

Master's Thesis

A Case Study of Volkswagens Use of Social Media During the Emissions Crisis

Copenhagen Business School, 17th of May 2016

MA in IBC: Multicultural Communication in Organizations (MCO)

MSc. EBA: International Marketing and Management (IMM)

Authors:

Rebecca Victoria Fatima Sjödin

Katarina Halkinrud

Supervisor: Søren Henning Jensen

Number of Characters Including Spaces: 227 183

Number of Pages: 109



Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express a sincere thank you to our supervisor Søren Henning Jensen, for his engagement and time, dedicated for guiding us through this thesis.

Executive Summary

Purpose: The importance of social media has arguably been growing at a faster pace than organizations' ability to use it as a tool to communicate. This was especially evident during Volkswagen's emissions crisis, where the company faced increased activity levels on Facebook and Twitter. This thesis was based on a single case study approach, with the purpose to gain a holistic picture of how Volkswagen took advantage of Facebook and Twitter to communicate the emissions crisis.

Methodology: A mixed methods research was applied to conduct a qualitative content analysis, which was followed up through quantifying the results. The aim of using a mixed methods research was to receive in depth contextual analysis, and further disclose whether the type of content had any effect on audience engagement.

Findings: Findings uncovered that Volkswagens social media content can be divided into a number of categories, based on different engagement approaches. It was discovered that Volkswagens content on social media, primarily built excitement in its relationships with its audience prior to the crisis. A change was indicated in the post crisis phase, where Volkswagen used emotional elements to engage its audience, and social media content was perceived as "softer" than prior to the crisis. The findings also matched existing research, revealing that organizations often fail to use a rightful initial crisis response strategy on social media. Additionally, the authors discovered that Volkswagen decreased its activity level on social media in the crisis event phase, while the crisis attracted new followers and increased audience engagement. As a final remark, Volkswagen lacked consistency when communicating the crisis on social media.

Practical Implications: Offering a quick initial response on social media, should be a company's main focus once a crisis takes place. Organizations should also aim to provide a consistent two-way interaction, by answering to audience's comments.

Originality/Value: The aim was not to generalize findings, since this research was based on an exploratory single case study, of Volkswagens use of social media as a crisis communication tool. However, the findings complement existing theory within crisis communication on social media, and how organizations build engaging online brand communities.

Keywords: Social Media, Crisis Communication, Communication, Stakeholders, Audience, Engagement, Online Brand Communities

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction	5
1.1 Problem Formulation & Research Question	6
1.2 Structure of the Thesis.....	7
1.3 Scope & Delimitations	8
1.4 Background.....	9
1.4.1 Characteristics of the Automobile Industry.....	9
1.4.2 Company Profile: The Volkswagen Group	11
1.4.3 The Volkswagen Emissions Crisis 2015:.....	12
1.4.4 Consequences Following the Emissions Crisis.....	14
2.0 Theoretical Framework.....	17
2.1 Stakeholder Theory.....	17
2.1.1 The Concept of Stakeholders	17
2.1.2 Stakeholder Management	20
2.1.3 Mapping out the Salient Stakeholders.....	22
2.3 Crisis Communication & Crisis Management	23
2.3.1 Managing Crisis Communication on Social Media.....	24
2.3.2 Communication in the 21 st Century	25
2.3.3 The Importance of Crisis Management	26
2.3.4 Phases of a Crisis	27
2.3.5 Situational Crisis Communication Theory	29
2.3.6 Critiques of Crisis Communication Theories	33
2.4 World Wide Web	34
2.4.1 Defining Social Media.....	36
2.4.2 Social Media in a Business Perspective.....	37
2.4.3 Building Successful Online Brand Communities.....	38
2.4.4 Ways to Engage an Audience on Social Media	40
2.4.5 Facebook.....	43
2.4.6 Twitter.....	44
2.4.7 Social Media as a Crisis Communication Tool.....	45
2.5 Theoretical Reflections	50
3. Methodology.....	51
3.1 Research approach	51
3.1.1 Research Philosophy: Pragmatism	52
3.1.2 Reasoning Approach: Abductive.....	53
3.2 Research design.....	54
3.2.1 Research Strategy: Case Study	54
3.2.2 Research purpose.....	55
3.3 Collecting the Empirical Data.....	55
3.3.1 Methods for Data Collection: Qualitative Research.....	56
3.3.2 Facebook and Twitter Posts.....	56
3.3.3 Secondary Data	57
3.4 Analyzing Data	58
3.4.1 Content Analysis	58
3.4.2 Analysing Data: Coding and Categorization	58
3.4.3 Analyzing Data: Measuring Engagement	61
4.0 Results.....	64
4.1 Categorizing Posts: Facebook and Twitter	65
4.2 Facebook Results	66
4.3 Twitter Results	68

5.0 Analysis	71
5.1 Did Volkswagen Actively Engage its Stakeholders on Social Media Prior to the Crisis?	71
5.1.1 Engagement on Facebook	72
5.1.2 Engagement on Twitter	74
5.1.3 Kozinets' Social Brand Engagement Model	76
5.1.4 Sub Conclusion	77
5.2 How was Volkswagens Reputation Perceived among Stakeholders Prior to the Crisis?	78
5.2.1 Sub Conclusion	80
5.3 How did Volkswagen utilize its Social Media Channels to Communicate with its Stakeholders in the Crisis Event phase?	81
5.3.1 Volkswagens Crisis Response on Social Media	81
5.3.2 Facebook Engagement during the Crisis Event Phase	84
5.3.3 Twitter Engagement during the Crisis Event Phase	87
5.3.4 Sub Conclusion	90
5.4 What Significant Changes can be indicated from Comparing Volkswagens Social Media Channels Prior to the Crisis, with Activities in the Post Crisis Phase?	91
5.4.1 Facebook Engagement in the Post Crisis Phase	92
5.4.2 Twitter Engagement in the Post Crisis Phase	95
5.4.3 Sub Conclusion	97
6.0 Discussion	98
6.1 Volkswagens Lack of a Crisis Communication Plan on Social Media	99
6.2 Inconsistency on Social Media	101
6.3 Increased Audience Engagement in the Post Crisis Phase	103
6.4 Volkswagens Change in Behavior when Responding to Comments on Facebook	104
6.5 Sub Conclusion	106
7.0 Conclusion	107
7.1 Managerial Implications	109
8. Reference List	110
9.0 Appendices	121
9.1 Appendix: Facebook Posts	121
9.2 Appendix: Twitter Posts	127

1.0 Introduction

In mid-September 2015, Volkswagen experienced a crisis after the company deliberately cheated on emissions tests. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered that several car models, produced by The Volkswagen Group, had installed devices in the diesel engines to manipulate the emission control systems (EPA, 2015). The emissions crisis has affected various groups of Volkswagens stakeholders worldwide. The authors therefore find it interesting to investigate this case further, from the perspective of applying social media as a crisis communication tool.

As social media has become a complex phenomenon in the 21st century, along with the rise of Web 2.0, businesses have discovered the importance of utilizing social media channels in a business manner. With that said, social media is still a rather new phenomenon, and thereby a limited number of studies have been conducted in regards to crisis communication on social media channels (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). Nevertheless, social media triggers news to travel faster than ever before, and it is therefore a given that social media will play a critical role in a company's crisis response strategy. Perry et al. (2003) stress the role of social media, by exploring a two-way interaction between stakeholders and the organization, as well as the increased potential for reaching out to a wide group of stakeholders at a fast speed. These factors are important, as Benoit (1997) states that an organizations ability to survive a crisis depends on its speed of response.

The aim of this research is to disclose a holistic picture of how Volkswagen utilized social media platforms, to communicate with its stakeholders in the pre, event and post phase of the emissions crisis. The social media platforms that will be further explored in connection to Volkswagens emissions crisis are Facebook and Twitter. These two platforms are chosen, because a majority of Volkswagens social media engagement takes place on Facebook and Twitter. To gain a complete understanding of how Volkswagen has handled the emissions crisis, other online platforms will also be investigated, such as Volkswagen's webpage and newspaper articles.

1.1 Problem Formulation & Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a holistic picture of Volkswagens communication on social media channels in the pre, event and post crisis phase. The aim is to disclose an understanding, whether Volkswagen utilized a crisis communication strategy on social media that aligns with existing crisis communication theories. To be able to provide an answer to the problem formulation, the authors will utilize a conventional content analysis, to examine how Volkswagen engaged its audience on social media. The authors will further verify how the audience reacted to Volkswagens social media content in the pre, event and post phases of the emissions crisis. A limited number of studies have been conducted regarding crisis communication on social media, yet it is verified that crisis strategies businesses take avail of, are often wrong (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). It is therefore interesting to approach this exploratory case study, to verify if patterns can be discovered regarding Volkswagens use of Facebook and Twitter as crisis communication tools. The intention of this research is not to generalize the findings from the analysis, but rather provide the reader with insights that may generate managerial implications and complement existing theory. Crisis communication and social media are the central areas of interest in this thesis, and the purpose of using other theories, such as stakeholder theory is utilized to support the main findings. The authors aim to obtain a better understanding of how Volkswagen, as global corporation, handled the emissions crisis through using social media.

The introduction of this thesis leads to the problem formulation:

How has Volkswagen used social media as a crisis communication tool?

To answer the problem formulation, four research questions have been defined and will be answered in the analysis. The research questions will be answered through sub-conclusions, which all combined will reflect the final conclusion.

RQ1. Did Volkswagen actively engage its stakeholders on social media prior to the crisis?

RQ2. How was Volkswagens reputation perceived among stakeholders prior to the crisis?

RQ3. How did Volkswagen utilize its social media channels, to communicate with its stakeholders in the crisis event phase?

RQ4. What significant changes can be indicated from comparing Volkswagens social media channels prior to the crisis, with activities in the post crisis phase?

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: The introductory chapter first introduces the motivation behind the thesis, following the problem formulation and its underlying research questions that are to be answered throughout the thesis. Background information about the automobile industry and the chosen case will be provided here. The scope and delimitation will also be presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2: The theoretical framework outlines the theoretical foundation of this thesis, which includes: Stakeholder theory, crisis communication theory, theories relating to online brand communities, and social media applied in a business manner as a crisis communication tool.

Chapter 3: The methodology chapter delivers an overview of the research approach and research design that have been chosen for this thesis. It clarifies the plan for the research, and the reasoning for the methodological choices taken.

Chapter 4: This chapter displays the results from the research, which will be further used to represent the findings in the analysis.

Chapter 5: This chapter provides a thorough description and analysis of Volkswagens emissions crisis, and aims to answer the four research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a thorough understanding of how Volkswagen utilized its social media channels in the pre, event and post phases of the emissions crisis.

Chapter 6: A discussion follows the analysis, with the aim to further explain surprising findings from the analysis. This chapter will elaborate upon findings that were not anticipated, and therefore perceived as interesting to discuss.

Chapter 7: The final chapter provides a conclusion, which answers the problem formulation and outlines a set of managerial implications.

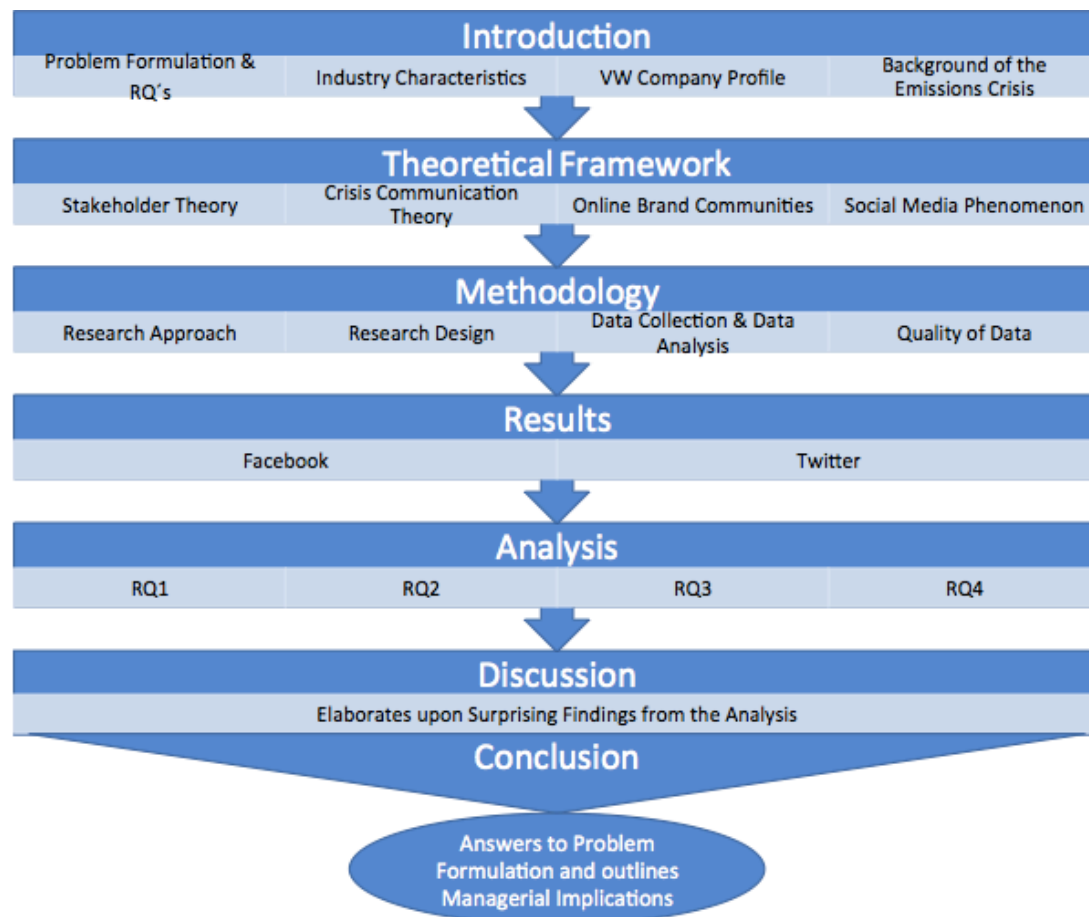


Figure 1: *Structure of the Thesis*

1.3 Scope & Delimitations

This thesis is based on an exploratory single case study, where the authors aim to investigate how social media, from a business perspective, can be utilized as a tool when communicating with stakeholders in the phases of prior to the crisis, crisis event and posts crisis. The authors will look at published content on Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter channels, in a timeframe between 2015 and 2016. The reason for this is to discover patterns and possible changes in Volkswagens social media content. The pre-crisis phase is the period before 18th of September 2015, the crisis event phase is appreciated between the 18th of September 2015 to the 1st of January 2016. The authors are aware that the emissions crisis is still on going, and will address the timeframe that is researched between 1st of January 2015 until the beginning of April 2016, as the post crisis phase, based on the fact that Volkswagen was not dominating headlines in media channels during that timeframe. An article in PR week, revealed that it is appropriate to move on and start posting regular content on social media

again, once the story is not dominating headlines anymore (Bradley, 2016)

The authors have not been in contact with Volkswagen, and therefore only include public available information in this study. Information regarding the automobile industry is also collected from public available information.

It would be difficult to cover all social media channels since time and resources are limited, thereby the second limitation regards the fact that only two social media channels are investigated. The content analysis that will be conducted will include text messages only. The authors will not be able to provide a content analysis through pictures, but will be identifying the meaning behind certain pictures to back up the analysed text at hand.

Narrowing this research to one company within one industry, makes it difficult to generalize findings from this research, and is therefore less applicable for other companies in other industries to relate to these findings. However, the aim of this research is to provide managers with an understanding of how to utilize social media a crisis communication tool.

1.4 Background

The background chapter will provide the reader with an overview of characteristics reflecting the automobile industry. Following, the authors will provide a brief description of the company profile, and an overview of Volkswagens emissions crisis.

1.4.1 Characteristics of the Automobile Industry

China and the United States are regarded as the largest automobile markets globally, in terms of both sales and production. Ever since Ford Motors released the Model T, which introduced the assembly line car production in 1908, the US has been a central automobile market (Statista, 2015). Ford Motor Company still ranks among the leading passenger car manufacturers. However, companies such as Toyota, Volkswagen and General Motors are on the top of the list of major automobile makers in terms of revenue (ibid).

Today, the industry meets numerous trends that create both new challenges, as well as providing growth-opportunities. What mainly causes these new trends, are according to SAP (2014) geopolitical and demographic changes, together with the need for sustainable and agile businesses. Customers are savvier than before due to the easy access to online information, which creates a change in the market, as tech-savvy customers form a new mobility culture (SAP, 2014; KPMG, 2015).

One factor that influences the entry barriers in the automobile industry is customers' existing brand preferences that they consider when buying a car (Kallstrom, 2015). The automobile industry is a mature industry; indicated by the existence of established brand names. Brands that have enjoyed customer loyalty for decades create difficulties for new entrants to establish a new brand, because it takes years to build a competitive reputation (ibid). Although there are numerous actors operating in this industry, it is predominantly dominated by a number of key players; General Motors, Ford, Toyota, Volkswagen, Daimler and Chrysler, hold a share of 49% of the global automobile market. Due to high entry barriers, new players have difficulties entering the market, where obtaining economies of scale and capital intensity, are main creators of these barriers (Kallstrom, 2015).

Another interesting characteristic of the automobile industry is the increasing threat of substitutes. As fuel prices and environmental consciousness increase, a rising number of urban drivers, switching to public transportation are anticipated to increase in the future (Schmidt, 2012). The latest report from McKinsey (2016) confirms this by stating the following: *“Consumer mobility behaviour is changing, leading to one out of ten cars sold in 2030 potentially being a shared vehicle and the subsequent rise of a market for fit-for-purpose mobility solutions”*.

The role of governments in the development of the automobile industry is vital, as governments have become central actors in this particular industry. An example of governmental engagement is the environmental policies, restricting emissions controls of greenhouse gasses, and requirements of safety (Evwind, 2009). According to KPMG (2015), the stricter restrictions concerning the environment may affect the popularity of bigger cars. The increasing regulatory standards demand stronger attention on fuel optimization and rationalization. In order for automobile companies

to meet customers' changing needs and consciousness towards sustainability, their business models need to align with agile businesses.

1.4.2 Company Profile: The Volkswagen Group

The German automobile manufacturer Volkswagen, founded by Deutsche Arbeitsfront, as Gesellschaft Zur Vorbereitung des Deutschen Volkswagen in 1937, is today headquartered in Wolfsburg and among the largest manufacturers of vehicles in the world. The Volkswagen group produces and sells vehicles under brand names such as MAN, Scania, Neoplan and Volkswagen. Major subsidiary brands for the Volkswagen Group include Porsche, Volkswagen, Lamborghini, Bentley, Audi and Skoda (The Volkswagen Group, 2014¹).



Ever since the company was established, Volkswagen has been more than a car in the German Society, for centuries it has been known as the “people’s car”. The Volkswagen brand has become a symbol and also an emotional attachment for the German citizen (The Volkswagen Group, 2014²).

Today, Volkswagen enjoys an automobile empire and operates in 153 countries (The Volkswagen Group, 2014³). The Volkswagen Groups financial report from 2014, states that the group had a market share of 12,9% in 2014. At the company’s 31 different production plants, 41.000 vehicles are produced every day, and total of 10,1 million vehicles were sold in 2014 (The Volkswagen Group, 2014¹; The Volkswagen Group 2014³). This achievement brought the company closer to its corporate goal; to

be the worlds leading automaker by 2018, “*We aim to be the world’s most successful, fascinating and sustainable automobile manufacturer*” is a statement from Volkswagen (The Volkswagen Group, 2014⁴).

Meanwhile, living up to the sustainability report, Volkswagen has actively taken action in order to minimize CO² emissions, and developing its technology to achieve efficiency in regards to fuel. The Volkswagen Group strives to become the world’s most environmental-friendly automobile maker, where targets are set to protect the environment. As a consequence, hybrid cars are already being developed (Schmidt, 2012). The company has an environmental strategy comprising all its brands in all regions, spreading throughout each stage of the value chain. In the Volkswagen Groups sustainability report, it is stated that the company is transparent about its sustainability results, in order to create value both for the company and for all its stakeholders (The Volkswagen Group, 2014⁴). The emphasis Volkswagen places on sustainability and acting responsively towards the environment does not align with Volkswagens actions related to the emissions crisis, which made this an interesting case for further investigation. Inconsistency in the Volkswagen Groups communication on its official websites, and how the company has recently acted, was notified. It is of the authors’ interest to discover how these actions have influenced Volkswagens social media platforms.

Volkswagen stated in its sustainability report that the company values the importance of taking a proactive stance, through offering innovative solutions in the field of social policy making. Volkswagen committed at an early stage to be a part of the emissions limit 95 g CO₂/km in the EU, these regulations were set by the EU in 2014. The company also indicated in the report, that regulating CO₂ emissions have been one of Volkswagens most important topics, due to global warming issues (The Volkswagen Group, 2014⁴).

1.4.3 The Volkswagen Emissions Crisis 2015:

Problems related to emission standards began already in 2005, when Volkswagen decided to push for diesels in the USA. Volkswagen knew that the company could meet the emissions target by changing “*only a small number of an approximate total of 15,000 individual algorithms were changed*” (The Volkswagen Group, 2016). As

previously mentioned the Volkswagen Group had clear goals and actions towards corporate responsibility, sustainability and transparency. Despite these goals, a huge crisis critically hit the company, 18th of September 2015, when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) convicted the company for violating the clean air act; *“VW admitted 3rd of September that the cars were designed and manufactured with a defeat device to bypass, defeat or render inoperative elements of the vehicle's emission control system”* (Bowler, 2015). The Volkswagen Group was accused September 3rd for installing a software that disabled pollution controls. The software is known as a defeat device in the electronic control components of diesel vehicles, which have been delivered between 2008 and 2015. The reason for falsifying pollution tests in the United States is that cars would seem environmentally cleaner than they actually were. According to CNN (CNN Money, 2015), the German government soon discovered that the Volkswagen Group cheated in Europe too.

The 21st of September 2015 Volkswagen's CEO Martin Winterkorn stated that the company had betrayed the trust of millions of people, and resigned after making the confession; *“I am deeply sorry we have broken this trust,” said CEO Martin Winterkorn. I would like to make a formal apology to our customers, to the authorities, and to the general public for this misconduct*” (CNN Money, 2015).

At the time the confessions were made, the crisis affected 11 million vehicles leading to a cost of \$7,27 billion. Shortly after, The Volkswagen Group confessed publicly that the problem could affect additionally 800.000 cars, leading to an additional cost of \$2 billion (Perlberg, 2015). It was the EPA who discovered that a number of the cars produced by The Volkswagen Group in the United States had installed devices in the diesel engines, to manipulate the emissions control systems. Volkswagen was accused for using an algorithm that first detected when the vehicle was tested; thereafter it was able to change the performance of the vehicles, to meet emissions standards. Hence, the cars produced by The Volkswagen Group met the emissions standards; nevertheless, on the roads they could actually pollute the air with nitrogen oxides up to 40 times more than emissions standards allowed (Plungis & Hull, 2015).

1.4.4 Consequences Following the Emissions Crisis

The emission crisis did not make the affected cars unsafe to drive, but at some point Volkswagen will be forced to update the software system in the affected cars, leading to customers getting fewer miles per tank, and increased fuel costs. Customers may be compensated in the future along with lawsuits, yet this will not happen any time soon (Plungis & Hull, 2015). Volkswagen decided to cheat on emissions tests in order to save fuel, increase the cars torque and acceleration. The software led to a higher amount of nitrogen oxide pollution, which in turn leads to increased emissions of a chemical that can cause emphysema, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases (Gates et al., 2016). The graph below displays Volkswagens stock price between 2014 and 2016, it is clear that the company's stock price dropped vastly in September 2015.

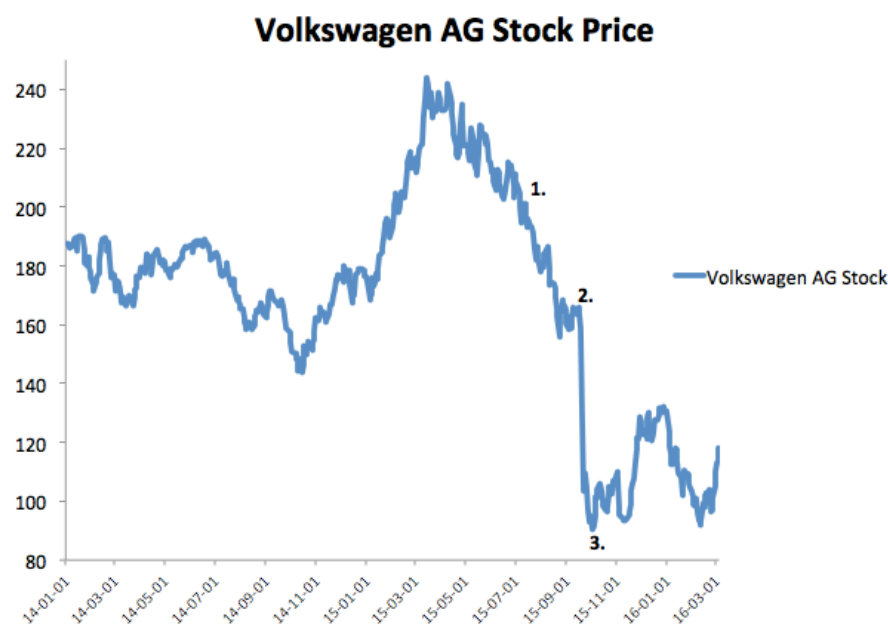


Figure 2: The graph illustrates how the emissions crisis has affected Volkswagen's shareholders. Between the 18th of September and the 20th of September 2015, Volkswagens stock price dropped 35% (Source: Market watch, 2016).

CARB (California Air Resources Board)
EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)

The happenings for the three points outlined in the graph are described below:

1. July 8th 2015: By July 2015, CARB shared its findings with Volkswagen. None of the technical issues that Volkswagen had blamed the emissions crisis on were consistent with CARB's results for the fault in the engines. CARB and EPA decided not to certify Volkswagens 2016 diesel lineup, which was a necessary step in order for Volkswagen to be able to place its cars out on sale. At this time Volkswagen came forward and admitted software regulations (Bowler, 2015).

2. September 3rd 2015: On the 3rd of September 2015, CARB confirmed that Volkswagen admitted its failure, violating the Clean Air Act, due to installing "*a defeat device to bypass, defeat or render inoperative elements of the vehicle's emissions control system*" (EPA, 2015). The defeat device indorsed the engines to emit nitrogen oxide levels that were 10-40 times the amount that is allowed by EPA (Bowler, 2015).

3. September 18th 2015: The affected cars should not have been EPA certified. Volkswagen was at this point facing fines ranging up to \$18 billion (Bowler, 2015).

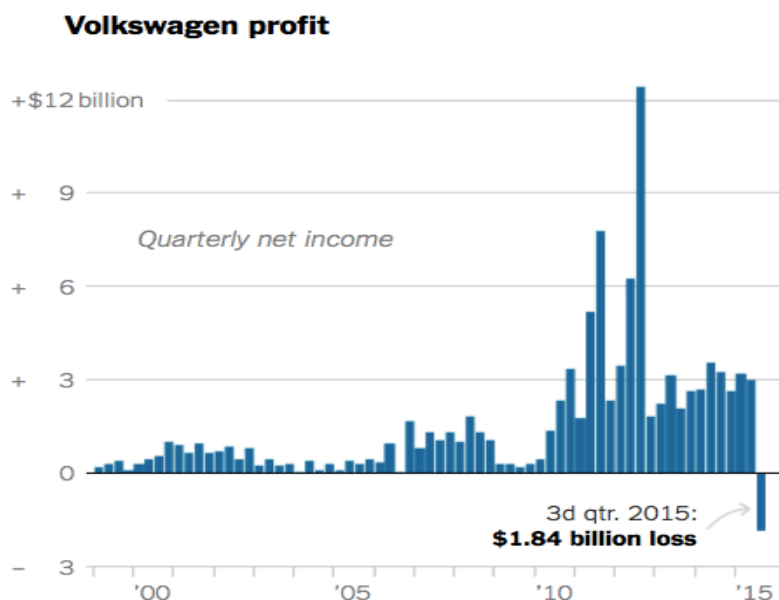


Figure 3: The graph illustrates Volkswagens profit between 2000 and 2015 (Source: Gates et al., 2016).

The emissions crisis is a crisis that has led to product recalls, and is in conflict with the Code of Conduct that The Volkswagen Group possesses. Along with high

compensation costs, the company's reputation is affected, and sales have dropped for the first time in 13 years (Houston-Waesch, 2016). The crisis has also affected The Volkswagen Groups subsidiaries. The loss related to the recalls is at the time of writing a total of \$1,9 billion. However, this does not include any additional fines or compensation, and there is more to come as organizations intend to sue the company. Since the production of quality cars is central for Germany's reputation, Angela Merkel has explained the situation as difficult and stated that Volkswagen has to show complete transparency for the problematic situation the company has caused (CNNMoney, 2015). The Volkswagen Influential Employee Council stated shortly after the crisis, that the crisis would not have any immediate effects on jobs. Even though Volkswagen aims to secure jobs, it is too early to announce information whether this crisis will affect jobs in the future or not. The Volkswagen employee council, expresses that the company is aiming to make sure the emissions crisis will not backfire on employees (McHugh, 2015). Another problem that may appear is that additional taxes may influence diesel drivers in the future (Bowler, 2015).

The Volkswagen Groups new CEO, Mathias Müller, is facing a great responsibility, getting the group on the right track again. Shortly after the crisis took place, the company announced that \$7,3 billion would be allocated to repair the damages caused by the emissions crisis.

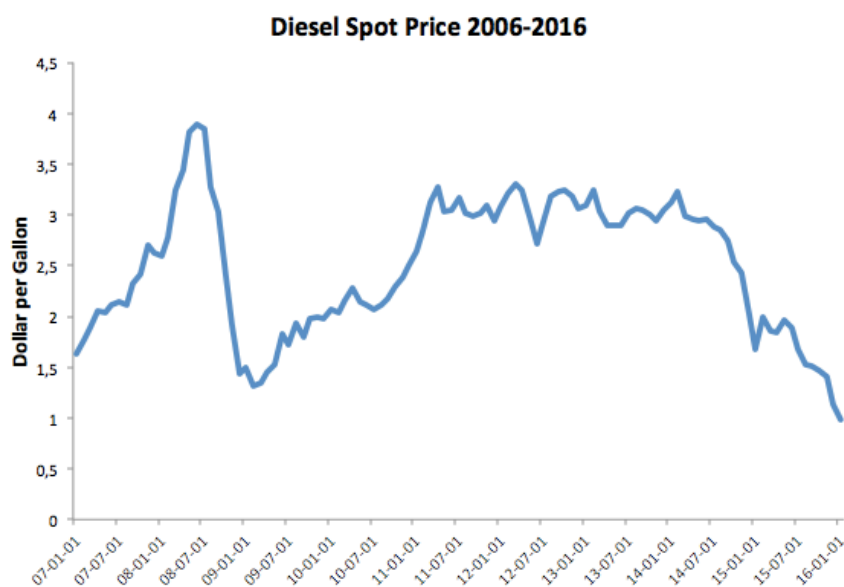


Figure 4: The chart indicates that the U.S diesel retail price took a hit along with Volkswagens emissions crisis. It has not been that low in 6 years (Source: Durden, 2015).

Figure 4 display diesel prices between 2006 and 2016. Following Volkswagens emissions crisis, there are reasons to believe that other car manufacturers are also manipulating tests. The emissions crisis has taken a hit on diesel cars worldwide, and as a consequence, diesel cars may no longer be perceived as the cleaner fuel car. The previous image people possessed of diesel cars, being a cleaner alternative to unleaded gasoline cars, was shaped back in the 90's. Along with the EU aiming to reduce CO2 emissions, Volkswagen along with other European carmakers innovated diesel engines to make cars cleaner (Durden, 2015).

2.0 Theoretical Framework

In order to answer the problem formulation, an overview of theories that are crucial for providing this research with suitable answers to the problem formulation, were necessary to include. This chapter will present theories that later will be applied to analyze Volkswagens crisis communication on Facebook and Twitter. The first section outlines basic stakeholder theory, for the purpose of mapping out the relevant stakeholders for this study. Further on, relevant crisis communication and crisis management theories, combined with theories concerning the social media phenomenon, and how to build successful online brand communities, will be elaborated upon. The end of the theoretical framework will include a section concerning the authors' reflections around the theories applied, with an aim to create a thorough understanding for why these theories are considered to be the most relevant for this study.

2.1 Stakeholder Theory

In this section, the most relevant stakeholder theories for the aim of this thesis will be presented. The authors first outline the different concepts behind the selected theories, and further examine more thoughtfully how these concepts should be managed in a company such as Volkswagen.

2.1.1 The Concept of Stakeholders

The authors' view of what characterizes stakeholders is in line with Freemans original stakeholder theory "*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives*" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p.854).

Stakeholders can also be described as *"those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist"* (Freeman & Reed, 1983). Stakeholders are those who hold a stake in the company, and may either gain benefits or experience losses/harm, as a result from a company's operations (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009). Groups or individuals who are not affected by the firm's activities and cannot affect the activities, does not have a stake in the company and are therefore not considered stakeholders. *"A stakeholder approach to business is about creating as much value as possible for stakeholders, without resorting to trade-offs"* (Mitchell et al, 1997, p.856-857). Companies may not possess perfect knowledge about everything, but when they discover danger or anything that may be a threat to their stakeholders, they are expected to be truthful to their stakeholders about it, and mitigate any negative effects (Freeman et al. 2010. p.24-28).

For this study, stakeholder theory will not be applied in a profound manner, as this thesis emphasizes Volkswagens use of social media in relation to the emissions crisis. However, as have been stated above, companies, when danger is discovered, are expected to be truthful to their stakeholders and mitigate any negative effect. Because social media is a growing phenomenon where stakeholders are present, it is vital for Volkswagen to pay attention to its stakeholders, and make sure all stakeholders are provided with the necessary information, on regular and social media channels. Stakeholder theory is utilized to map out Volkswagens relevant stakeholders, to further investigate the interaction between Volkswagen and its stakeholders, on Facebook and Twitter in the phases of pre, event and post crisis. The aim is to discover significant traits and patterns, and observe changes in Volkswagens communication in the three distinct phases. A statement from Volkswagen's homepage addresses the company's stakeholders as following: *"Our stakeholders include analysts and investors, employees, customers, neighbors, suppliers, partners, politicians, public authorities, scientists and non-governmental organizations – a network of relationships that grows with our market presence"* (The Volkswagen Group 2014⁵). By looking at Volkswagens situation after the emissions crisis broke out, it is according to relevant theory, evident that the majority of all of its stakeholders will be affected in some way. Figure 2 (*Volkswagens Emissions Crisis*) reveals that Volkswagens stock price dropped 35% in only two days. This example illustrates how Volkswagens shareholders were affected by the emissions crisis. The

German government is also likely to be affected by the crisis, as it (The State of Lower Saxony) holds 20% of Volkswagens shares (The Volkswagen Group, 2014⁶). The company is currently striving to prevent the crisis from firing back on its employees, yet this cannot be reassured. The Volkswagen Group has to compensate for the damages, which in turn might affect employees. Volkswagen has damaged its relationship with its customers, and risks losing loyal customers. In this thesis the authors will reference to Volkswagens stakeholders as customers, because they are predominantly present on Volkswagens social media channels (Ruddick, 2015).

As the figure below implies, areas where Volkswagen has stated that the company desires to meet stakeholders' expectations are: *Capital Market* (shareholders, banks, analysts and investors), *Society* (legislators, public authority, municipalities, neighbors, associations, religious groups, academia, NGO's), *Customers* (dealer's, fleet operations, consumers) and *Partners* (employees, works councils, business partners, suppliers, trade unions). As explained in chapter one, the automobile industry has enjoyed customer loyalty for decades, making it difficult for companies to build a solid reputation within the industry. Alternative options for cars are growing along with people wanting to protect the environment. It is therefore more important than ever before, that an organization considers what is of the greatest interest of its stakeholders, and strives to meet values of interest. It is a corporation's requirement to listen and take action, and build relationships with multilateral groups (Smith et al., 2011). Building on this theory, the authors are interested in further exploring Volkswagens social media engagement, in terms of how the company interacts with its stakeholders through its official Facebook and Twitter channels. What makes the authors consider stakeholder theory as essential for this thesis, is the fact that along with social media being an evolving phenomenon, stakeholders will expect Volkswagen to be present on social media channels, and share crisis related information.

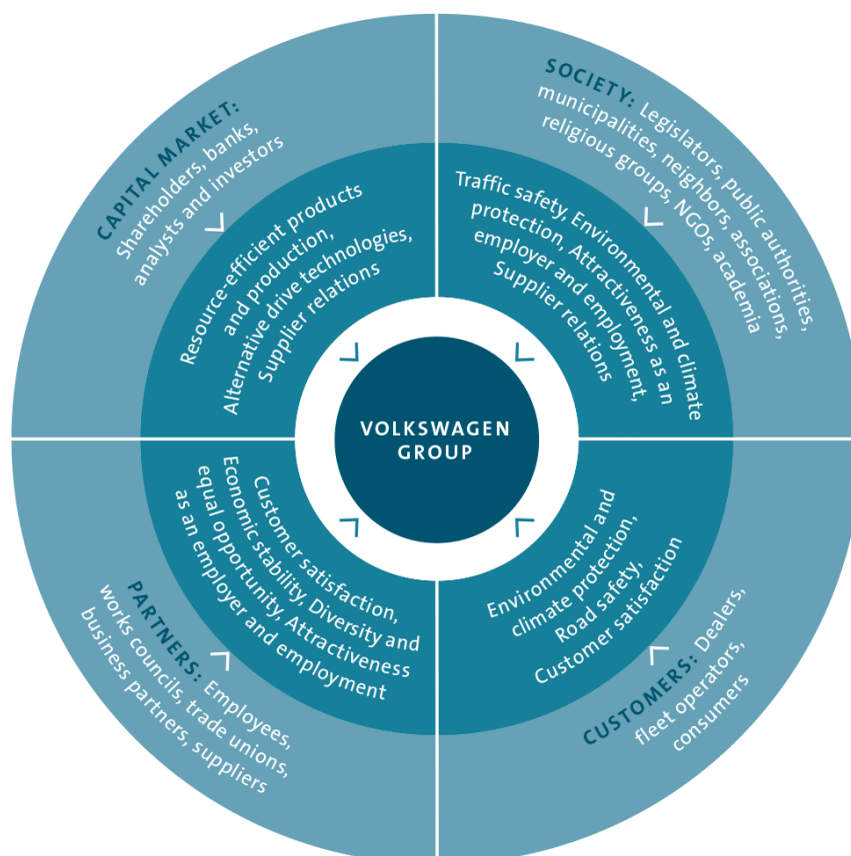


Figure 5: An overview of Volkswagens stakeholders (Source: The Volkswagen group, 2014⁵)

2.1.2 Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder management refers to “the necessity for an organization to manage its relationships with specific stakeholder groups in an action-oriented way” (Freeman, 2010, p.53). An efficient awareness towards stakeholder management involves communication, managing relationships, negotiation and contracting, and motivating stakeholders to respond to the organization in a way the organization can benefit from (Harrison & John, 1994). A company ought to think about stakeholders as a strategic asset and source of information. In other words, stakeholders should shape the direction of the company. To reach this goal, a company needs to engage with its stakeholders on a regular basis, in order to build trust, which will derive from mutually understood shared values (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009).

Degree of Engagement	Management Behaviour
Inactive	Unilateral decision-making, ignoring stakeholder concerns
Reactive	Management only engages defensively when forced to
Proactive	Management attempts to anticipate stakeholder concerns
Interactive	Company has ongoing relationships of mutual respect, openness and trust with stakeholders

Figure 6: *Continuum of Stakeholder Engagement* (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009)

The figure above presents four different degrees of engagement a company can have with its stakeholders, and management behaviour related to the different degrees a company desires to engage with its stakeholders.

For the purpose of this study, the authors will further consider different degrees of engagement, in order to see which one aligns with Volkswagens behaviour on social media. The four engagement degrees can be described as the following (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009):

Inactive engagement - When the organization ignores stakeholders' concerns. This type of engagement is not a valuable strategy if a firm wants to build a long-term relationship with its stakeholders.

Reactive engagement - When a company only engages with its stakeholders to rebuild a relationship that was not strong to begin with (in a crisis situation for instance).

Proactive and interactive engagement - When a company builds goodwill through ongoing cooperation with its stakeholders, which can be an asset in a crisis situation. In other words, the organization already has a strong bond with its stakeholders beforehand.

In terms of the four distinctive degrees of stakeholder engagement, it is of interest to indicate whether Volkswagen has taken avail of a proactive and interactive engagement prior to the crisis, and notify if the company possesses reputational goodwill that has been an asset during the emissions crisis. This will be thoroughly examined through analyzing Volkswagen social media strategy prior to the crisis. The authors will discover which engagement strategy Volkswagen utilized to interact with its stakeholders prior to the crisis, in the crisis event phase and in the post crisis phase.

Since this study, as previously outlined, will be applied to stakeholders who are present on social media (predominantly known as customers), the term stakeholders will further on be referred to as social media *audience*.

2.1.3 Mapping out the Salient Stakeholders

When a company finds itself in a crisis situation, it should not only concentrate on identifying the crisis type to further find the most appropriate crisis response. It should also concentrate on identifying the affected stakeholders, and focus on those that will furthermost influence the situation. This is perceived to be a suitable strategy for making sure a company is targeting the right stakeholders. A corporation should first target stakeholders, then find the most suitable crisis response strategy (Magness 2008). A salient stakeholder will possess a combination of the following three attributes: legitimacy, power, and urgency. It is predicted that the salience of a stakeholder to the firms' management is low if only one attribute exists, moderate when two attributes exist, and high when three attributes exist (Mitchell et al., 1997, p.879). The company should focus its communication strategy and show empathy to all of its stakeholders. If the company emphasises merely on certain stakeholders because this suits the interests of the company, the company might be perceived as unethical (Berman et al., 1999).

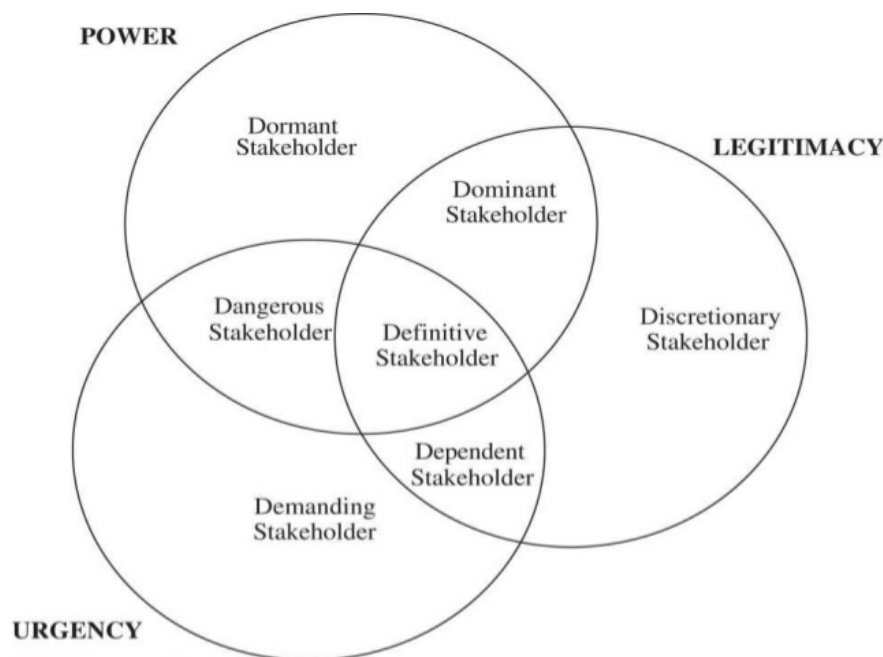


Figure 7: Stakeholder Typology: One, Two, or Three Attributes (Source: Mitchell et al., 1997)

According to Mitchell et al. (1997), the Stakeholder Typology model is an identification of entities that are considered a firm's stakeholders, and it also constitutes those entities that managers consider salient. Entities without power, legitimacy or urgency, are not considered stakeholders, and managers will often pay little or no attention to them. The Stakeholder salience model outline stakeholder classes separated into three central groups (Mitchell et al., 1997):

- a) *Latent Stakeholders* - Those who possess one of three attributes: power, legitimacy or urgency. Managers are not likely to pay attention to these stakeholders- they may not even recognize their existence.
- b) *Expectant Stakeholders* - Those who possess two of the three attributes are in a different zone of salience; the two-attribute moderate-salience stakeholders will expect to be noticed. The two expectant stakeholder classes are described as dominant, dependent, or dangerous.
- c) *Definite Stakeholders* - Those who possess all three attributes, and therefore are considered the organizations most salient stakeholders. An expectant stakeholder can acquire one attribute and become a definite stakeholder. Stakeholders, who possess two attributes, power and legitimacy for instance, are already members of the firms' dominant coalition. When such a stakeholder's claim is urgent, managers should immediately give priority to that stakeholder's claim.

According to this model, the authors will also place emphasize on those stakeholders who are perceived as latent stakeholders, since social media allow for any stakeholder to interact and share their opinion about the emissions crisis. This may lead to latent stakeholders affecting definite stakeholders, since social media enables latent stakeholder to influence definite stakeholders. This verifies, that all stakeholders (latent, expectant and definite) should be perceived as equally important, when dealing with crisis communication on social media.

2.3 Crisis Communication & Crisis Management

Underpinning definitions that are viable parts for the aim of this research will be outlined in this section. Recognizing why crisis management and crisis

communication is crucial for organizations, will be essential to understand, before explaining the impact social media can have in a crisis situation.

2.3.1 Managing Crisis Communication on Social Media

Despite that organizations have been coping with crises for decades, organizational crisis management is a relatively new field, and a limited number of studies have been conducted within this field. While the field of *crisis management* in the 1970's was commonly tied to natural or human accidents, a new type of crisis has appeared in the 21st century. This type of crisis is known as an intentional crisis, such as The World Trade Centre 9/11 attacks in New York, a deliberate crisis caused by terrorism. Later in 2010 the BP oil spill crisis took place, as a consequence of management overlooking safety issues (Goldenberg, 2010). Lord Browne, the former executive chief of BP, wrote the book (*Connect*) in assembly to Volkswagen's emissions crisis. The aspiration behind the book was to have corporations understand how they are in better position to recover from a crisis, if they already have built up a reservoir of trust with their stakeholders before a crisis takes place. Lord Browne states that "*Volkswagen's reputation for affordable quality will stand it in good stead, so will the speed with which it has apologized and promised to put things right*". A natural human intuition is that individuals are much more likely to forgive somebody one already trusts (Hellier, 2015). Lord Browne stressed the urgency of being open and moving quickly to make amends, when the organization has intentionally caused a crisis upon itself. The authors will later in the analysis, identify what type of initial response strategy Volkswagen took avail of on Facebook and Twitter. This will be examined through identifying social media posts during the crisis outbreak; with the aim of looking for patterns that can clarify the current understanding the authors have concerning the study at hand.

In previous years, a crisis was merely communicated through regular media channels. These mediums did not allow for information to spread at such a fast speed, or as freely as new type of mediums allow for. The rise of Web 2.0 has created a century where news is generated more freely and travels at a faster speed. Qantas, an Australian airline company found themselves in a situation in 2010 where an engine exploded, which led to an emergency landing. Already before the plane was on the ground, someone had posted a picture on social media, displaying the broken engine.

The picture went viral within a couple of minutes. This example highlights the fact that it is more important today than ever before, for organizations to rapidly respond to a crisis, and take advantage of digital technologies (e.g. social media platforms), for interacting with its stakeholders (May, 2010).

Volkswagen is one of the biggest automobile companies in the world, and after notifying that other global companies (such as Qantas) have struggled with responding to a crisis rapidly, it is of the authors' interest to recognize if Volkswagen applied new technologies to issue a quick response to the emissions crisis. The authors have discovered that the emissions crisis has been discussed on various Internet channels, which implies that a study examining how Volkswagen can most properly answer to concerns online, is essential to investigate. It is of the authors' interest to discover if this study will lead to discovering any patterns, characterizing how Volkswagen used social media to communicate the emissions crisis, since a limited number of studies have been executed concerning social media as a crisis communication tool.

2.3.2 Communication in the 21st Century

Scholars have acknowledged that the communication concept is difficult to define (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). The authors have chosen the following two definitions to clarify the meaning of communication: *Communication is one of those everyday activities that is intertwined with all of human life so completely that we sometimes overlook its persuasiveness, importance and complexity*" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, p.2). *"Communication is the relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response"* (Griffin, 2009, p.6-7). Griffin (2009) states that communication only makes sense, if there is someone out there who can interpret and receive the words. The majority of difficulties crisis managers experience in the 21st century, are related to the evolving news culture facilitated by social media. The Internet allows people worldwide to access news through a variety of mediums at any time. The rise of Web 2.0 and user-generated content, has made it possible for non-professional journalists to contribute directly to the production of daily news, which has increased the intensity of the news culture (Hussein et al., 2009). Thus, user generated content has made it possible for organizations to share real time news with its stakeholders at any time. For the purpose of this study, the authors will further investigate

Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter accounts, to explore what type of user-generated content is shared between Volkswagen and its audience in the pre, event and post crisis phase.

2.3.3 The Importance of Crisis Management

The authors are aware of the numerous definitions explaining the term *crisis*. “*An act of God that is unwanted, unexpected, unprecedented and almost unmanageable, causing widespread unbelief and uncertainty*” (Hewitt, 1983). Rosenthal et al. (1989), states that a crisis should be comprehended as an event causing collective stress and threatening core values. Nevertheless, for this thesis the authors have chosen Coombs’ (2007) definition to describe a crisis. “*A crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization’s operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat*” (Coombs, 2007, p.164). This definition is perceived as most suitable for this research, because it is among the most recent and up to date definitions, making it more applicable to social media theories. An organizational crisis can be anything from a natural disaster to a rumour, or it can occur from intentional actions, which was how Volkswagens emissions crisis evolved. What reflects all crisis types is that they lead to injuries, material losses or fatalities (ibid). Volkswagens crisis led to a lack of trust among its customers, as it broke ethical standards by deliberately going against rules and regulations, along with breaking with customer values. Despite what type of crisis an organization is affected by, it needs to find a proper crisis management strategy to deal with it.

The emissions crisis is perceived as a threat to Volkswagens reputation, as a vast amount of cars have been affected by it. The Volkswagen emissions crisis is another proof indicating that no organization is immune to a crisis. Organizations are not immune to crises, and should therefore be prepared to manage a crisis at all time (Coombs, 2007). Smith (1990) stresses the fact that a system will fail at some time, and thereby an organization cannot consider *if* a system will fail, but rather *when* it will fail. Once an organization has accepted that it is not immune to a crisis, it can plan out a management strategy for dealing with a crisis, and also find ways that will prevent a crisis from occurring (Smith, 1990). “*Crisis management seeks to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders, and industry from harm*” (Coombs, 2007, p.5).

Stakeholders' expectations of an organization are infringed in a crisis, which may lead the affected stakeholders to recognize the organization in a more negative manner (Pearson & Clair, 1998). The purpose of crisis management is to mitigate reputational threat that a crisis may have on the organization. Crisis management is all about evaluating a crisis, and understanding the situation. Hence, it is vital to find a crisis management strategy that is most suitable for the particular situation (Coombs, 2007). In order for Volkswagen to mitigate the harm that the crisis has already caused on the company's reputation, the authors will apply what is known about crisis management, to further analyze how and if Volkswagens actions, align with responsible crisis management strategies.

2.3.4 Phases of a Crisis

Coombs' (2007) definition of a crisis, comprehends distinctive perspectives that preceding writers have already used in their approach for describing a crisis. "*A crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat*" (Coombs, 2007, p.164). What is common ground for all crises types is that managers need to respond quickly and consistent, once stakeholders define an event as a crisis, regardless of how the organization perceives the situation. A crisis can be divided into three phases, both Coombs (2007) and Mitroff & Pearson (1993), have defined the three stage model as; *pre-crisis* (preparing for a possible crisis), *crisis-event* (how the organization should respond to a possible crisis) and *post-crisis* (understanding why the crisis took place). In relation to this study, Volkswagens pre-crisis phase is perceived as any time before the crisis broke out, the crisis event phase is perceived as the time between the 18th of September 2015 to the 1st of January 2016 (when the EPA publicly announced the crisis), and the post crisis phase is perceived as the time between 1st of January 2016 and until the beginning of April 2016.

The *pre-crisis* phase, outlines the importance of having a prepared management team at all time, ready to take control of a crisis once it takes place. The crisis management team holds a responsibility to identify the risks of a possible crisis taking place. The management team should allocate responsibility to members in the crisis management team, to ensure everyone is prepared when a crisis occurs. Beforehand, the team should already have a sense of the environment that the organization operates within,

and create an information system that can be utilized to monitor a crisis (Burnett, 1998; Coombs, 2007). It is crucial that all organizations have a crisis management plan worked out before a crisis takes place (scenario planning), in order to be able to take action immediately once the crisis takes place.

The *crisis-event* phase is difficult to prepare, because a crisis is difficult to predict as every crisis is unique, and the way it should be handled may therefore change rapidly. In this phase, it is crucial for the crisis management team to collect information about the crisis. A company should in this phase seek to create a response strategy for the purpose of avoiding negative publicity. The organization should identify how messages ought to be composed, and which stakeholders the messages are to be targeted towards (ibid).

The *post-crisis* phase is referred to as the aftermath of the crisis, which is when the organization assigns blame, meaning that they look for whom and where the source for the crisis outburst is located. The purpose of this phase is to earn back external trust through a managerial restructuring process (Smith, 1990). Coombs (2007) describes the importance of keeping stakeholders updated during the recovery process, by continuously updating stakeholders about actions taken to correct mistakes, and what is done to avoid a similar crisis from taking place in the future.

When analysing Volkswagens use of social media, the authors will explore how Volkswagen managed the emissions crisis on Facebook and Twitter in each of the crisis phases. Strategies for engaging the audience throughout the three distinct crisis phases will be measured and compared from one phase to another, with the purpose of detecting patterns in Volkswagens communication. The emissions crisis is still on going, however the authors perceive the crisis as being in the post crisis phase after 1st of January 2016, since the company is handling the recovery process but no longer dominating news headlines. The aim is to discover how Volkswagen has taken avail of social media in the pre-crisis phase, event phase, and post-crisis phase, and further discover how these actions have influenced audience's engagement in the different phases.

2.3.5 Situational Crisis Communication Theory

The situational crisis communication (SCCT) theory will be applied as one of the main theories for this thesis, with the aim to uncover the likely reputational threat Volkswagen is exposed to, on the basis of how its stakeholders perceives the emissions crisis. *“Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) provides a mechanism for anticipating how stakeholders will react to a crisis in terms of the reputational threat posed by the crisis”* (Coombs, 2007, p.163). Empirical SCCT research specifies strategies/guidelines, for how managers may utilize crisis response strategies to protect the company’s reputation in the best possible manner. A full apology is not necessarily the best response for every type of crisis, which was assumed in former research. Instead, a company should assess each crisis, and use a situational approach to protect the company’s reputational assets (Coombs, 2007). SCCT derives from attribution theory, which refers to human beings having the need to attribute the cause/reason of a crisis, especially when it appears unexpected and sudden (Weiner, 2006). Emotional reactions follow a crisis, where feelings such as anger or sympathy will evolve, which are the most common emotions described in connection to attribution theory (Coombs, 2007).

Concerning the ethical element of a crisis, an organization should first focus on protecting its stakeholders from harm, before thinking about preserving its own reputation. The authors will use Volkswagens official Facebook and Twitter sites, when mapping out whether Volkswagen shared information about the crisis, with the aim to reduce psychological stress. The uncertainty in a crisis situation tends to lead to psychological stress, which can be mitigated by informing stakeholders as detailed as possible at an early stage (Coombs, 2007). In Volkswagens case, that would be to inform stakeholders about the fact that Volkswagen intentionally manipulated the emissions tests, and reveal information concerning consequences that will affect stakeholders, and actions that will be taken to repair the damages. This can be communicated directly to stakeholders through social media channels. Social media is useful for communicating directly with stakeholders, where consistent and up to date messages should be provided concerning how the crisis is being handled. After communicating the cause of the crisis, corrective actions should be allocated in the next step according to SCCT theory. Corrective actions can lead to the reduction of psychological stress; since such actions can reassure stakeholders’ safety. The final

step is about expressing concerns to the stakeholders (victims) who are already affected by the damages (Coombs, 2007).

“Reputational capital is an organization’s ‘stock of perceptual and social assets – the quality of the relationship it has established with stakeholders and the regard in which the company and brand is held’” (Coombs, 2007, p.164) An organization who possess a strong reputation prior to the crisis, will experience a stronger post crisis reputation. The reason is simply because it has more reputational capital to spend, then it would if the company had a poor reputation prior to the crisis (Coombs 2007).

SCCT outlines strategies for assessing an organizations potential reputational damage following a crisis. This is evaluated through assessing the firm’s attribution to a crisis, following an estimated emotional reaction to it (Coombs, 2007). According to SCCT, the following attributes are the main components that influence organizations’ reputational threat in a crisis situation: *Initial crisis responsibility, crisis history and prior relational reputation* (Coombs, 2007, p.166-167). These attributes will be mapped out in the analysis, with the aim to reveal Volkswagens current situation. This will facilitate the author’s ability to map out which actions are perceived as most suitable for Volkswagen, in order to overcome the emissions crisis.

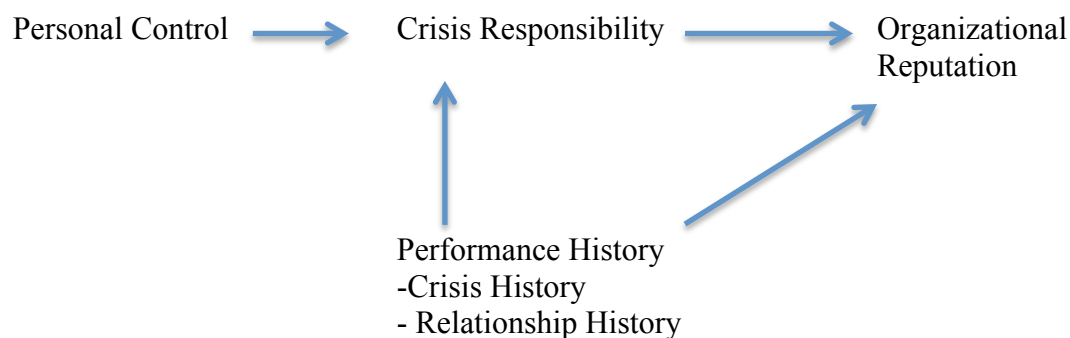


Figure 8: Illustration of three components influencing an organizations reputation (Coombs 2007).

Coombs (2007) outlines the *initial crisis responsibility*, by following the description below. He identifies 12 different crisis types that can be divided into three categories in terms of responsibility: Victim cluster refers to the type of crisis where the organization is a victim and reputational threat is thereby mild. Natural disasters, false rumors, workplace violence, product tampering (external agents causing damage), are crisis types where the organization is also perceived as a victim. Accidental cluster

refers to the type of crisis that the organization deliberately caused upon itself, yet the reputational threat is still moderate. Preventable cluster refers to the type of crisis where the organization intentionally placed people at risk, and took inappropriate actions that violated laws/regulations, leading to severe reputational threat. Human error accidents, human product harm, organizational misdeed with or without injuries, organizational misdeed, management misconduct (violating laws and regulations), are crisis types where the organization deliberately have caused a crisis upon itself. *Crisis history* is the second attribute that will impact the organizations reputation. Crisis history refers to whether the organization has experienced a similar crisis in the past. *Prior relational reputation* is the third attribute that aims to understand how the organization has handled its stakeholders in similar situations (Coombs 2007).

These attributes should be considered before choosing a crisis response strategy. These three attributes together with the crisis response strategy, will impact the organizations reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The SCCT theory is thereby useful to apply in the analysis, by mapping out Volkswagens situation based on the three attributes (crisis history, prior reputational threat, crisis responsibility). Following, the authors will be able to create an understanding of how big impact the emissions crisis will have on the company's reputation, and choose a correct crisis response strategy aligning with the crisis type.

An organization should strive to choose a suitable crisis response strategy when the three following attributes *crisis responsibility*, *crisis history* and *prior relational reputation* are identified. The table below represents the six main crisis response strategies that organizations should avail of (Coombs, 2007).

Crisis Types	Crisis Response Strategies	
Victim Cluster	Deny Crisis Response Strategies	
Natural disaster Rumor Workplace Violence Product tampering/malevolence	Attack the accuser	Crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organization
	Denial	Crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis
	Scapegoat	Crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organization for the crisis
Accidental Cluster	Diminish Crisis Response Strategies	
Challenges Technical-error accidents Technical error product harm	Excuse	Crisis manager minimizes organizational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis
	Justification	Crisis manager minimizes the perceived damage caused by the crisis
Preventable Cluster	Rebuild Crisis Response Strategies	
Human-error accidents Human-error product harm Organizational misdeed with no injuries Organizational misdeed management misconduct Organizational misdeed with injuries	Compensation	Crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims
	Apology	Crisis manager indicates the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness

Figure 9: *Situational Crisis Response Strategies (Coombs, 2007)*

Further research has emphasized on other important factors that an organization should keep in mind when executing crisis communication; timely response, consistent response and active response. Coombs (2015), stresses the importance of the company being the first to report a crisis, in order to reduce reputational threat. Timely response, emphasizes on the fact that the organization should make sure to be the first to report the crisis in media, before anyone else does. Responses should be consistent through all channels, because constantly changing the story makes the story less reliable. The organization should be active in its response strategy, which means that it should respond to every stakeholder's concern throughout any channel at any time. When these elements are met, the organization will have a greater chance to earn back stakeholders trust (Huang, 2008). Later research has proven that interactive open dialogues with stakeholders during a crisis, leads to greater positive emotions towards the company after the crisis (Yang et al., 2010).

The rebuild crisis response strategy is considered the most relevant in Volkswagen's situation, as a consequence from deliberately cheating on emissions tests. An article from Business Insider (2015), announced that Volkswagen has managed the crisis in the best possible way, throughout regular media channels (DeBord, 2015). Volkswagen admitted for intentionally having cheated on emissions tests, and admitted its guilt for the situation. Volkswagen admitting shortly after the emissions

crisis, that the company had been dishonest with government regulators, suppliers, manufacturers and customers. Further on in the analysis, the authors aim to discover how Volkswagen has handled its crisis response strategy on Facebook and Twitter. The authors will use the SCCT framework, to understand whether Volkswagen has applied a proper crisis communication strategy on social media. The authors are aware that SCCT theory is not originally created with the aim to apply the framework on social media. Nevertheless, it is the most relevant existing theory that can be used as a guideline, to how an organization should communicate any crisis situation. The authors perceive the SCCT theory as valuable for this exploratory case study, since it meets a line of crucial elements that crisis managers should identify, before choosing a crisis response strategy.

Critiques concerning crisis communication theories will be outlined below, before the authors move on to outline the World Wide Web phenomenon of the 21st century.

2.3.6 Critiques of Crisis Communication Theories

Firstly, crises are unique events that evolve in their own unexpected manner. Various sources generating crisis communication theory are tied to the way theories simplify and generalize crises (Seeger, 2006). This leads to crisis communication theories, not being as applicable to real life as scholars explain. Crisis communication theories may therefore be used as inspiration and direct organizations towards how they might manage a crisis, more than it being hands on strategy fitting every crisis situation (Sandman, 2006). Another aspect that criticizes crisis communication theories, is that the current theories related to crisis communication, fail to take cultural sensitivity into account. Global corporations such as Volkswagen, may discover that a crisis situation in Europe should be handled in a different manner than in Asia for instance. Culture has an impact on people's behavior, which is important to consider before outlining a crisis communication strategy (Dykeman, 2005). The authors have not considered cultural differences for the purpose of this thesis. This element may therefore be a bias that is not considered, when applying crisis communication theories to this Volkswagen case study.

The end of this chapter, will outline elements that a company should take avail of when building an online brand community, as well as how social media may be used in a business manner and as a crisis communication tool. This section of the theory chapter, will elaborate on the increased importance of utilizing social media when communicating a crisis. Social media is a new phenomenon that has not been incorporated in regular crisis communication theories. Therefore, theories concerning social media and the creation of online brand communities, combined with crisis communication theories, will predominantly build the basis for the analysis in this thesis.

2.4 World Wide Web

The World Wide Web was born in 1990, which is the year when the first web page served on the open Internet. Tim Berners Lee, who invented the Web, realized that it had to be free, unleashed and open for anyone in the world. He addressed the fact that if the Internet had been proprietary and in total control, it would probably not have taken off (Web Foundation, 2015).

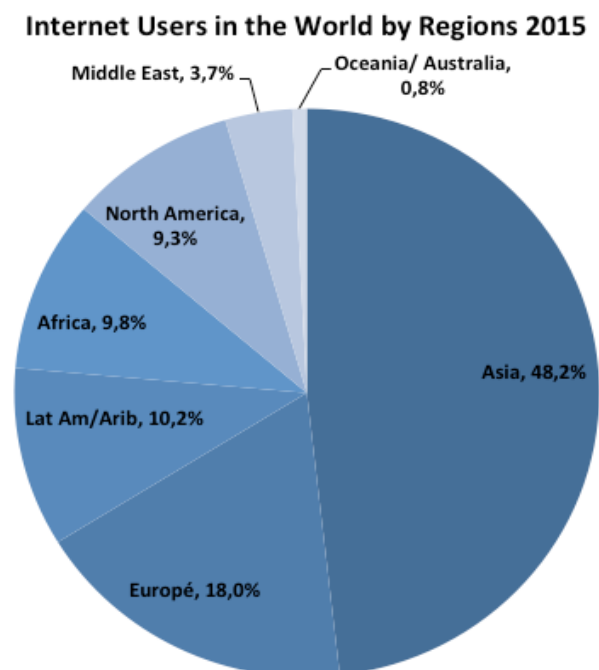


Figure 10: World Wide Web usage in the world divided by regions 2015 (Source: Internet World Stats, 2015)

Web 2.0 refers to the new Internet paradigm that created a new Internet culture, between 2000 and 2004 (Wolcott, 2007). Web 2.0 is characterized by greater user interactivity, open network connectivity and enhanced communication channels. The technology remains the same, but the way web pages are built and utilized, has changed along with greater interactivity and user collaboration (O'Reilly, 2007). Users have more input in the nature and the scope of the content that is shared on the Web today. Web 2.0 basically refers to a change from static Web 1.0, to a more interactive Web. Websites today allow for community-based input, interaction and content sharing (Web Foundation, 2015). User-generated content (UGC) is a term describing that anyone, anywhere in the world can communicate freely on the Web. The combination of the rise of a generation of digital natives (younger age groups with substantial technical knowledge and willingness to engage online), economic drivers (increased availability of tools for creating UGC) and technical drivers (a broader availability of hardware capacity), has made UGC different from what was observed prior to Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Critics of the Web 2.0 demonstrates the fact that it is easy for anyone in the world to affect online content, and as a result this has a major impact on credibility, ethics and legality of content available on the Web today (ibid)

On this basis, the authors understand that anyone has access to Volkswagens social media platforms, and are able to share their opinions concerning the emissions crisis in a freely manner. Along with the rise of digital natives having access to the Internet, it is a given that people from all over the world will express their opinions about Volkswagen on the Internet. As described before, the consequence of the open Internet is that Volkswagen cannot control what is expressed about the company, and latent stakeholders will be able to influence definite stakeholders with opinions that are not necessarily truthful. Another concern is that content that is shared, spreads at a faster speed than prior to the rise of Web 2.0, therefore Volkswagen has to manage its social media platforms in a rightful manner, to control what is being communicated about the company. The more Volkswagen manages to take control of what is expressed about the company on the Web, the more likely the company is to mitigate reputational threat.

2.4.1 Defining Social Media

This section defines characteristics of the term social media - *“Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61).

The term weblog was used long before Web 2.0, later transformed to the word blog. Personal webpages, Encyclopaedia online, and many other online platforms characterized Web 1.0. The increased Internet activity and Internet availability, further created MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004). Along with Web 2.0 and the term UGC, the popularity of Internet content has changed from a static web to blogs, social networking sites, wikis, collaborative projects etc. Content characterizing Web 2.0, is created by several users through collaboration, instead of one single person being in charge of the creation of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms represent a vast part of an era where people connect to a higher extent (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In other words, according to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 is the technical foundation that has developed the term social media, and UGC is the way in which people develop social media content. The term describes media in various forms, available to the public and created by end users. Social media provides the world with an opportunity to communicate more freely. The term social media is based on a two-way interaction, compared to regular media, which provide one-way interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The authors will detect Volkswagens interaction with its social media audience, on the basis of Volkswagens content, shared on Facebook and Twitter in the pre, event and post phases of the crisis. The authors have already developed an impression that Volkswagen managed its social media platforms well prior to the crisis, by interacting regularly with its audience. However, for the purpose of this study, discovering a two-way interaction through monitoring the amount of likes, shares, comments and retweets will be of relevance. It is relevant as it enables the authors to measure engagement between the two parties (Volkswagen and its audience). By analyzing Volkswagens content on its official Facebook and Twitter pages, and measuring the frequency of posts, the authors aim to discover if Volkswagens communication on social media engages its audience. Facebook and Twitter are relevant platforms to

analyze, as they enable the authors to measure social media engagement between the two parties (Volkswagen and its audience).

Since the term social media is broad, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) arranged social media into six different categories; Blogs, Social Networking Sites, Content Communities, Collaborative Project, Virtual Social Worlds. Only Social Networking Sites will be defined below, since this type of social media category is availed of in this thesis (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010):

Social Networking Sites – Enables people to have personal profiles and connect with friends and family through these profiles. The social networking sites applied to this study are Facebook and Twitter, where Volkswagen expresses itself with text, photos and videos. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and MySpace are typical social networking sites. Companies tend to use social networking sites to create online brand communities, where they share product information with videos, pictures and other relevant content. The authors have observed that Volkswagen is mostly active on Facebook and Twitter, and therefore these platforms are considered most relevant for this study.

2.4.2 Social Media in a Business Perspective

Social media allows for organizations to connect with stakeholders at a low cost. Social media platforms have provided companies the opportunity to collect a wide range of customer information, leading to the possibility to tailor marketing and create a value proposition, that meets customer needs to a higher degree (Mayfield, 2008). The authors will further explore what type of information is primarily shared on Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter sites, to discover how the company connects with its audience on social media. Social media is a place where companies look to foster emotional connections with its customer's (Social Media Examiner, 2016). The authors perceive it as vital to create an understanding of how Volkswagen foster emotional connection with its audience, as this may lead to stronger ties between the parties. A strong relationship between Volkswagen and its audience is perceived as beneficial for fostering strong reputation, which is desired by every company.

The rise of Web 2.0 goes against businesses traditional way of influencing stakeholders, because businesses no longer have total control of their own brand image. The reason for this is that consumers interact with each other when they seek product advice and opinions. It is therefore crucial that organizations follow this changing trend (Quinton, 2013). A study from 2010 outlined the fact that 78% of consumers prefer recommendations from other consumers' social media content, and only 14% believe in company ads (Pick, 2015). This information verifies that Volkswagen should strive to be present on social media, as information shared on social media is preferable over regular media. Recommendations from Volkswagens consumers on social media, may influence other consumers. However, social media is not just a promotional marketing heaven; interaction between individuals may also cause harm when the communication spins off at something negative. As Volkswagen is currently in the middle of crisis, the company currently experiences how its audience spreads sentiments that are negatively loaded. Interactivity is the major characteristic of social media, and what distinguishes it from regular media channels. Web 2.0 technologies provide platforms where organizations can distribute large amounts of information globally, and also respond in the fastest and most direct manner (González-Herrero et al., 2008). Volkswagens ability to interact with its audience and provide a crisis response at a fast speed, is one of the most crucial elements that should be in place on Volkswagens social media channels.

2.4.3 Building Successful Online Brand Communities

It is vital to discover strategies Volkswagen has utilized to engage its audience on its online brand communities (Facebook and Twitter), prior to the crisis, as it will create an advantage for the company in the crisis event phase and post crisis phase. The audience is likely to be more receptive to Volkswagens content in the crisis event phase and post crisis phase, if the company has fostered an emotional connection on its online brand communities prior to the crisis. Social media platforms are efficient online brand communities for organizations, making it possible to stay connected with stakeholders at any time. Barriers for entering a company page on social media are low, because it is easy to access through only clicking on a *like* or a *follow* button. Social media provides visual platforms, where users tend to use photos with a text describing the situational context (Habibi et al., 2014). Habibi et al., (2014)

demonstrates why social media content allows for increased interaction, it is because it provides the possibility to like, share and comment on posts. Traditional communications tools do not allow the same amount of interactive engagement, as social media platforms.

Social media *networking sites* have become natural online communities for stakeholders and organizations to join, for communication purposes in the 21st century. Social media audience look for certain traits when they decide to join an online brand community; it has to be entertaining, meet personal social values, and it has to be functional in terms of easy to share information (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). Other crucial elements that should be in place to foster audience engagement, is that content should be fun, exciting, informing, storytelling and supportive of vital causes (Hettler, 2010). Kaplan & Heinlein (2010) stresses the importance of sharing unprofessional and trustworthy content, as it creates a sense of relaxed and a humble environment. When analysing Volkswagens social media content, the authors will search for these elements, in order to discover if Volkswagen uses these elements frequently, to create engagement among its audience.

Common features that reflect all social media sites, despite which categories they belong to are, *conversation, community, connectedness, openness, and participation* (Mayfield, 2008). It is crucial that organizations place the audience in centre of attention, instead of predominantly using the online community as a promotional site (Cova & Pace, 2006). Whether Volkswagens audience is placed in the centre of attention, through sharing content that is of interest to its audience, is a characteristic that the authors will aim to discover. Fournier and Lee (2009), stress the fact that a brand community is not built to primarily serve the organizational needs, rather it strives to serve the needs of the people in it. People seek for emotional support and look for communities where they can cultivate interests and skills. If personal needs in the community are met, then it can actually increase brand awareness. Another important aspect is that organizations should embrace conflicts in their brand communities, instead of neglecting negative comments (Fournier & Lee, 2009).

To sum this up, an organization should primarily strive to meet stakeholder's needs, and foster motivations that lie behind participation on an online brand community. On

the basis of these theories, the authors will discover whether important elements for engaging Volkswagens audience on Facebook and Twitter, are in place in the pre, event and post crisis phase.

2.4.4 Ways to Engage an Audience on Social Media

There are four strategies outlined below, describing how successful brand engagement may be managed. Although communication requires two parties for it to take place, one of them needs to take the lead - the consumer or the company (Kozinets, 2014). The four strategies for creating successful social brand engagement are as following:

<i>Customer Care</i>	Monitor social media to find customer complaints, in order to prevent “forest fires”. The customer care strategy proves to the customer that the organization cares, and thereby it strengthens the relationship.
<i>Co-creation</i>	Collect ideas from consumers, a strategy also known as crowdsourcing. Using ideas created by consumers lead them to feel excitement and authenticity, as well as it provides insights to what consumers wants.
<i>Communicate and Listen</i>	Understand consumers’ on-going conversations that they have with each other concerning the brand. This can be revealed through collecting content through big data. Increased intimacy between the consumer and the organization can evolve through creating enhanced consumer understanding.
<i>Communication and Sharing</i>	Organizations should share exciting and stimulating messages that lead to consumers wanting to share them with each other. Content that is shared between consumers often have an increased promotional affect.

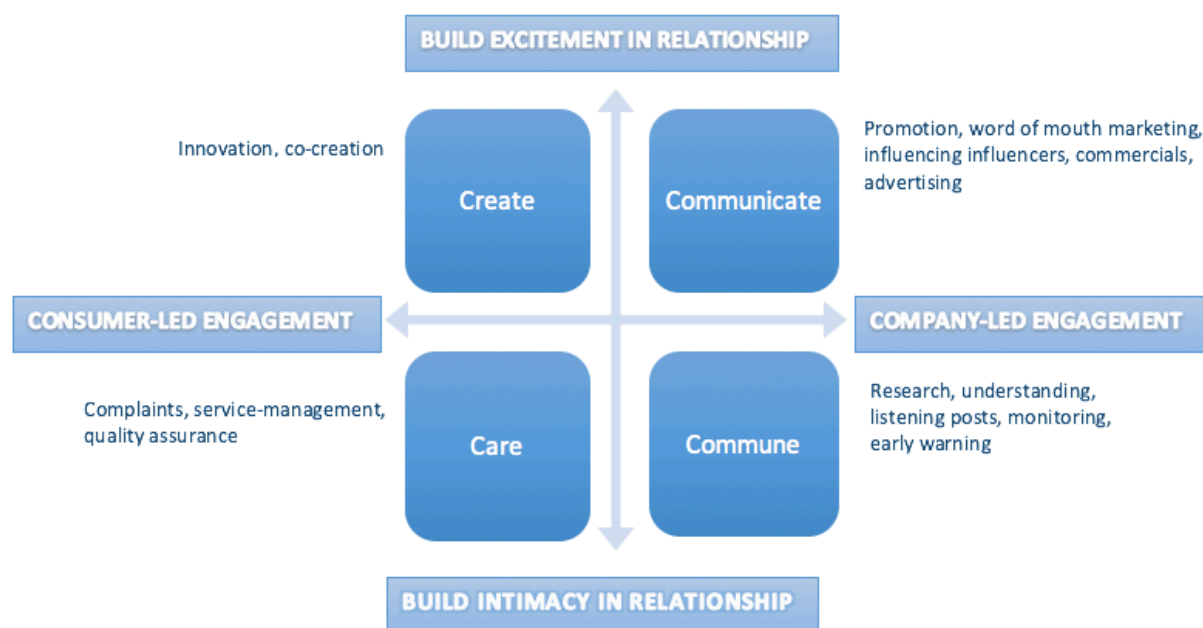


Figure 11: Strategies to leverage social brand engagement (Source: Kozinets, 2014)

Social media channels provide the opportunity for organizations to engage with their customers/audience on their own terms. Content shared on social media platforms should meet the purpose for entertaining, informing, educating or providing content about company insights. Consumer engagement is known as an on-going interaction between the company and the consumer; it enhances brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty. Consumers are motivated to engage online, as they wish to increase knowledge about the brand or a certain product (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005).

The way content is constructed also affects level of engagement, content that includes for instance a link to another website, is perceived as more interactive than content including only text (ibid). Asking questions and providing links, act as highly interactive content, because this pushes the audience to engage (DeVries et al., 2012). People also tend to use social networking sites for information seeking reasons. When information regarding the product is provided, the audience is more likely to participate and consume content, because people tend to have positive attitudes towards information (Taylor et al., 2011). Entertainment is another important element that should be in place; content that is perceived as fun, exciting, cool and flashy have positive effects on the audience (Taylor et al., 2011). Other interesting findings

provided by DeVries et al. (2012), is that although posting questions is an interactive strategy, it may have a negative effect on number of likes. Including links may have a negative effect on number of comments, as it navigates people away from the brand site (ibid). Negative comments, should not necessarily be perceived as bad for the brand community site, as it is proven that both negative and positive comments enhance general interest. Brand fans wish to engage in vivid discussions, both positive and negative (DeVries et al., 2012). The authors will examine if certain elements are in place, by exploring how Volkswagens content is created, in terms of questions being asked, and whether links are added as additional informing content. The authors will also strive to detect if Volkswagen is neglecting negativity on Facebook and Twitter.

When content is entertaining, the audience is more likely to return to the site again, and the audience is more motivated to participate in conversations (Raney et al., 2003). People who engage on social media channels, usually do so because of the need to belong to a community (Brodie et al., 2011). Community members, initiate discussions in connection to the brand, and share other information of interest (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). According to Jakste & Kuvykaite (2012) learning motivates an audience to engage, as they seek to acquire new knowledge and skills. When an organization acknowledges its audience, it provides them with a sense of belonging, which leads to increased engagement (ibid). Below are some main elements that organizations should have in mind when engaging an audience on social media (Sklar, 2013; Pressault, 2014; Fieseler & Bucher, 2015). These are traits that the authors will look for when analysing Volkswagens content on Facebook and Twitter:

- Find a brand ambassador who drives your audience to engage.
- Allow for a free flow of content sharing.
- Create a personal communication flow with your audience. Make sure to reply to both negative and positive comments. Missed opportunities for replying to negative comments may damage the brand reputation.
- Creative content motivates consumers to engage, for instance games and competitions are perceived as playful elements.
- Ask questions that enable conversations to start.

- Include links that enables the audience to collect additional information.
- Ask customers to share their stories relating to your product.

In the analysis, the authors will strive to discover whether Volkswagen has implemented any of these engaging elements on Facebook and Twitter. Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter sites are the two social networking sites where the highest level of activity was found. Hence, these will be the main channels, where the authors will aim to detect whether elements are in place for actively engaging Volkswagens audience.

2.4.5 Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg's (founder of Facebook) vision for Facebook was to "*give people the power to share and make the world open and connected*" (Facebook, 2016). Facebook is defined as a free social networking site that allows people to interact with each other through sharing photos, messages, videos etc. (Facebook, 2016). A study indicates that Facebook meets two human primary needs; the need to belong and the need for self-presentation (Eler, 2012). Facebook is the market leading social media platform, and enjoyed a total of 1.55 billion monthly active users by 2016 (Statista, 2016).

Facebook reaches out to a broad audience when utilized in a correct manner during a crisis; Facebook can be a tool for avoiding aggravation of a crisis, and for mitigating reputational threat. Since Facebook is a channel that reaches out to a broad audience, it is crucial for Volkswagen to be present there during the emissions crisis. Being present on Facebook enables Volkswagen to reach out to a broad audience and answer to concerns. Since Facebook may exacerbate a crisis when poorly utilized in a crisis situation (Ki & Nekmat, 2014), it becomes vital to manage Facebook as rightful as possible, to mitigate reputational threat. It is proven that a majority of messages posted on Facebook in relation to a crisis, does not match optimal response strategies in accordance to SCCT. Another observation that is carried out by Ki & Nekmat (2014) is that organizations often fail to interact with their stakeholders during a crisis, as messages that are posted on Facebook mainly derive from the audience. The authors will aim to detect, what strategy Volkswagen took avail of when offering its initial crisis response on Facebook.

2.4.6 Twitter

Twitter is a platform that enables creation of virtual consumer environments, where online communities are created around people's passions and opinions (Shively, 2014; Twitter, 2016¹). By December 31 2015, Twitter had 320 million users, with an amount of more than 500 million tweets being shared every day (Twitter, 2016²). Ever since its launch in June 2006, Twitter has served users with the mission - *"To give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers"* (Twitter, 2016¹). The concept of Twitter allows users to share information, known as "tweets", with their followers. A tweet refers to any type of message containing videos, photos or links, and no more than 140 characters of text. The amount of text a person is able to share on Twitter is fairly short, but is perceived as the ideal length for status updates (Twitter, 2016³). The concept of Twitter is referred as - *"your window to the world. Get real-time updates about what matters to you"* (Twitter, 2016²). Twitter offers direct access to whomever one wishes to connect with. Twitter also enables linking a tweet to a press release, or to "retweet" other peoples' tweets, by forwarding a tweet to followers (Twitter, 2016²). The symbol # is used as hashtag, which people place in front of important keywords (without spaces), to categorize a tweet. Hashtags enables people to get easy access to messages on Twitter Search. When clicking on a hashtag, one gets access to all other messages with the same hashtag. Hashtags are also used when creating messages on other social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest etc.). Twitter also allows for people to comment, however, comments on Twitter will not be investigated in this study (Twitter, 2016³). Using hashtags and retweeting messages, offers the possibility for a two-way interaction on Twitter.

A study by Kerkhof et al. (2011) indicated that people are more likely to accept a message that is tweeted, than a message in a newspaper article. The reason for this is because people perceive Twitter as an open communication platform, which signals a higher level of willingness to solve a problem (Kerkhof et al., 2011). People perceive organizations that use social media platforms as more human, and perceive these as more dedicated to help stakeholders solve a crisis (Kelleher, 2009). Twitter storms refer to a sudden spike in the activity level of a certain topic. The authors will observe whether any particular hashtags have caused Twitter storms, during the emissions crisis. A Twitter storm often begins when someone uses a certain hashtag

characterizing a topic; this follows by tweets spreading on the Internet at a fast speed, and by people reusing the same hashtag in their tweets, to refer to the same topic (Twitter, 2016³).

2.4.7 Social Media as a Crisis Communication Tool

Along with the new paradigm of Web 2.0, social media has taken over a major role in the way crisis communication should be incorporated in a company's strategy. *"Social media is immediate (instant sharing), ubiquitous (hundreds of millions of people use social media), and available (anyone with an Internet connection can access it)"* (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Information that emerge online concerning a crisis is difficult to predict, and can take sudden turns, as social media both accelerates a crisis, and at the same time is an efficient tool for mitigating reputational threat during a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Social media has triggered news to travel faster than before, it is therefore a given that social media will play a critical role in a company's crisis response strategy. An organization should consider social media platforms, as new opportunities for exploring a two-way interaction, between the stakeholders and the organization. The authors will aim to discover if and how Volkswagen has utilized social media after the crisis outbreak, as a two-way interaction channel with its stakeholders (audience), since this may help the company mitigate reputational threat. There should be an ongoing proactive discussion between the public and the organization beforehand, during and following a crisis (Perry et al., 2003); social media provides effective channels for executing such a strategy. This aligns with regular stakeholder theory, stating that organizations that have a proactive engagement with its stakeholders, are likely to foster stronger connections with them, which in turn leads to reputational goodwill (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009). Thus, it is interesting to discover if Volkswagen has handled social media channels in a proactive manner, since Volkswagen as most companies, is likely to aim for reputational goodwill and loyal customers.

Conway et al. (2007), state that social media may be perceived as a risk in a crisis situation, as stakeholders who usually hold low power are able to influence other stakeholders, since they can spread information without gatekeepers withholding them from doing so. Social media users seek for interactive communication to reduce uncertainty during a crisis; interactive mediums are therefore preferable over static

ones (Procopio & Procopio, 2007). Hence, it is important for organizations to respond quickly once a crisis occurs. Social media channels should be perceived as an opportunity, crucial for companies to take advantage of, because if information from the company is absent, journalists and stakeholders are likely to spread sources of inaccurate information (Fjeld & Molesworth, 2006). The authors will detect whether Volkswagen has utilized social media channels (Facebook and Twitter), as two-way interaction channels during the emissions crisis, as this may prevent the risk from other sources influencing stakeholders.

It is proven that people's social media usage increases during a crisis (Pew Research Center, 2006). Hence, the authors will discover whether Volkswagens social media users increased their engagement once the emissions crisis took place. Often stakeholders perceive content posted on social media to be more credible than what is posted on traditional media during a crisis (Procopio & Procopio, 2007). Thus, it is crucial to discover if Volkswagen has answered to audiences' comments concerning the crisis, as the audience may perceive information on social media to be more truthful than information on regular media channels. During a crisis, social media platforms serve as communication platforms for stakeholders, and content that is shared remains beyond control of organizations. Tools such as chat boards, email links, feedback forms, and audiovisual resources can help organizations foster a two-way interaction, and thereby manage conflicts and maintain relationships during a crisis situation (Capriotti & Morieno, 2007). Social media offer channels where the public comes together during and after a crisis, to provide each other with emotional support through sharing information (Choi & Lin, 2009). It is therefore a given that Volkswagen integrates social media as a crisis management tool, and that the only question Volkswagen should have in mind is *how* social media should be integrated, and not *if* it should be integrated (Jin et al., 2014).

An example of why leaving social media out of the company's crisis communication strategy can be a crisis in itself will be demonstrated below. This is a vital example, illustrating how a global company took advantage of social media in an incorrect manner.

An example of social media being poorly utilized in a crisis situation

A video of employees at Domino's Pizza defacing a pizza and sandwiches, was posted on YouTube in 2009, and went viral in a couple of minutes. The company experienced how damaging social media platforms can be to a company's reputation. Domino's made a mistake when the company decided to not respond to the YouTube video for 24 hours after it went viral. Instead of believing that interactive communication could mitigate reputational threat, Domino's assumed that any response would add fuel to the problem. This is proven to not be a winning strategy in the digital world we live in today. Viral posts have raised the stakes for crisis communication and brand protection. Overnight the video reached a quarter of a million views, and Domino's shortly changed course by responding with an apology. The CEO used the video to thank the community for bringing the employees misbehaviour to his attention (showing empathy), and explained what the company would do to further deal with the situation. This way of answering to a crisis is a classic crisis management strategy, communicated on social media. An important lesson that was learned from this mistake is that companies should run towards the light, not against it. A company has to adjust to the rapid evolving digital environment (Levick, 2009). *"Social computing is not a fad. Nor is it something that will pass you or your company by. Gradually, social computing will impact almost every role, at every kind of company, in all parts of the world"* (Mayfield, 2008). A main difference for communicating a crisis on social media vs. regular media, is that conversations are interactive, and managers are able to engage individuals in conversations. An organizations ability to survive a crisis depends on its ability to respond at a fast speed (Benoit, 1997). The authors will strive to detect if Volkswagen has used social media channels to rapidly handle the crisis, as this example illustrates that the only way to handle social media in a crisis, is to fire back on social media and avoid immunity.

Strategies for utilizing social media during a crisis

In connection to the SCCT theory, the organization should first instruct stakeholders on how to physically deal with a crisis, followed by expressing concern and sympathy (Coombs, 2007). The more timely, consistent, and honest manner an organization manages to communicate this information, the more likely the organization is to effectively predict levels of reputational threat, and thereby be able to mitigate it

(Huang, 2008). Communication platforms such as social media become strategically important when organizations respond to a crisis. It increases the speed for sharing information between the company and the stakeholders, by enabling real time dialogues between the parties (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). An important aspect for organizations to keep in mind, in order to maintain a contingent interactive conversation with stakeholders, is that conversations should be intertwined and cumulative, and messages should be interchangeable (Walther et al., 2005). The more organizations welcome and engage their audience to participate in conversations, the more likely it is that the audience will feel a sense of closeness to the organization. It will be vital to detect if Volkswagen has welcomed its audience to conversations about the emissions crisis, instead of avoiding concerns from the audience. It will be interesting to discover if Volkswagens strategy for handling social media in the crisis event phase, has affected audience engagement in the posts crisis phase. An interactive strategy is likely to result in favorable attitudes toward the organization, which results in positive word of mouth, as attitudes towards the organization become more favorable (Yang et al, 2010).

Ki & Nekmat (2014) conducted a study for the purpose of understanding companies' use of social media in a crisis situation; it was based on a content analysis of all fortune 500 companies Facebook pages. Providing justification (apology/compensation) is the SCCT strategy that should be executed when the crisis type is intentional, meaning that the level of accommodation is high. Despite this, the outcome from the research proved that a majority of messages in relation to a crisis posted on Facebook did not match optimal response strategies, in accordance to SCCT. It was revealed that companies offered a full apology when they actually belonged in the low responsibility/victim cluster, and also the other way around; companies provided excuses or a scapegoat strategy when they actually belonged in the intentional crisis cluster (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). Another important aspect that was taken from the research, was that organizations did little to participate in a two-way interaction with their audience. Messages posted on companies' Facebook pages during a crisis, mainly derived from the audience. In other words, organizations scored poorly on the aspect of building a two-way interaction with their audience on Facebook. A significant finding from the research was that a more positive tone from the audience was present, when companies responded to their audiences' messages

(Ki & Nekmat, 2014). Based on this, the authors will further aim to explore how Volkswagen has responded to audiences' messages on social media, during the event phase and post phase of the emissions crisis.

To conclude this section, the authors have discovered that organizations should utilize social media as a crisis communication tool, because it provides the ability to respond in a more timely and interactive manner. Nevertheless, organizations should execute an SCCT strategy in the right manner on social media platforms, meaning that the response should be consistent with the crisis type. Another important aspect that should be considered, is that organizations should work to build a two-way interaction with their audience, by responding consistently to comments posted by the audience (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). The authors will further on, look for these traits in the content analysis that will be conducted in connection to Volkswagens emissions crisis, on Facebook and Twitter.

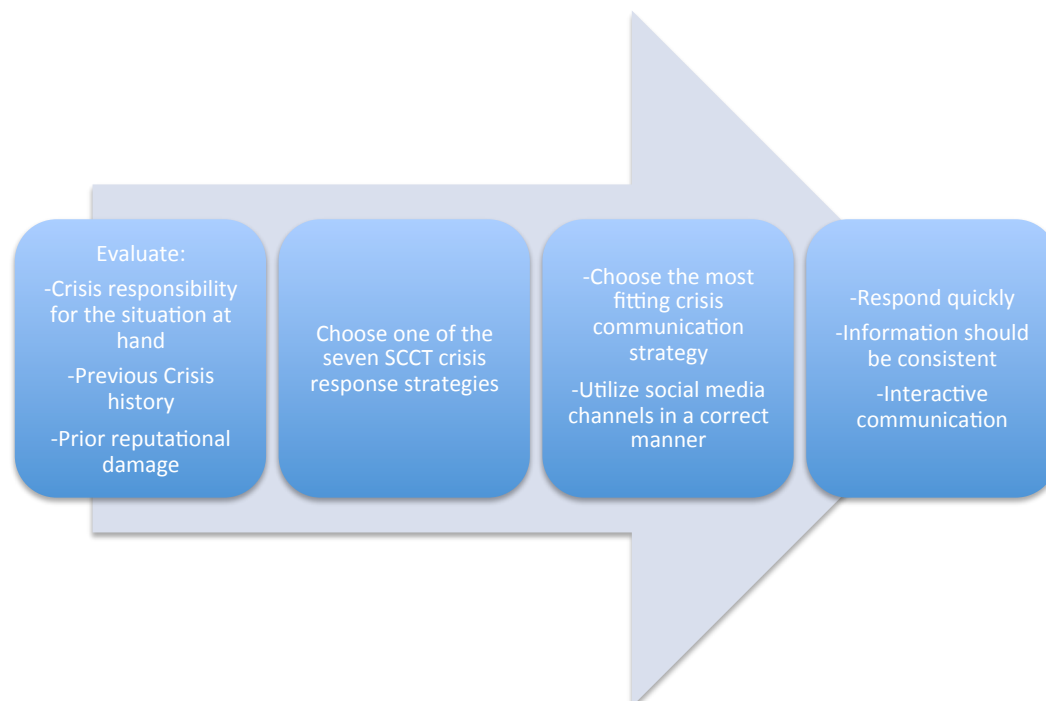


Figure 12: An overview for incorporating crisis communication theory and social media (Coombs, 2007)

2.5 Theoretical Reflections

This section will outline the theoretical reflections, by verifying how the applied theories are connected, and why these are relevant for this study. Overall, there are four main areas that the authors define as essential for answering the problem formulation and research questions: The concept of stakeholders, crisis communication, crisis management and finally, the emergence of Web 2.0.

The stakeholder concept is utilized to map out stakeholders that are relevant for this study, and emphasizes on how stakeholders should be managed by Volkswagen in connection to the emissions crisis. Crisis communication and crisis management theories emphasize how a crisis should be managed, to mitigate reputational threat. It has been vital to map out the different crisis phases, for the purpose of understanding how the three distinct phases are linked, and how social media should be handled in each of the phases. The SCCT framework is used to map the initial response strategy most suitable for Volkswagens situation, from the basis of why the crisis has evolved, how Volkswagen has previously handled its stakeholders, and by indicating if the company has experienced a similar crisis prior to the emissions crisis. What distinguishes the use of these theories in this study, compared to studies concerning crisis communication before the 21st century, is the emergence of the Web 2.0. Along with the emergence of Web 2.0, there is a change in how news travels and how news is created. Today, stakeholders themselves are able to emerge user-generated content and share it freely on the Web.

The authors are aware that the selected theories are not initially created for applying to social media; nevertheless, it is necessary to have certain guidelines supporting crisis management on social media. Although a theory such as SCCT is not created for applying on social media, scholars (Ki & Nekmat, 2014) have utilized this theory as a framework when demonstrating how social media should be handled during a crisis. Crisis communication theories are created as general guidelines concerning how to handle any type of crisis, which makes it applicable for this study. Stakeholder theory has not been the focus of this study, yet it is essential to verify that the term stakeholder has been referred to as social media *audience* in this study. Social media

audience may in this study be anyone; latent, expectant and definite stakeholders, and they all influence each other's opinions.

There is no single theory that alone can answer the problem formulation, and therefore these theories combined are more suitable for finding insightful answers to the problem formulation at hand, than one theory alone. The authors will weigh the various theories differently, by placing more emphasize on those theories that are considered most vital for developing answers to the research questions, and finally bring an answer to the problem formulation.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological choices that were guided by the problem formulation - *"How has Volkswagen used social media as a crisis communication tool?"* The chapter is divided into four sections, which together depict the entire research process in four steps. The first step outlines the reasons for, and consequences of adopting the research philosophy pragmatism, together with the implications of undertaking an abductive reasoning approach. The second step follows, by explaining the choice of conducting an exploratory single case study. Further on, the applied mixed methods for data collection and for conducting a conventional content analysis will be outlined. Credibility and quality of the conducted research, in terms of validity and reliability, will be considered in the final step, through highlighting semantic and sampling validity and describing the steps taken for increasing reliability of this study.

3.1 Research approach

Developing a research approach is all about identifying factors that influence the research design. The research philosophy and the reasoning approach are the underpinning elements that further guide the study, as the research approach will help the researcher further decide *"how best to encapsulate and communicate the measurements or understandings"* (Malhotra et al., 2012, p.8).

3.1.1 Research Philosophy: Pragmatism

The problem statement guided the methodological choices for this study. The authors did not undertake one specific ontology or epistemology, which made pragmatism considered as the appropriate research philosophy to adopt in this study. The selected view of ontology and epistemology varied through this research process, which enabled the authors to develop answers to the problem statement, without any philosophical limitations (Saunders et al., 2012). The ontology in this thesis derived from individuals interacting, together with the artefacts in their environment, which constructed the reality. This thesis aims to look for patterns in Volkswagens use of social media in the pre, event and post phase of the emissions crisis. Social media is constructed by people's opinions and is therefore a complex phenomenon, since the content is dependent on the context and is thereby in constant change. Hence, the authors did not perceive the world as one entity, and the reality was regarded as multiple (Saunders et al., 2012; Barab & Squire, 2004). In regards to the epistemology of pragmatism, *"observable phenomena and/or subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge"* (Saunders et al, 2012, p.140). In order for the selected point of view to be truthful or real, it does not necessarily need to agree with the real world; nevertheless, it needs to be realistic and applicable to real life context (Barab & Squire, 2004). The authors integrated various angles of knowledge in order to enhance the interpretation of data. Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods was therefore considered useful for this study, in order to gain objectivity in the findings (Saunders et al., 2012). A qualitative conventional content analysis, with category development, allowed the authors to quantify findings, in the last step of Mayrings' inductive categorization approach. This will be elaborated in section 3.4.2.

The subject at hand is in constant change, since the authors are studying the use of social media as a crisis communication tool; people's reactions towards a crisis is difficult to predict, and may constantly change. What is posted on social media is context dependent, and derives mainly from subjective opinions. Therefore, the authors perceive social media content as being dependent of the context, which in this case study derives from Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter platforms. It was therefore appropriate to vary the ontology and epistemology throughout the research, assuming that no philosophical stances were more right or wrong than others. In this thesis the researchers adopted a variation in ontology and epistemology, as both

subjective and objective views were taken. Subjective when choosing the case, and determining the categories for gathering content. Objective as patterns could be graphically presented by quantifying findings. The outcome that derived from not undertaking any specific epistemology or ontology provided the ability to consider Volkswagens communication on social media, from various perspectives. The research philosophy undertaken in this thesis, brought advantages to this research, as ontological or epistemological approaches did not limit the findings.

3.1.2 Reasoning Approach: Abductive

An abductive reasoning approach was chosen for this study, since this approach allowed the researchers to move between the deductive and inductive approach. The authors first applied a deductive reasoning approach, by outlining a theoretical framework deriving from existing theories. Further on, an inductive approach was applied, as empirical data was collected and analysed by using a content analysis, which provided the authors with new insights of the social media phenomenon (Kuada, 2012). The authors aimed to link the empirical findings that derived from induction, to the theoretical framework obtained on the basis of deduction (Easterby-Smith, 2012). In abduction *“data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, and locate these in a conceptual framework”* (Saunders et al, 2012, p.145).

The authors desired to take an inductive approach, leading to the choice of collecting content from Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter sites, for the purpose of further building on the existing theory. Since this study is based on a new field, lacking literature related to social media as a crisis communication tool, an inductive approach was preferable as it allowed the authors to gather findings, which further developed new insights (Kuada, 2012). There were no predefined categories in the inductive categorization textual scanning process, which made it possible to freely discover patterns from the analysed data; this aligns with an inductive approach, allowing new insights to emerge from data (Saunders et al., 2012). To analyse findings, theory within the research field was utilized to further support the findings from the content analysis; this aligns with a deductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.2 Research design

The research design outlines a framework for the research, as it specifies necessary considerations that have to be taken into account in order to structure the research process, to answer the problem formulation. Hence, the aim of the research design is to ensure that the research will be conducted thoroughly (Malhotra et al., 2012). This section outlines the authors' choice for applying a single case study as a research strategy, and the reason for applying an exploratory design.

3.2.1 Research Strategy: Case Study

Whether the selected strategy develops answers to the problem at hand, is vital for the selection of research strategy. This thesis was carried out as a single-case study based on Volkswagens emissions crisis that took place 18th of September 2015. According to Stake (2000, p. 435) *“a case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case.”* A case study is defined as *“an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context...”* (Yin, 2014, p.13-14). A single case study strategy was selected for the aim of obtaining an in-depth understanding, of the role of social media, in Volkswagens emissions crisis. A case study is applicable when the researcher lacks control over events, or when questions concerning *why* and *how* are examined (Yin, 1981). No crisis is similar, due to distinctive factors that influence a crisis (Coombs, 2007), and a crisis is often contemporary, because one crisis tends to be forgotten once a new crisis occur. Crises are difficult to predict and also difficult to control, which is why a single case study is applicable to this study, to gather insights to how social media has been used as a crisis communication tool, in one specific case. The reason for applying this strategy is that it aligns with the authors' desire to find answers to, *how* Volkswagen used social media in the prior, event and post phases of the emissions crisis.

Yin (2014) states that the unit a research will centre around is a crucial to consider when a case study is selected. In this study, the Facebook and Twitter pages were the selected units to be further analysed, on the basis of Volkswagens emissions crisis.

Single-case studies have received criticism for not being sufficient for scientific generalizations (Yin, 2014). However, the authors conclude that choosing a single

case study strategy was appropriate for the aim of this thesis, as the authors merely intended to discover Volkswagens particular use of social media, in the three distinct phases of the emissions crisis.

3.2.2 Research purpose

The aim of this thesis was to explore a field of study, where knowledge concerning the selected topic was limited. This study was therefore based on an exploratory design (Saunders et al., 2012). The purpose of this exploratory case study was to obtain new insights, and clarify current knowledge, that the authors possessed concerning the importance for Volkswagen to utilize social media for communicating with its stakeholders, in connection to the emissions crisis. Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter content was explored in the prior, event and post phases of the crisis, and the reactions the content received from Volkswagens followers in terms of likes, comments, retweets and shares. This was conducted through analysing posts by using an inductive categorization development, in a conventional content analysis. Adopting an exploratory design allowed the authors to further explore the topic, and to achieve an in-depth understanding of the social media phenomenon (Malhotra et al., 2012).

3.3 Collecting the Empirical Data

The purpose of this section is to outline methods that were used to collect the empirical data. According to Blumberg et al., (2008), gathering empirical evidence to support data to answer the research question, is one of the main concerns in a research process. The authors will use this section to explain the data collection methods that were utilized to collect empirical data from Facebook and Twitter. A qualitative approach towards data collection was primarily taken. However, the amount of collected data was big, as 514 posts from Facebook and Twitter were collected. First, qualitative methods were applied to identify patterns in Volkswagens communication, which was conducted through dividing content in various categories. Further on, the authors desired to investigate Volkswagens audience engagement, by quantifying likes, shares/retweets and comments. Thereby, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was applied. Applying a mixed methods research approach is suggested within pragmatism, as this combination provides the researchers with the best understanding towards the problem being researched, and for gaining objectivity

in findings (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.3.1 Methods for Data Collection: Qualitative Research

By collecting and observing Volkswagens content on social media, a qualitative method was merely availed of when collecting data. Qualitative research is defined as *“an unstructured, primarily exploratory design based on small samples, intended to provide depth, insight and understanding”* (Malhotra et al, 2012, p. 187). This aligns with the purpose of this study; to obtain a broader understanding of how Volkswagens used social media as a crisis communication tool. However, the sample size was rather big, as 514 posts were collected. Yet, the purpose was to discover patterns in what was communicated in the broad sample of posts, explaining the qualitative nature of the collected data. Furthermore, qualitative methods are suitable for the research philosophy of pragmatism, as this allowed the authors to collect qualitative data from Facebook and Twitter, without any epistemological or ontological guidelines limiting the findings. As will be outlined in section 3.4, the last step in Mayrings (2000) inductive categorization model, allowed the authors to present the results through quantifying findings. This was achieved by creating graphs, and calculating the average audience engagement during three distinct crisis phases. The authors believe that applying quantitative methods improved reliability in the findings that derived from the collected data. This was accomplished by organizing findings related to engagement in graphs, and thereby enabled the authors to view the results objectively.

3.3.2 Facebook and Twitter Posts

Qualitative methods for data collection enabled the authors to investigate social media channels, to obtain a more thorough understanding of Volkswagens social media content. The purpose was to get an overview of Volkswagens social media activity, and the audience's reactions.

Facebook posts were collected and analysed within the period from January 2015 until the 10th of April 2016, whereas the timeframe for including Twitter posts was from June 2015 until the end of March 2016. These periods were chosen as the selected timeframes were considered to be relevant in order to seek for patterns in the phases of pre, event and post crisis. Because Volkswagen did not publish content as

frequently on Facebook as on Twitter, collecting posts from the beginning of the year was necessary, in order to gain a holistic picture of Volkswagens communication on Facebook. The timeframe from January 2015 to 18th of September 2015 was considered as *prior to the crisis*, from 18th of September to 1st of January 2016 was considered the *crisis event phase*, and from 1st of January 2016 to 31st of March 2016 was considered the *post crisis* phase. Every published post by Volkswagen within the selected timeframe was placed in a coding scheme (appendix 9.1 and 9.2). This facilitated a further analysis of Volkswagens published content, and to what extent the various categories engaged Volkswagens audience. Posts published by Volkswagen were merely included in the data collection. Comments from the audience were not covered, since this study aims to map out patterns in Volkswagens communication. Engagement was measured in terms of likes, comments, retweets and shares, and will be further elaborated on in section 3.4.3. The authors applied the same procedure for collecting posts from both Facebook and Twitter. In total, 112 posts from Facebook and 402 posts from Twitter were collected. An overview of the posts can be found in appendix 9.1 and 9.2.

3.3.3 Secondary Data

The posts published on Facebook and Twitter were not created for the purpose of this study, and is considered secondary data, as the posts existed prior to this research (Malhotra et al., 2012). Hence, this thesis has primarily availed of secondary data. Except from the published Facebook and Twitter posts that were examined, secondary data in this study also derived from online research. A widespread use of approved sources such as; academic journals, articles, books, relevant press releases concerning the emissions crisis and reports (i.e. annual reports and company's own pages), were availed of. Saunders et al. (2012), highlight the importance of using secondary data as this enables the researchers to gather information for the purpose of outlining the problem or subject at hand. The advantage of using secondary data, in this study, was its ability to provide the authors with contextual insights for the subject. Also, because Volkswagen does not provide students with interviews or additional information, the authors realized that secondary data provided this research with fundamental insights that could not be obtained from other sources. The authors are aware of existing biases as the data applied for this research was created for other purposes.

3.4 Analyzing Data

Independently of the chosen method, the process of analysing data aims to reduce the amount of collected text, by identifying underlying meanings and creating categories. This will assist the researchers to stay true to the text, and thereby reliability can be achieved (Patton, 2002).

3.4.1 Content Analysis

To complete this research, a content analysis was conducted to reveal patterns, and further obtain an understanding of how Volkswagen used Facebook and Twitter in the three distinct phases of the emissions crisis. Krippendorff (2013, p.4) defines a content analysis, without further specifying the depth of analysis, as *“a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use”*. Malhotra et al. (2012, p. 307), state that *“content analysis should be classified as a quantitative technique based upon classifying and counting”*. This implies that by reducing and coding the data, a content analysis should be considered as a quantitative method. However, a content analysis is also a qualitative research method, conducted for the purpose of investigating various communication manners, which is contrary to behaviour that is directly observable (Malhotra et al., 2012). Krippendorff (2013) confirms that a content analysis can be both quantitative and qualitative, as both methods are required to thoroughly analyse text. Applying a content analysis for this study was perceived valuable, because of its ability to investigate empirical data constructed independently from the problem formulation, as the data was originally created for other intentions (Krippendorff, 2013). The authors operated under the assumption of a content analysis being both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative, since it thoroughly explores the actual meanings that lay behind the textual context. Quantitative, because of its availability of reducing and coding data for further quantification. The main purpose of a content analysis is to use guidelines from existing theory to reduce, simplify and structure the data that is collected (Malhotra et al, 2012). This will be outlined in the next section.

3.4.2 Analysing Data: Coding and Categorization

A qualitative, conventional content analysis allowed the authors to develop categories inductively. According to Hsieh & Shannon (2003, p. 1279) the *“conventional content*

analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon... This type of design is usually appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited". What characterises this method is that the researchers did not use preconceived categories, but instead allowed categories to emerge from the data (social media content) (Kondracki et al., 2002). It will thus be necessary to have certain guidelines for conducting the content analysis, to obtain objective and trustworthy findings (Mayring, 2000). The authors conducted the content analysis in coherence with previous research that has conducted a qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Mayrings (2000) inductive category development approach, to a conventional content analysis, was selected for analysing the empirical data, as there were no previous related studies concerning Volkswagens use of Facebook and Twitter as crisis communication tools.

As mentioned in section 3.2.2, the units analysed for this study derived from Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter content. Content that derived from Volkswagen was examined to gain an understanding of how the company engaged with its audience, and how the audience reacted to the published content. Coding was used to break the collected data into smaller parts, with the purpose of further developing categories. Mayrings' (2000) inductive category development was followed as the figure below displays.

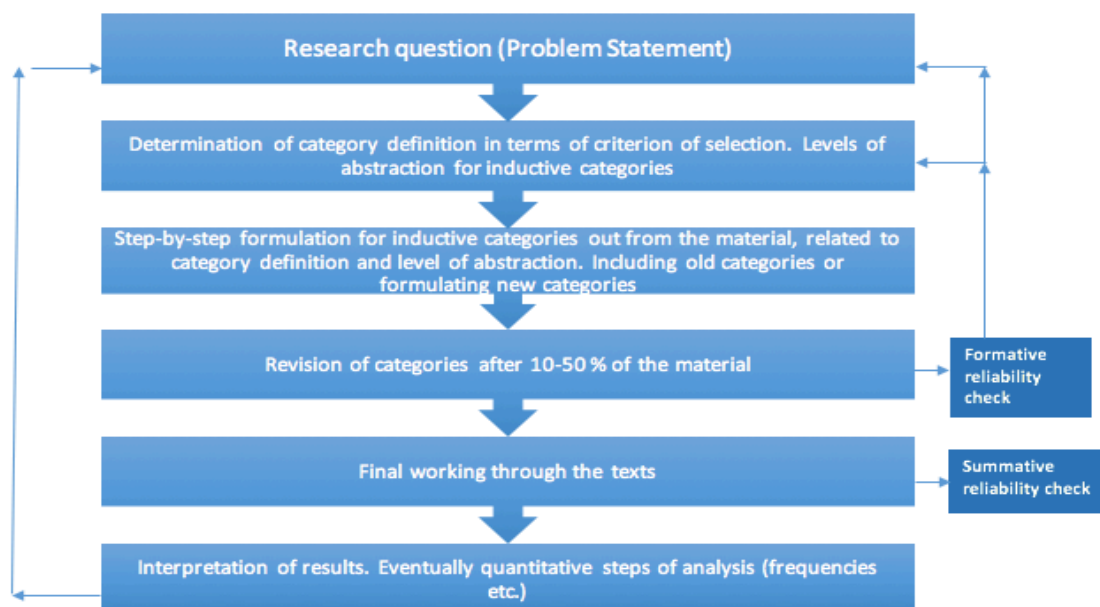


Figure 13: Step model of inductive category development (Mayring, 2000)

First, the authors divided the posts in two separate coding schemes, one for Facebook and one for Twitter (appendix 9.1; appendix 9.2). Numerous categories were developed, before the authors decided which of the identified categories were predominant for further selecting key categories (outlined in 4.1). By following Mayrings' inductive category development guidelines, the 56 first posts from Facebook and the 201 first posts from Twitter were coded again, and categories were modified (formative reliability check). At this point, an inter-coder agreement between the two coders was conducted. This will be further elaborated in section 3.5. Once the formative reliability check was conducted, the authors continued the process, coding and gathering the remaining posts. Once all posts were categorized, the authors executed a final summative reliability check to verify that the selected categories corresponded. None of the categories were considered necessary to discard. The authors could further on develop an understanding of the results by discovering patterns in Volkswagens content and measure engagement from Volkswagens audience.

A bias that may arise from this type of content analysis is that the authors may have failed to develop a coherent understanding of the context, leading to mistakes when identifying the key categories. This may generate findings that do not represent the data truthfully (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to develop consistent categories, the authors strived to take notes throughout the process that would enable the authors to identify common traits in the posts.

To make the coding process more comprehensive, an example of the coding scheme is illustrated below:

22 06.04.15	On opening day, we wish pitcher Daniel Norris the best of luck. Even though he's in the big leagues now, Daniel chose to live out of a 1978 Volkswagen Westfalia during spring training. He bought the van, which he calls "Shaggy," right after graduating high school in 2011. Every year, he drives it to spring training in Florida from his home in Tennessee. Good luck this season, Daniel!	10699	222	637	Promotion
-------------	--	-------	-----	-----	-----------

This post was coded as promotion, as the content relates to promoting Volkswagens cars, using the acknowledged baseball pitcher Daniel Norris as a brand ambassador

for the old Volkswagen Westfalia. Once all posts from Facebook and Twitter were placed in different categories, the authors further examined and quantified the audience engagement related to the posts. This will be elaborated throughout the subsequent section.

3.4.3 Analyzing Data: Measuring Engagement

In this thesis, the authors measured the audiences' engagement by quantifying amount of likes, comments and shares connected to Facebook posts, and the amount of likes and retweets connected to Twitter posts. This engagement measurement aligns with what scholars have applied in previous research (DeVries et al., 2012), hence the authors find this as a suitable manner to measure engagement. On the basis of this, the authors were able to identify patterns related to what extent the audiences engaged with the various categories, in the prior, event phase and in the post phase of the crisis.

The following explains how engagement was applied in this research:

- Analysing to what extent Volkswagens audience engaged in terms of how many likes/comments/shares/retweets each post received. It was desired to observe possible changes in engagement in the three distinct periods of the prior, event and post crisis phase.
- Analysing if patterns could be discovered in terms engagement related to the various categories. The purpose was to address whether any specific category had a significant impact on the audiences' engagement.

Whether Volkswagen removed any posts prior to this study, or if Volkswagen applied social media features to boost certain posts to gain more attention, could not be controlled. Neither has timeslots (time of the day) for the posts that were collected been considered, which may also influence the variation in level of engagement.

3.5 Data Quality: Validity and Reliability

This section highlights elements challenging the results in this study. The two most meaningful variables that should be taken into account during the data collection procedure are validity and reliability, as these are essential for the credibility of the

findings (Saunders et al., 2012). Criteria that are most relevant for testing the quality of this study will be outlined below.

Validity assess if the conducted research truly measures what is intended to be measured (Saunders et al., 2012). Sampling validity and semantic validity are two components that are vital to measure, when conducting a content analysis. “*Sampling validity refers to the usual criteria for a precise sampling*” (Kohlbacker, 2006, p.21). The semantic validity “*relates to the meaning reconstruction of the material, and is expressed in the appropriateness of the category definitions, the key examples and the rules for coders*” (Kohlbacker, 2006. p.21). To ensure *sampling validity*, the authors collected every single post from Volkswagens official Facebook and Twitter sites (the chosen sampling units), in the selected sampling period. To strengthen the *semantic validity*, the coding of the text had to correspond with its original meaning (Krippendorff, 2013). By applying Mayrings inductive categorization for coding data, the authors consider the semantic validity as solid, as Mayrings system led to a systematic approach for analysing text.

Internal validity refers to the level of truth and accuracy aligning with findings. A case study research is challenging in terms of keeping a solid internal validity, due to the high degree of interpretation of the qualitative data. Qualitative content analysis also imposes a challenge for maintaining a certain level of internal validity (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In order to preserve a high level of internal validity, mixed methods were availed of to gain objectivity in the findings, and to overcome the risk of generating inconsistent interpretations (Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2014).

Both Yin (2014) and Malhotra et al. (2012), mention the trickiness of *external validity* (generalizability). The Volkswagen case study derives around one specific crisis that belongs to a specific crisis type (preventable cluster, Figure 9), in one specific industry, that occurred at a specific time (2015). These elements combined, define the setting of the single case study at hand. The setting is unique because no crisis is similar, and the authors lack other comparable situations that increase the ability to generalize the findings from this specific case study. This in turn, makes the level of generalizability for this study low. Since this study does not seek to generalize findings, but rather aims to obtain specific insights for the case of Volkswagens

emissions crisis, external validity will not have a vast concern for the overall validity in this study. The authors have emphasised on increasing the overall validity by focusing on the semantic validity. Semantic validity was ensured in this case study, through using Mayrings' inductive categorization, where a formative reliability check was executed in the coding process. The authors went through the 56 first Facebook posts and the 201 first Twitter posts, and coded these a second time. This was performed with the aim to adjust categories, to provide a more thorough meaning that related to the original text (social media post). Once all Facebook and Twitter posts were coded, the authors executed a summative reliability check, by going through all the 514 posts, ensuring that the posts were placed in the intended categories. The authors thereby conclude that this research is valid.

Reliability refers to “the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings” (Saunders et al., 2012. p.149). Thereby, it became crucial for the authors to ask themselves if other observers would reach similar observations (ibid). Reliability was obtained by utilizing empirical data that was publicly available, which implies that anyone who is interested in conducting the same research, have the similar possibility to do so. Reliability was improved as this study availed of secondary data; the collected data was already created, which reduced researcher bias, as the authors could not influence the creation of data. However, the coded categories that derived from the collected data may contain researcher bias, since the authors coded the content without any preconceived categories. When conducting a content analysis, inter-coder reliability becomes an important element because it may increase the ability to reproduce the results in the future (Titscher et al., 2000). An inter-coder agreement between the two coders was therefore applied; “Independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artefact and reach the same conclusion” (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000, p. 98). The two coders tested their perception of how the posts should be coded. Further on, categories were tested with the purpose of making sure the two authors (coders) recognized the same categories. As an outcome, results remained stable and inter-coder reliability was achieved, as the categories foremost corresponded; only 13 out of 514 (2, 53%) posts were placed in inappropriate categories.

3.6 Ethical Considerations for this Research

After the rise of Web 2.0, the ability to access information online related to people/organizations has become easier than ever before, leading to an increased issue concerning security and privacy in the 21st century. The nature of the collected data in this study did not raise any ethical concerns, since Volkswagens social media content was publicly available.

4.0 Results

The results chapter will present the findings from the conducted content analysis of Facebook and Twitter posts. The authors aim to provide a holistic picture of how Volkswagen engaged its audience and how the audience responded to Volkswagens activity in terms of comments, shares, likes and retweets. The authors aim to provide insights whether any patterns may be observed between Volkswagens engagement and the audiences' response in the three distinct crisis phases.

The authors have divided Volkswagens social media posts into a number of categories in order to create an understanding of how the company communicates with its stakeholders on Facebook and Twitter. On the basis of DeVries et al. (2012), it was decided to define categories within entertaining and informing content. The authors have observed how these categories are used within the selected timeframe (section 3.3.2), and will further in the analysis outline to what degree the use of these categories has changed between the three distinct phases - *pre-crisis*, *event-crisis* and *post-crisis*. Below is a table displaying these categories.

4.1 Categorizing Posts: Facebook and Twitter

Categories	
<i>Retweet</i> (Entertaining content - fun, exciting, informing)	A Retweet is a repost of someone else's tweet. Volkswagen occasionally retweets content from other users, which provides the audience with access to the original Twitter account where the content originally derives from. The content in the Retweet category is mostly perceived as entertaining.
<i>Applications</i> (Entertaining and Informing content)	Volkswagen has created applications offering different car features. This type of content meets the need of entertainment and excitement, and is also informing.
<i>Special Days</i> (Entertaining content)	Special days refer to valentine's day, Christmas, New Years and other festive holidays. Such content mainly entertains the audience.
<i>Sponsored Events</i> (Entertaining content - fun, exciting, cool and flashy)	Volkswagen shares information about events, such as car racing and cycling on its social media platforms. The company uses a brand ambassador to motivate additional engagement among its followers. This meets entertaining, exciting, cool and fun elements.
<i>CSR</i> (Informing)	Philanthropic events are mostly observed in these posts. These posts are rather educating to the audience, providing insights into what can be done to improve certain peoples' lives by giving them education etc.
<i>Promotion</i> (Promotion and Advertising)	This category provides company insights. Volkswagens promotional content is often informing and creative in the sense that the company posts pictures of older vintage cars, and includes information on how the audience should maintain their car etc. This category provides both informing and exciting news, which are two elements that create audience engagement.
<i>New Product Launch</i> (Promotion, advertising, informing)	Volkswagen provides information concerning new car models. This is both informing and exciting news, which are two elements that create audience engagement.
<i>New Feature Launch</i> (advertising, informing)	Volkswagen provides information concerning new features in its car models, these features are supposed to provide fun and convenient car experiences. This is exciting news that engages an audience.
<i>Crisis</i> (Informing)	Crisis is the last category that the authors use to define the content that is posted in the crisis event phase.

4.2 Facebook Results

The total amount of followers on Volkswagens official Facebook page is 25.857.643 million by April 2016. It was not possible for the authors to find information related to how many followers Volkswagens official Facebook site enjoyed prior to the crisis. By looking at the figure below, it is evident that Volkswagens Facebook activity level decreased significantly during the crisis event phase, meanwhile the followers' engagement increased. Volkswagens Facebook activity level remains somewhat similar in the prior and post crisis phase. The figure below provides information displaying Volkswagens activity level prior to the crisis (01 Jan 2015 – 17 Sept 2015), in the event phase of the crisis (18 Sept 2015 -01 Jan 2016), and the post crisis phase (01 Jan 2016 – 11 April 2016).

Average weekly activity prior to the crisis	Average weekly activity in the event crisis phase	Average weekly activity in the post crisis phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Posts: 2 •Comments: 95 •Shares: 421 •Likes: 5818 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Posts: 0,7 •Comments: 1368 •Shares: 1017 •Likes: 5349 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Posts: 1,45 •Comments: 219 •Shares: 423 •Likes: 3311

Figure 14: *Figure providing information displaying Facebook activity in the pre, event and post crisis phases*

From observing Volkswagens Facebook page in the event phase of the crisis, it could be observed that Volkswagen replied to every follower's comment during this phase. Volkswagen provided guidance for further information through e.g. sharing links. Even though it was not in the aim of this study to look thoroughly into every comment that was shared, it is essential to mention that Volkswagen interacted with its audience in the crisis related posts.

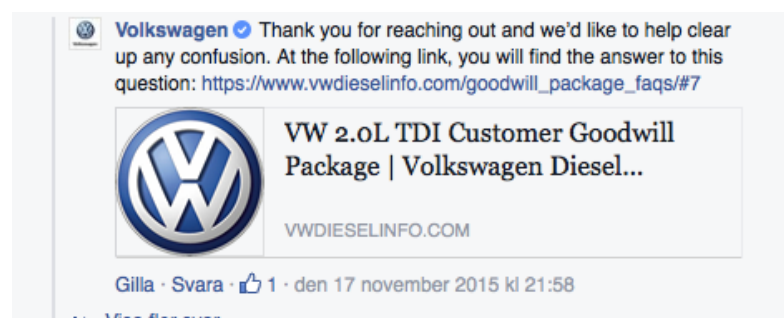


Figure 15: Example of a reply from Volkswagen during the crisis event phase

By looking at the figure below, it can be indicated that Volkswagen posted Promotional posts and Sponsored Event posts most frequently in the *pre-crisis* phase. During the *event phase* of the crisis, Volkswagen mostly posted content within the Crisis category. In the *post-crisis* phase, Volkswagen went back to posting content within the Promotional and Sponsored Events category, and increased its frequency of posting content within the New Feature Launch category. Volkswagen did not focus much on posting content within the CSR or New Product Launch category. The company particularly avoided posting content within the New Product Launch and CSR category within the crisis event phase. Volkswagen rarely posted text by itself; the company took avail of visual effects such as photos, videos and links in all of the Facebook posts (appendix 9.1).

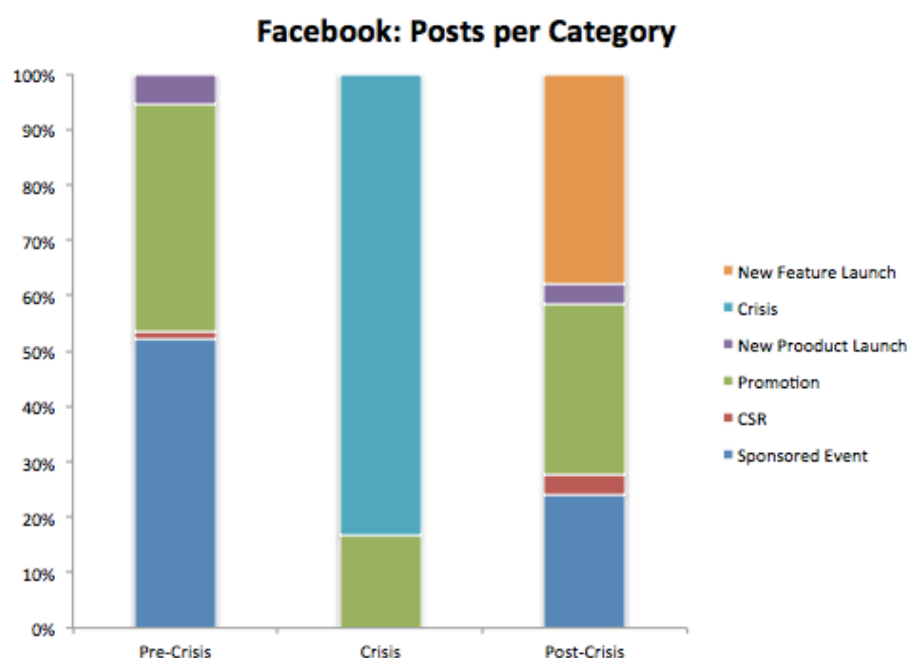


Figure 16: The figure provides information regarding which category is most frequently used in the pre, event and post crisis phase

By looking at the figure below, the authors were able to verify that Volkswagen received most attention in terms of likes, shares and comments within the Crisis category. In addition to the Crisis category receiving a lot of attention, it is indicated that the Promotion and Sponsored Events categories received a lot of attention on Facebook as well.

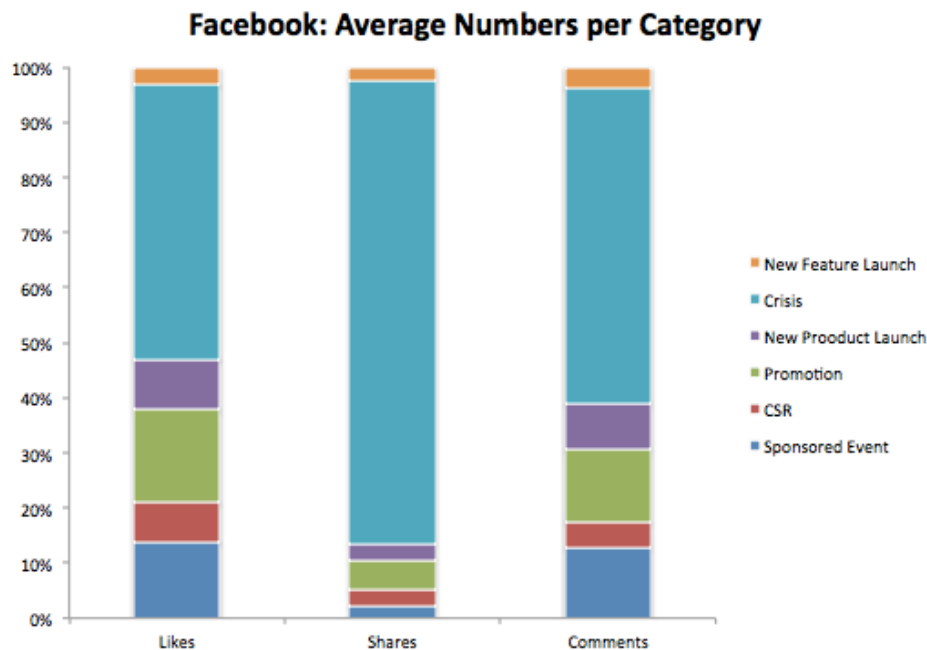


Figure 17: The figure provides information regarding which category has received most attention in terms of likes, shares and comments

4.3 Twitter Results

The total amount of followers on Volkswagens official Twitter site was 67.377 thousand by April 2016. Similarly to Facebook, the authors are not able to provide information regarding how many followers Volkswagen enjoyed on Twitter prior to the crisis. By looking at the figure below it is evident that Volkswagens Twitter activity level decreased during the crisis event phase, the company went from posting 11 tweets on a weekly average, to an average of 6 tweets a week. Despite the fact that Volkswagens Twitter activity level decreased significantly during the crisis event phase, the followers' engagement increased in terms of likes, while retweets remained the same. Volkswagens Twitter activity remained at the same level prior to the crisis and post crisis phase; meanwhile its followers increased their engagement in the post crisis phase. The figure below provides information displaying Volkswagens activity

level prior to the crisis (01 June 2015 – 17 Sept 2015), in the event phase of the crisis (18 Sept 2015 -01 Jan 2016), and the post crisis phase (01 Jan 2016 – 01 April 2016).

Average weekly activity prior to the crisis	Average weekly activity in the event crisis phase	Average weekly activity in the post crisis phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts: 11 • Likes: 265 • Retweets: 156 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts: 6 • Likes: 349 • Retweets: 152 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts: 11 • Likes: 510 • Retweets: 214

Figure 18: Figure providing information displaying Twitter activity in the pre, event and post crisis phase

By looking at the figure below, it is indicated that Volkswagen posted Promotional, Sponsored Event and New Product Launch tweets most frequently *prior* to the crisis. During the *event phase* of the crisis, Volkswagen highest frequency of posts was observed within the Crisis, Special Days and Promotion categories. In the *post-crisis* phase Volkswagen went back to most frequently posting content within the Promotional, New Product Launch and Special Days categories. Volkswagen did not focus much on posting content within the CSR, New Feature Launch, nor within the Retweet category in the *post crisis* phase. However, Volkswagen started posting slightly more posts within the Applications category in the post crisis phase. The company rarely posted text by itself; visual effects such as photos, videos and links were taken avail of in all of its tweets (appendix 9.2).

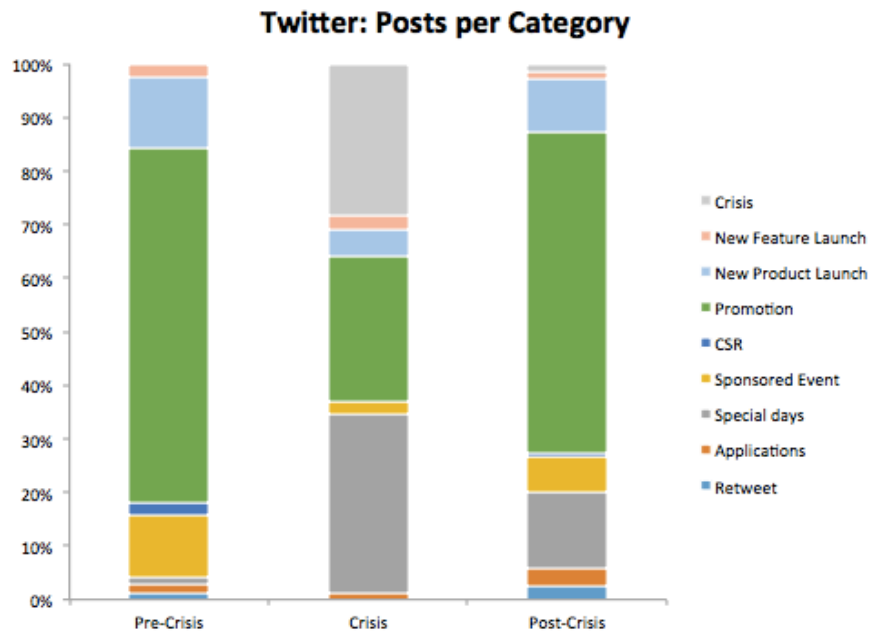


Figure 19: The figure provides information regarding which category is most frequently used in the pre, event and post crisis phase

By looking at the figure below, the authors were able to verify that Volkswagen received most attention in terms of likes and retweets within the Retweet category. In addition to the Retweet category, Volkswagen received most attention within the Promotional, New Product Launch, New Feature Launch, Crisis and Special Days categories.

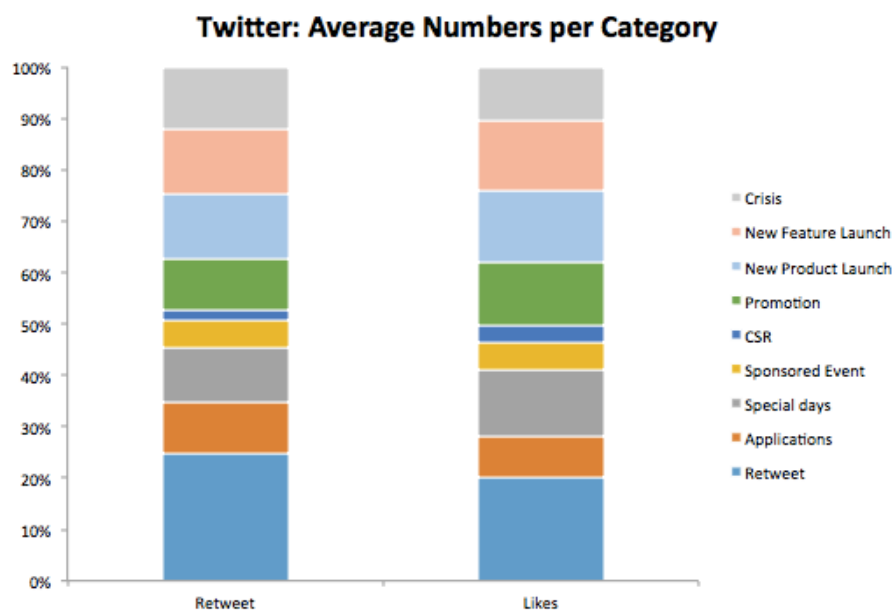


Figure 20: The figure provides information regarding which category received most attention

5.0 Analysis

This chapter will provide an analysis of the findings presented in the previous results chapter, through connecting them to the theoretical framework from chapter two. Sub conclusions will be drawn from each research question. The aim is to provide an answer to the problem formulation through answering each research question. The chapter will be divided into four sections. The first section outlines general information, concerning how Volkswagen engaged its stakeholders on Facebook and Twitter, prior to the crisis. In the second section of the analysis, the authors will demonstrate how stakeholder's perceived Volkswagens reputation before the crisis took place. The third section aims to outline how Volkswagen took avail of social media to communicate with its stakeholders in the crisis event phase. The last section of the analysis will aim to create an understanding of how Volkswagen has utilized social media in the post crisis phase.

5.1 Did Volkswagen Actively Engage its Stakeholders on Social Media Prior to the Crisis?

This section will provide an overview of Volkswagens strategy for engaging its audience on Facebook and Twitter prior to the crisis. The aim is to understand whether Volkswagen focused on building strong online brand communities prior to the crisis. *“Brand fans can interact with brand posts by liking or commenting”* (DeVries et al., 2012, p.84). On the basis of DeVries et al. (2012) the authors decided to use liking, commenting, sharing and retweeting activities to display interaction on Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter sites.

Organizations should strive to endorse engagement among its followers, and it is therefore crucial to understand whether Volkswagen has met its audience's needs and motivations, that lie behind engaging an audience on Facebook and Twitter. Research verifies, that the way content is constructed is the most central element for engaging an audience on an online brand community, because without compelling content, people are less likely to visit the social media sites (Culnan et al., 2012). Several researchers have argued for the same requirements that should be met, in order to actively engage an audience on social media. Social media content has to meet

followers' social values, which is managed through placing the audience at the centre of attention, instead of primarily using social media sites for promotional purpose (Sicilia & Palazon, 2008; Cova & Pace, 2006).

5.1.1 Engagement on Facebook

Facebook posts were divided into a number of 6 different categories; Sponsored Events, CSR, Promotion, New Product Launch, New Feature Launch and Crisis.

It is observed from looking at figure 14 that Volkswagen on average, shared posts on Facebook 2 times a week, prior to the crisis. According to the same figure, it is revealed that Volkswagen received most attention from its audience in terms of likes and shares, prior to the crisis. Figure 16 provides information regarding how frequently content within each category was posted, in the *pre crisis*, *crisis event* and the *post crisis* phase.

Sponsored Events and Promotion, were those categories that Volkswagen posted most frequently prior to the crisis. Both of these categories engaged Volkswagens audience through entertaining and informing elements, which is proven to be motivational elements that should be present on an online brand community, to engage an audience (DeVries et al., 2012). Volkswagen used the world leading professional car racer Tanner Foust, as a brand ambassador to attract more attention in the Sponsored Events category. Entertaining posts are perceived as being engaging, and enhance the chance of the audience returning back to the site again (Raney et al., 2003). Volkswagens strategy for creating entertaining content aligns with Raney et al's. (2003) theory, and may therefore have enhanced Volkswagens audience to return back to the company's Facebook site again. Volkswagens exciting content enhanced its audience to spread and share posts with others, which can be indicated from observing the amount of shares in the pre crisis phase (Figure 14).

Volkswagen primarily provided informational content within the Promotion category, e.g. how to maintain your car in the best possible way - "*A prepaid maintenance plan can help protect your VW—and your wallet*". Entertaining content was another utilized element within Volkswagens promotional posts e.g. "*When you're a part of the 2015 Volkswagen golf family, everyone's a winner.*" It was indicated that Volkswagen asked questions in its promotional posts to enhance engagement e.g.

“Dune or Denim, which is your favourite Beetle at the North American International Auto Show?”. Research has verified that asking questions and sharing information regarding the brand, motivates the audience to engage, and creates positive attitudes towards the brand (Jin & Liu, 2010; Taylor et al., 2011). Asking questions are especially effective for the purpose of enhancing number of comments (DeVries et al., 2012). Fortin & Dholakia (2005) verifies that sharing links for the purpose of adding additional information also motivates an audience to engage, more than text does entirely by itself. According to appendix 9.1, it is verified that this is an approach Volkswagen used frequently in its Facebook content, especially in its Sponsored Events and Promotional categories. Despite that links have proven to enhance engagement, it is important to keep in mind that it may have a negative effect on number of comments as it navigates people away from the site (DeVries et al., 2012). This theory can be linked to findings from figure 14, indicating that Volkswagen received significantly less comments, than shares and likes prior to the crisis. An underlying reason for this may be that Volkswagen merely posted Sponsored Events and Promotional posts prior to the crisis, which often contained links.

Volkswagen took avail of videos and pictures to engage its audience on social media, e.g. the Sponsored Events category contained videos, which according to Steuer, 1992; Cho, 1999; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Goodrich 2011, enhances audience engagement through stimulating people’s sight and hearing. According to Coyle & Thorson (2001), vividness reflects richness in posts on social media, which is achieved through the use of colors, animations and pictures. The authors did not detect any patterns, concerning whether videos or pictures attracted most attention. However, engagement was closer related to type of category, where the authors detected that Promotion and Sponsored Events enhanced most engagement prior to the crisis (Figure 16).

Figure 17 provides information regarding how much Facebook activity is notified on average in terms of likes, shares and comments, between 2nd of January 2015 to 11th of April 2016. According to figure 17, New Product Launch is a category that also engaged Volkswagens audience prior to the crisis. However, this category was not posted as frequently as the Sponsored Events and Promotional categories (Figure 16).

It is notified from looking at figure 17 and from appendix 9.1, that New Feature Launch and content within the CSR category, received less attention from the audience, compared to Promotion and Sponsored Events. It is observed from looking at figure 16 that none of these two categories (CSR/New Feature Launch) were frequently posted on Facebook prior to the crisis. The underlying reason for Volkswagen posting content less frequently within the categories that received less engagement, aligns with the fact that Volkswagen desired to meet audiences' motivations for engaging on Facebook. In order to build a valuable brand community, it is crucial that organizations place the audience in the centre of attention (Cova, & Pace, 2006).

Volkswagen can only post content within the New Product Launch category, when the company is launching a new car. This may be the reason for why this category was not as frequently posted prior to the crisis, as the other two highly engaging categories; Promotion and Sponsored Events. Promotion and Sponsored Events are by far those categories that received most attention prior to the crisis. It is therefore natural that Volkswagen more frequently utilized these two categories, than those that received less attention (e.g. CSR and New Feature Launch). This aligns with Sicilia & Palazóns (2008) theory, which implies that an organization should strive to post content that is most appealing to its followers. The authors conclude this part, by notifying that Volkswagen utilized required elements that should be present in order to engage an audience on Facebook, prior to the crisis.

5.1.2 Engagement on Twitter

It is evident that Volkswagen shared content on Twitter more frequently than on Facebook. Figure 18 provides information displaying how many tweets that were posted on a weekly average, which was a total of 11 tweets prior to the crisis. It is indicated from observing the content in Volkswagens tweets (appendix 9.2), that Volkswagen aimed to catch its audience's attention by sharing content that was exciting and informing, which according to theory, motivates engagement and encourages the audience to return back to the site again (Taylor et al., 2011; Raney et al., 2003).

Figure 20 provides information regarding which Twitter posts were most engaging on average, in terms of likes and retweets, prior to the crisis. It is evident that content within the Retweet, Promotion, New Product Launch and New Feature Launch categories, attracted most attention from the audience on Twitter, prior to the crisis. Volkswagens Retweets primarily contained information regarding events and happenings, a trend was thereby observed, revealing that Volkswagens social media audience was interested in entertaining content on both Facebook and Twitter. According to appendix 9.2, it is revealed that Volkswagens Promotional and New Product Launch tweets were mainly informational and entertaining tweets, containing content concerning car maintenance and car features. From looking at figure 19, the authors revealed that Promotion was Volkswagens most frequently tweeted category, prior to the crisis, which merely contained entertaining and informing elements. Since it is crucial that an audience is placed in the centre of attention, in order to build a strong online brand community (Cova & Pace, 2006), it is natural that the Promotion and New Product Launch categories were posted more frequently than other categories. Retweets were not posted very frequently, despite its high level of engagement. A reason for that may be that Volkswagen only retweeted messages, once the company detected tweets on the news feed that were perceived as appealing to its audience.

Similar with its Facebook content, Volkswagen shared videos and pictures aligning with the context of the content, to enhance audience engagement on Twitter (appendix 9.2). According to Steuer, 1992; Cho, 1999; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Goodrich 2011, an audience is more likely to be engaged when the company includes dynamic animations, pictures and colours. The authors thereby assume that these elements contributed to increased positive attitudes towards Volkswagens brand, as it is indicated that Volkswagens use of pictures and videos enhanced audience engagement prior to the crisis. Creating entertaining content by using Tanner Foust as a brand ambassador, and asking questions, is observed as engaging elements in Volkswagens Sponsored Events category -“*Digital dreams come true! We just can’t get enough from the GTI Supersport. Do you feel the same? #VisionGTI*”. This was a similar strategy that was availed of when Volkswagen shared content on Facebook.

The authors thereby confirm that Volkswagen used a well thought through strategy to motivate its audience to engage on Twitter prior to the crisis. A pattern is thereby indicated, revealing that Volkswagen utilized equal elements for engaging its audience on Facebook and Twitter, prior to the crisis. It was evident that promotional and entertaining content attracted underlying motivations for audience engagement, as content was perceived as fun, exciting and informing. Scholars stresses the importance of using certain elements to foster audience engagement on social media, content should be fun, exciting, informing, storytelling and supportive of vital causes (Hettler, 2010). These elements were present on Volkswagens Facebook and Twitter sites, prior to the crisis.

5.1.3 Kozinets' Social Brand Engagement Model

The authors placed Volkswagen in accordance to Kozinets' (2014) model, which describes strategies for leveraging social brand engagement. Prior to the crisis, Volkswagen availed of a strategy where the company aimed to build excitement in its content. Posts were shared between Volkswagens audience, which indicates that the audience may have influenced each other. This strategy was uncovered, through gaining insights revealing certain elements that the company used to build excitement in its content. Volkswagen primarily shared promotional content, through applying dynamic elements such as videos and photos, brand ambassadors and product related information. Thereby, Volkswagen scored high on building excitement in its relationship with its audience, as elements applied in the company's content, was merely entertaining and promotional. Through revealing these elements in Volkswagens content, the authors perceive engagement as being company-led. This is indicated as Volkswagen primarily decided what type of content it shared with its audience. Consumer-led engagement existed to a certain extent as the company took the audiences' preferences into account, acknowledging which categories were preferable. However, Volkswagen was merely placed towards company-led engagement, because the company chose which comments from its audience it desired to answer, meaning that not every comment was provided with an answer. Volkswagen seemed to neglect negative comments prior to the crisis, which according to DeVries et al. (2012) is not the most preferable behaviour, as brand fans wish to engage in vivid discussions, both positive and negative.

Through scoring high on building excitement and company-led engagement in Kozinets' (2014) model, the authors perceive that Volkswagen availed of a communicate strategy for leveraging social brand engagement prior to the crisis (figure below). This aligns with findings from this study, verifying that Volkswagen merely published content within the Promotional and Sponsored Events categories prior to the crisis. These categories were merely promotional and marketing oriented, which align with the communicate strategy in Kozinets' (2014) model for leveraging brand engagement.

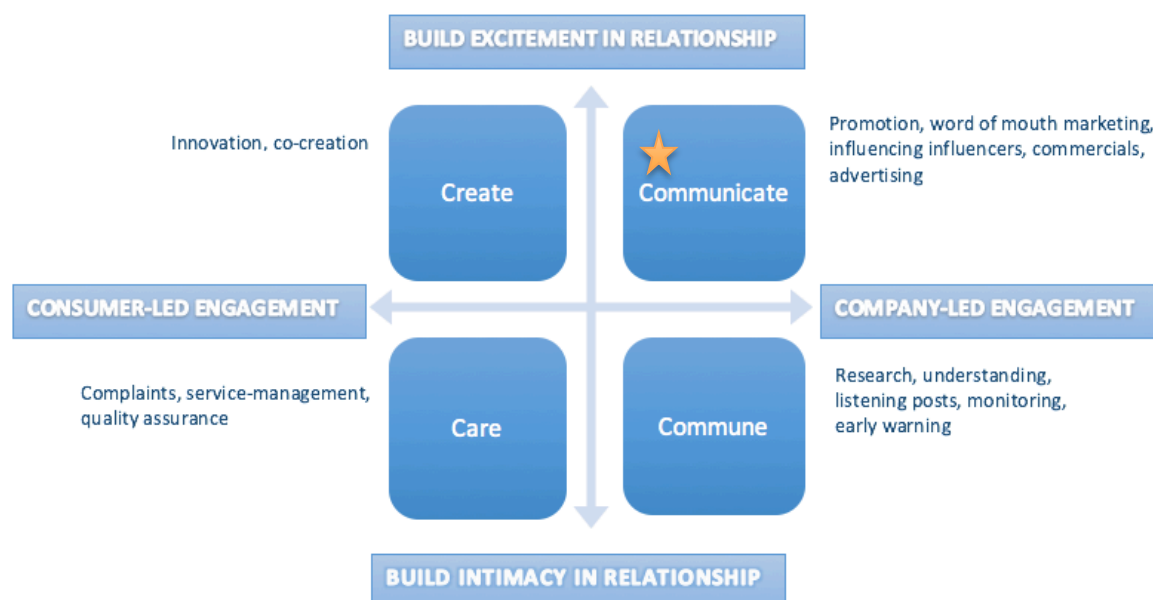


Figure 21: *Strategies to leverage social brand engagement (Kozinets, 2014)*

5.1.4 Sub Conclusion

The authors indicated that Volkswagen published valuable content that align with elements for engaging an audience on social media, prior to the crisis. Hence, the authors discovered patterns indicating that Volkswagen published content that was primarily informing and entertaining on both Facebook and Twitter, which are elements that according to theory, enhances audience engagement. It was also indicated that Volkswagen always availed of videos and pictures, aligning with the

context of the content, which created vividness in Volkswagens content, and in turn enhanced engagement.

Volkswagen clearly focused on building excitement in its relationships with its audience, with the use of e.g. brand ambassadors to enhance engagement. It is likely that an audience is more willing to engage on social media during a crisis, if the audience is already engaged prior to the crisis. Thus, the authors assume that Volkswagen possessed an advantage from generating strong online brand communities on social media, prior to the crisis. The authors will further on in the analysis, seek to detect whether Volkswagen took avail of its strong online brand communities, when engaging its audience in the crisis event and post crisis phase.

5.2 How was Volkswagens Reputation Perceived among Stakeholders Prior to the Crisis?

In this section of the analysis, the authors will outline Volkswagens reputation prior to the crisis. This is considered a crucial factor, since an organization that possesses a strong reputation prior to a crisis, is more likely to earn back stakeholder trust after the crisis (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009). Volkswagen may hold an advantage for the fact that the company enjoyed a strong brand reputation prior to the crisis. In stakeholder management theory, it is indicated that a *proactive and interactive engagement* approach prior to a crisis, will build reputational goodwill for the future (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009).

The emissions crisis was perceived as a betrayal to the automakers customers, since Volkswagen communicated values for being an environmentally sustainable company prior to the crisis. Through promoting these values, the company attracts customers who possess the same values, and it may thereby be difficult to earn back stakeholder trust. A journal from the Global Corporate Governance Forum (2009), stresses the importance of having stakeholders shape the company's direction, and that trust will derive from mutually understood values.

Volkswagens brand possessed strong brand equity prior to the crisis (Figure 22), and its reputation was primarily built by trust and reliability (Shah, 2015). This figure

illustrates that Volkswagen was among the market leaders in the automobile industry, prior to the crisis (Damodaran, 2015). The Volkswagen Groups financial report from 2014, states that Volkswagen possessed a market share of 12,9% in 2014 (The Volkswagen Group, 2014³).

Global Auto Revenue Market Share 2014

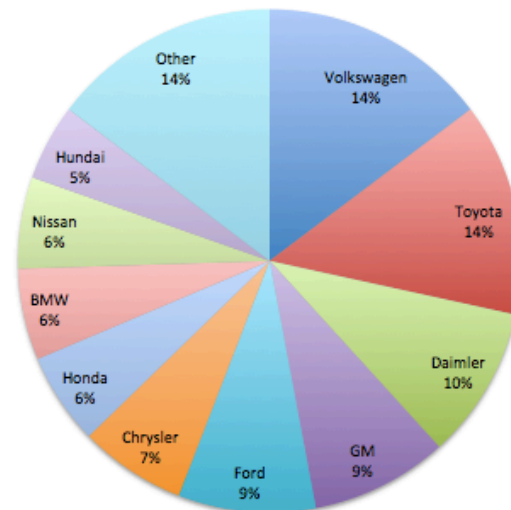


Figure 22: *Illustrates global auto revenue by 2014* (Damodaran, 2015)

What is also interesting to perceive from this figure is that Toyota has become a market leader in the automobile industry again, despite the crisis regarding self-acceleration problems in 2009. Customers had strong confidence in the Toyota brand prior to the crisis. A study verified that the Toyota crisis had an impact on customer confidence as it dropped vastly in 2009, and recovered again by 2011 (Kelly, 2012). Scholars have provided research confirming that organizations that possess a strong reputation prior to a crisis will experience a stronger post crisis reputation. The reason is simply because companies that possess a strong reputation prior to a crisis, have more reputational capital to spend (Coombs 2007). The authors perceive Volkswagens situation as similar to Toyotas, since the company was a clear market leader within the automobile industry prior to the emissions crisis.

Volkswagen does not possess a crisis history track record, which also increases the speed of earning back stakeholder trust (Coombs, 2007). Except for cooperating with the Nazi trade union during World War Two, Volkswagen has not experienced a

major crisis in the aftermath of that. During World War Two, the company had slaves from concentration camps create vehicles on behalf of the company (a practice that was utilized by most companies in Germany during WW2). Despite this, it is safe to state that Volkswagen does not have a crisis history enclosing similar crisis types, aligning with the emissions crisis. This places Volkswagen in a better position than the company would be in, if it had a history enclosing similar crisis types in the past. It is rather biased to compare a crisis from World War Two with a crisis in the 21st century. However, if the authors were to look at actions taken by Volkswagen in the aftermath of the World War Two crisis, compensation was offered to survivors (Bowler, 2015). This implies that Volkswagen holds a history of trying to make things right by providing compensation (Coombs. 2007).

Despite the fact that Volkswagen enjoyed a strong reputation prior to the crisis, there are necessary steps that should be taken in the crisis event and post crisis phase, in order to be more capable of earning back stakeholder trust, after a crisis is resolved. One of these necessary steps comprises answering to a crisis quick and consistently (Huang, 2008; Coombs 2007). This can be accomplished by utilizing social media channels, since social media provides the opportunity to execute real time dialogues between the organization and the audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

5.2.1 Sub Conclusion

The authors confirm that Volkswagen possessed a strong brand reputation prior to the crisis. Volkswagen does not possess a history for having caused a similar crisis in the past, which according to situational crisis communication theory, will enhance the chances for Volkswagen to earn back stakeholder trust in the future. Being among the market leading companies within the automobile industry, indicates that customers have favoured Volkswagen as a brand before, and are likely to favour Volkswagen as a brand in the future. This may lead to Volkswagen experiencing an easier way back, to earning back stakeholder trust, since the company has reputational capital to spend.

5.3 How did Volkswagen utilize its Social Media Channels to Communicate with its Stakeholders in the Crisis Event phase?

This section of the analysis will outline activities that were performed by Volkswagen on Facebook and Twitter during the crisis event phase. The aim is to provide a holistic picture of how Volkswagen engaged its audience on Facebook and Twitter, and how stakeholders have reacted to these activities. Research verifies that a majority of messages related to a crisis posted on Facebook do not match optimal response strategies in accordance to SCCT (Figure 9). Many companies offer a full apology, when they actually belong in the low responsibility/victim cluster, and vice versa; companies provide excuses or a scapegoat strategy when they actually belong in the intentional crisis cluster (Ki & Nekmat, 2014).

5.3.1 Volkswagens Crisis Response on Social Media

Volkswagen was quick to offer a full apology through regular media channels, but unfortunately this crisis management strategy was not followed up on social media channels. It is observed from the findings (appendix 9.1 & 9.2) and an article from BBC News (Bowler, 2015), that Volkswagen lacked a quick and consistent communication strategy on its social media channels. Volkswagen failed to acknowledge the crisis quickly on social media, which may aggravate reputational damage (Coombs, 2015).



Volkswagens crisis communication strategy did not align with Huang's (2008) theory, which implies that a company should make sure messages are timely, consistent and active through all channels. A company should always have a plan outlined for monitoring a crisis before it takes place. That is known as the *pre-crisis* phase, where the crisis management team is responsible for identifying the risk for a possible crisis taking place, and how much damage that crisis may cause (Burnett, 1998; Coombs, 2007). Especially since Volkswagen knew beforehand that it deliberately rigged the software systems in order to cheat on emission tests, the company should have been thinking ahead and outlined a crisis management plan for managing social media. It was not sufficient for Volkswagen to only have a plan outlined for handling regular media channels, since the 21st century has forced companies to understand the equal importance of monitoring social media channels during a crisis (Jin et al., 2014). It

should no longer be a question for a global company, such as Volkswagen, whether it should be present on social media during a crisis, rather how it should utilize social media as a tool during a crisis. As the social media phenomenon is growing, so is the importance of being present on social media (Baron, 2010).

Social media is a critical platform to act quickly upon, as all stakeholders are present there; latent, expectant and definite. They all have the ability to influence each other since anyone can share their opinion freely on the Internet, also known as user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This makes Volkswagens ability to respond at a fast speed even more critical, because latent stakeholders may spread inaccurate sources of information, since they do not hold any stake in the company and may therefore be less emotionally attached to the company. Managers tend to ignore latent stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997), but along with the rise of Web 2.0, managers are forced to pay attention to every stakeholder concern (Conway et al, 2007).

The Domino's example from chapter two, illustrates the importance of striving to be present on social media as soon as a crisis takes place, and that companies are forced to adjust to the digital environment (Benoit, 1997; Levick, 2009). According to figure 14 and 18, the authors indicate that Volkswagen had a lower activity level in the event phase of the crisis, than prior to the crisis, both on Facebook and Twitter. According to the Domino's example, Volkswagen should have provided more support to its social media audience, through more actively providing a two-way interaction as soon as the crisis took place. Volkswagen should have used social media as interactive communication platforms; to reduce uncertainty once the emissions crisis took place, because theory states that interactive mediums are preferable over static ones during a crisis (Procopio & Procopio, 2007).

Since Volkswagen avoided being present on social media the first seven days into the crisis, it is reasonable to state that, according to SCCT strategies (Figure 9) Volkswagen first executed a Denial strategy. Instead of posting crisis related content, Volkswagen posted content that was unrelated to the crisis. This strategy belongs in the victim cluster (Coombs, 2007), which does not align with Volkswagens situation, since the company deliberately caused the emissions crisis. Volkswagens emissions

 Denial	Diminish	 Rebuild
Attack the accuser	Excuse	Compensation
Denial	Justification	Apology
Scapegoat		

[illegible]

The authors conclude this section by stating that Volkswagen first implemented a wrongful crisis response strategy on social media, and followed up late with a full apology. Volkswagen did not utilize an immediate crisis response strategy, which is usually recommended in a crisis situation (Coombs, 2007; Benoit, 1997). It is therefore acceptable to conclude that Volkswagen could have executed a better

strategy on its social media channels, once the crisis took place. Crisis management is all about taking control of the situation in order to earn back trust, which is not accomplished through complete immunity (Bradley, 2016).

5.3.2 Facebook Engagement during the Crisis Event Phase

Research highlights the importance of interacting with stakeholders on social media during the crisis event phase, in order to mitigate reputational threat (Coombs, 2015). Even though evidence proves that this will help an organization earn back stakeholder trust, organizations seem to fail in this area, since messages posted on Facebook mainly derives from the audience (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). It is evident that Volkswagen should have utilized its Facebook site more actively as a crisis communication tool, since it would have helped the company take control of the situation.

According to figure 14, Volkswagen went from posting 2 messages on a weekly average prior to the crisis, to an average of 0,7 messages on a weekly basis during the crisis event phase. Volkswagen had a clear decrease in its activity level in the crisis event phase. It is likely that Volkswagen may have utilized Facebook to a greater extent, if the company had planned how to handle a crisis on social media beforehand. This is known as the pre-crisis phase, where all organizations should have a crisis management team, ready to take charge of a crisis once it occurs (Coombs, 2007; Mitroff & Pearson, 1998). Volkswagens audience may have been more willing to look for information regarding the crisis on social media platforms, since stakeholders often perceive content posted on social media as more credible than on traditional media (Procopio & Procopio, 2007). Hence, Volkswagens absence of an initial response, may have led to its audience seeking for information from other sources, which may be inaccurate. Research has proven that an organizations ability to survive a crisis depends on its ability to respond at a fast speed, this should therefore be an important component for any crisis management team to meet (Benoit, 1997). Volkswagen did not meet the crisis communication requirement for executing a quick and initial response on Facebook, which may have led to uncertainty among Volkswagens audience, since people always seek for the cause of the crisis to reduce uncertainty once a crisis occur (Coombs, 2007). The picture below illustrates the post that Volkswagen published on Facebook, the same day (18th of September) as the EPA accused the company for deliberately cheating on emissions tests.



The authors have observed that comments posted in connection to the picture above, were negatively loaded and also contained questions where the audience asked about the crisis. It is clear that Volkswagens audience was interested in hearing about the emissions crisis, and were confused about the picture Volkswagen had posted. Emotional reactions follow a crisis, and feelings will aggravate if the organization does not attribute the cause of the crisis as quickly as possible (Coombs, 2007), this was notified from looking at comments related to the picture above. The issue with being absent on certain media channels, especially social media channels, is that news spreads at a faster speed and will lead to stakeholders and journalists providing messages that may contain inaccurate information (Fjeld & Molesworth, 2006). Volkswagen should have aimed to be the first to post information about the emissions crisis on Facebook, to avoid uncertainty among its audience.

At the time of writing, Mitsubishi is experiencing a crisis for falsifying fuel efficiency tests (BBC Business, 2016). The authors have observed that Mitsubishi has not communicated anything concerning the crisis on Facebook, even though the company is four days in it already. This resembles Volkswagens behavior, as the company did not offer a quick initial response on Facebook. Ki & Nekmat's (2014) theory about brands choosing a wrongful crisis management strategy on Facebook, thereby align with the findings from this study, and Mitsubishi's actions. Volkswagen may have reduced reputational threat if the company had been the first to report the crisis (Coombs, 2015).

Figure 14 illustrates that posts (Crisis category) published during Volkswagens crisis event phase, received more attention from its audience than any other category. This aligns with the fact that social media usage increases during a crisis (Baron, 2010). However, during the crisis event phase, Volkswagen only posted a total of six posts in three and a half months (appendix 9.1), an activity level that did not resemble the company's regular Facebook activity. Volkswagen should have possessed a higher activity level during the crisis event phase, as the public comes together on social media during and after a crisis, to provide each other with emotional support through sharing information (Choi & Lin, 2009).

A positive acknowledgement notified in the six messages posted on Facebook in the crisis event phase, was that the posts contained information regarding actions that Volkswagen was taking to handle the situation. Volkswagen answered to most comments on Facebook (Figure 15) in the crisis event phase, which is an important component that should be in place. It aligns with the fact that a company should aim to answer consistently, in a timely manner to every stakeholders concern during a crisis, since it enhances positive emotions towards the brand (Huang, 2008). It is proven that organizations that proactively engage with its stakeholders are more likely to foster strong connections with them (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009). The fact that Volkswagen answered to audiences comments in the crisis event phase on Facebook, may have enhanced stronger connections with its audience. The authors indicated from looking at figure 16 that Volkswagen primarily posted content within the Crisis category and the Promotion category, during the crisis event phase. By looking at figure 17, the authors indicate that the Crisis category by far received most attention. It is therefore natural that Volkswagen focused on posting content within the Crisis category in the crisis event phase, as research verify that the audience should be placed in the center of attention on social media, to foster motivations to engage (Cova & Pace, 2006).

The authors conclude this section by indicating that Volkswagen has not utilized its Facebook site in the best manner. Volkswagen offered a full apology and took responsibility for its actions late, which implies that the company denied the crisis the first week through continuing posting regular content. Theory indicates that organizations should focus on sharing content relating to a crisis as soon as the crisis

takes place, and that a company should avoid posting especially positive news (Bradley, 2016). Volkswagen lacked this strategy on Facebook, which is indicated by looking at the picture posted by Volkswagen, the same day as the EPA informed the public about the emissions crisis. Volkswagen lacked certain elements that should have been in place, such as informing its audience, as quick and thoroughly as possible about the crisis, which may have reduced reputational threat (Coombs, 2015). The fact that it took a week for Volkswagen to post an apology on Facebook after the crisis took place, indicated that Volkswagen had a poorly established crisis management plan outlined to handle a crisis on Facebook.

A number of PR experts state that a company should take avail of its social media channels by addressing customer concerns and monitoring messages (Bradley, 2016). Volkswagen did address customer concerns, once the company started posting crisis relevant content, a week into the crisis. Volkswagen went from having a poor crisis management strategy, to applying a more responsible crisis management strategy, since the company was active in its response towards crisis related comments, in the crisis event phase. By answering to the audience's comments, Volkswagens conversations resembled more connecting and open dialogues, increasing the audiences' motivations to engage with Volkswagen on Facebook (Mayfield, 2008).


5.3.3 Twitter Engagement during the Crisis Event Phase

Volkswagen ignored sharing an immediate response about the emissions crisis on Twitter, which aligned with its actions on Facebook. The two pictures below illustrate the content Volkswagen decided to share on Twitter the same day as the company was accused for deliberately cheating on emissions tests.

 Volkswagen @Volkswagen · 18 Sep 2015
Lined up like rainbow colours. #VW Golf
#Volkswagen



42 72

 Volkswagen @Volkswagen · 18 Sep 2015
Everyone has a social (media) aura. What is yours? Join us at the #IAA
and find out. #VWI15 #VWThinkNew



5 10

These pictures resembled promotional content, which may have been confusing to the audience, as other media channels were providing information about the emissions crisis. As stated in the Facebook section, Volkswagen first took avail of a denial SCCT strategy, by posting unrelated tweets when the crisis first broke out. Volkswagen did not start posting tweets concerning the crisis, until the company was four days into the crisis event period. A twitterstorm broke out after the EPA announced that scandal 18th of September 2015. #Dieselgate is the hashtag that drove the twitterstorm about Volkswagens emissions scandal, the hashtag went viral on the Internet 21st of September 2015. The hashtag #dieselgate was tweeted from a series of different accounts, from high profile media accounts, as well as private people's accounts. This indicates that social media may be perceived as a risk in a crisis situation, as those stakeholders who usually hold low power are able to influence other stakeholders, as they spread information freely on the Internet without gatekeepers withholding them from doing so (Conway et al, 2007). This may in turn, lead to a reputational damage, as Volkswagen did not share the rightful information about the crisis at a desired time. Volkswagen should have been the first to report issues concerning the emissions crisis, to reduce reputational threat (Coombs, 2015).

Tweets that were shared by the audience in connection to the emissions crisis were observed as negative, since people revealed anger and frustration. Volkswagen should therefore have interacted earlier, as theory verifies that open dialogues may lead to create greater positive emotions towards the company after a crisis (Yang et al, 2010). Theory verifies that followers tend to increase their social media usage during a crisis (Pew Research Center, 2006), which aligns with figure 18, displaying that the audiences activity level on Volkswagens Twitter site increased in the crisis event phase. Audiences activity levels increased on both Facebook and Twitter during the event phase (Figure 14 and 18), thereby the authors notify a trend displaying that social media activity levels increases on a number of different social media platforms during a crisis. The example mentioned earlier about Domino's crisis, that went viral on YouTube in a couple of minutes, also aligns with theory stating that activity levels on social media increases during a crisis.

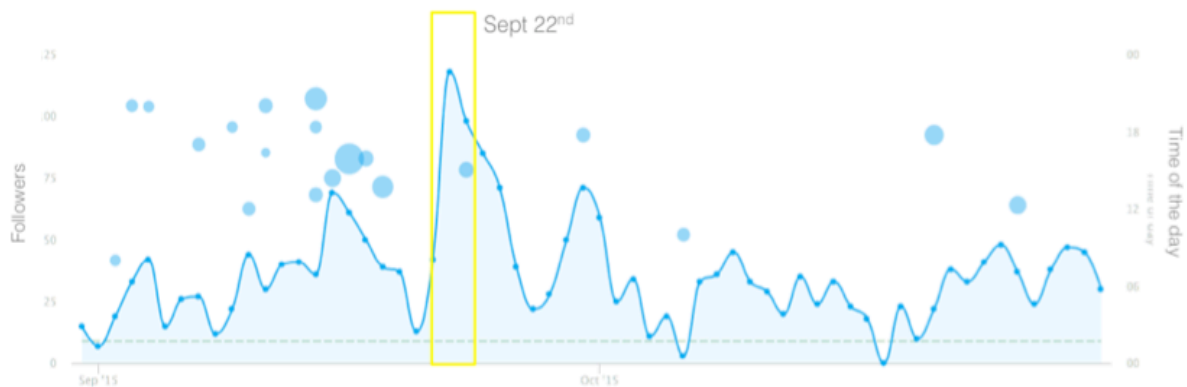


Figure 24: *The figure displays that Twitter activity levels about VW increased when the emission crisis took place (Shah, 2015)*

The graph above displays Volkswagens 225% increase in number of Twitter followers during the first two days of the emissions crisis (Shah, 2015). Along with the increased amount of followers on Twitter, Volkswagen should have availed of a more interactive strategy by offering a two-way dialogue during the first couple of days of the crisis. Attributing the cause of the crisis and providing a plan of action (Weiner, 2006), may reduce psychological stress among stakeholders. As explained before, a two-way interaction may lead to an increased ability to manage conflicts, and maintain relationships in a crisis situation (Capriotti & Morieno, 2007).

Figure 20 displays that the Crisis category received the same amount of attention as the other frequently posted categories received. In the event phase of the crisis, Volkswagen posted content within the Special Days and the Promotion categories, as frequently as the company posted content within the Crisis category (Figure 19). A reason for why Volkswagen availed of this strategy may be that the Promotional and Special Days categories received equal amount of engagement, as the Crisis category received. This aligns with theory, stating that the audience should be placed in centre of attention, meaning that a company should adapt content towards what the audience perceive as interesting (Cova & Pace, 2006).

It was observed that Volkswagen followed up messages posted on Facebook during the crisis event phase, a strategy that was not availed of on Twitter, as posts on

Twitter did not receive any replies from Volkswagen in the crisis event phase (Davis, 2015). By looking at figure 18, it is observed that Volkswagen was less active when posting Twitter messages during the crisis event period, compared to usual activity levels on Twitter prior to the crisis. Volkswagen went from posting 11 tweets on a weekly basis, to posting 6 tweets on a weekly basis between 18th of September 2015 to 01st of January 2016. According to Kelleher (2009), stakeholders perceive organizations as more human if they are actively present on Twitter during a crisis, and they are believed to be more dedicated to help stakeholders solve the problem at hand (Kelleher, 2009).

The authors clearly indicate from looking at figure 24 that the audiences' activity level increased on Twitter once the crisis took place, therefore Volkswagen should also have increased its activity level in order to provide consistent information. Stakeholders tend to perceive content posted on social media as more credible than content in traditional media during a crisis (Procopio & Procopio, 2007). Volkswagen should therefore have aimed to provide a higher frequency of crisis related tweets, and provided answers to tweets related to Volkswagens emissions crisis. A main reason for why Volkswagen should have availed of Twitter in a more interactive and consistent manner, is that tweeted messages are accepted to a much higher degree by stakeholders, than regular media content (Kerkhof et al., 2011).

The authors conclude that Volkswagen utilized its Twitter accounts poorly in the crisis event phase, as the company's activity level was low in terms of interaction, as well as the frequency of posts pr. week declined during the crisis event period. The consequence from distributing a low activity level was that other sources were faster than Volkswagen to tweet about the crisis. Having a low activity level on social media may be a risk for a company's reputation, as others may spread sources of inaccurate information (Fjeld & Molesworth, 2006).

5.3.4 Sub Conclusion

The authors verify that Volkswagen failed to take avail of social media in a rightful manner according to situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). Since the company avoided mentioning anything about the crisis the first week, it is implied that Volkswagen first adopted a Denial strategy, by posting unrelated content to the

crisis. In order to implement a rightful SCCT strategy, Volkswagen should have provided a quick apology on both Facebook and Twitter, since the company belonged in the Preventable SCCT cluster.

The authors discovered that the audiences' activity level increased during the crisis event phase on Facebook and Twitter, while Volkswagen decreased its activity level on both platforms. As previously mentioned, this is a risky strategy as other sources may provide inaccurate information. Another risk is that stakeholders, who usually hold low power, are able to influence other stakeholders through spreading information without gatekeepers withholding them from doing so.

In order to mitigate reputational threat, Volkswagen should have outlined a plan in the pre-crisis phase, preparing how to offer an initial crisis response on social media. It is indicated from the findings that Volkswagen handled its Facebook audience better than its Twitter audience. Volkswagen posted content relating to the emissions crisis, and replied to every comment on Facebook during the crisis event phase. This was a strategy Volkswagen did not avail of on Twitter, since it was verified that posts on Twitter did not receive any replies from Volkswagen. Hence, the authors conclude that Volkswagen should have utilized both Twitter and Facebook instantly in an interactive manner, as soon as the crisis broke out, with the aim to reduce psychological stress and uncertainty among stakeholders, which appears during a crisis when the situation is unknown.

5.4 What Significant Changes can be indicated from Comparing Volkswagens Social Media Channels Prior to the Crisis, with Activities in the Post Crisis Phase?

This section of the analysis will outline changes that can be indicated in Volkswagens use of social media, from the prior phase of the crisis, to the post crisis phase. The aim is to outline whether Volkswagen meets its audience's preferences, and whether its audience's activity level have increased or decreased in the post phase of the crisis.

It is verified from looking at appendix 9.1 and 9.2 that Volkswagen stopped posting content both on Facebook and Twitter relating to the crisis, by the 01st of January

2016. According to figure 14 and 18, it is indicated that Volkswagen was less active on social media in the period between the crisis outbreak 18th of September 2015 and the 01st of January 2016. After 01st of January 2016 Volkswagen went back to an activity level resembling its social media activity before the crisis took place. By the beginning of 2016, Volkswagens emissions crisis was not dominating headlines in the media anymore, it was therefore appropriate for Volkswagen to move on and start posting regular content on social media again (Bradley, 2016).

5.4.1 Facebook Engagement in the Post Crisis Phase

By looking at figure 14 the authors perceive that Volkswagens Facebook audience was increasing their activity level, in terms of comments and shares in the post crisis phase. This aligns with the fact that stakeholder's social media usage increases during a crisis (Pew Research Center, 2006). There was a clear observation in figure 14, implying that Volkswagens Facebook audiences' amount of likes dropped in the post crisis phase.

From looking at figure 16 it is verified that Volkswagen changed its type of content in the post crisis phase, compared to what was regularly posted on social media prior to the crisis. Prior to the emissions crisis, Volkswagens Facebook content was by far predominantly related to entertaining and informing content, including pictures and videos related to the text. In order to motivate engagement, Volkswagen used brand ambassadors and asked questions that would catch audiences' attention. A pattern was observed, indicating that Sponsored Event and Promotion were the two categories that received most attention from the audience prior to the crisis. Figure 16 indicates that Volkswagen stopped posting crisis related content after January 2016, and instead focused on content within the New Feature Launch, Promotion and Sponsored Events categories. This indicates that Volkswagen went back to building excitement in relationship, but also enhanced a strategy for building intimacy, through answering to negative and positive comments in the posts crisis phase (Kozinets, 2014).

It is difficult to disclose what content is perceived as right and wrong to publish shortly after a crisis, as people will possess negative sentiments towards the brand (Bradley, 2016). It seems as if Volkswagen aimed for a strategy where the company

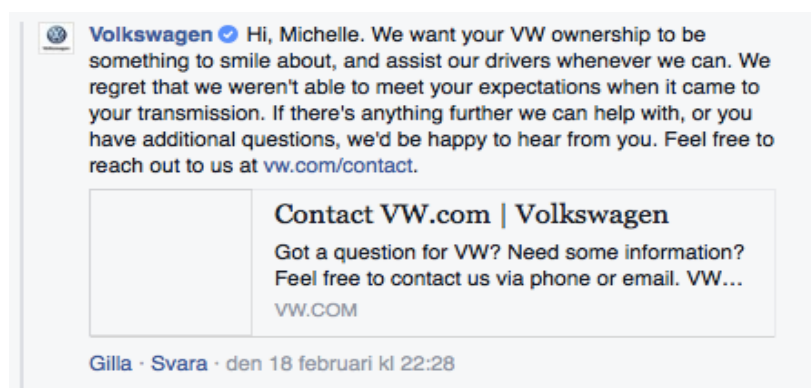
focused on sharing content that it knew its audience had appreciated before the crisis broke out, but also tried to share new type of content where Volkswagen focused on catching people's attention through showing off new car features. It was observed that the New Feature Launch category (appendix 9.1), contained videos with cartoon figures. These type of videos may have created vividness in Volkswagens Facebook posts, and enhanced audience engagement, which in turn created stronger feelings towards the brand (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). However figure 17, illustrates that New Feature Launch did not receive as much attention as was assumed based on theory. Volkswagen focused on promoting new features that would make car rides more comfortable and convenient. The quote below is taken from appendix 9.1, and resembles one of Volkswagens New Feature Launch posts - *"The 2016 Volkswagen Passat available with Forward Collision Warning and Autonomous Emergency Braking"*. Since posts within the New Feature Launch did not receive much attention, Volkswagens strategy for engaging an audience on Facebook did not align with Cova & Pace's (2006) theory, stating that content should meet audience's interest. Volkswagen should have monitored posts with the aim to meet audiences' needs and motivation to enhance engagement, which according to figure 17 was predominantly content within the Promotion and Sponsored Events categories.

It was observed that Volkswagen did not avail of as many questions in the New Feature Launch category, as the company used to in the categories for New Product Launch, Promotion and Sponsored Events. As explained earlier, questions motivate people to comment (DeVries et al., 2012), and Volkswagen may have been avoiding comments as the company was still in the early stage of the post crisis phase. A company should not be completely avoiding negative comments, because whether content is positive or negative, it enhances general interest among followers (DeVries et al., 2012). Reducing the amount of questions in the New Feature Launch category, may be a reason for why New Feature Launch did not receive as much attention as the other categories (New Product Launch, Promotion and Sponsored Events).

Even if a company should focus on sharing regular content once it is no longer dominating media headlines (Bradley, 2016), it is still crucial that the company follows a post crisis strategy, through keeping the audience updated on crisis related news. Coombs (2007) stresses the importance of keeping stakeholders informed about

actions taken to correct mistakes in the post crisis phase. Volkswagen has already, at the time of writing, announced many decisions on regular media channels, concerning actions taken to correct mistakes in the post crisis phase (Lilleby, 2016). Nevertheless, Volkswagen has not shared this information on Facebook. Volkswagens social media content should have been more consistent, offering insight to what is being done to compensate stakeholders, since Volkswagen promised to reveal this information in the crisis event phase. By doing so Volkswagen may have enhanced the chance to earn back stakeholder trust, as theory states that the more consistent and honest manner organizations manage to communicate information about a crisis, the more likely the organization is to predict level of reputational threat (Huang, 2008). Volkswagen should have been utilizing Facebook to offer information regarding the crisis, to avoid that its audience shared inaccurate information, as people tend to come together on social media to offer each other with emotional support, during and after a crisis (Choi & Lin, 2009).

Despite the fact that Volkswagen did not provide information about the crisis on Facebook in the posts crisis phase, the company actively continued to answer to negative comments concerning the crisis. Coombs' (2007) theory reveals that addressing stakeholders' concerns during a crisis helps reduce psychological stress, which aligned with Volkswagens actions of answering to audiences comments (picture below). Volkswagen enjoyed less engagement from its audience on Facebook, in terms of likes, yet comments and shares from its audience increased in the post crisis phase. This may imply that the audience appreciated Volkswagen answering to comments in the event phase of the crisis.



The authors conclude that Volkswagen has not utilized a recommended post crisis strategy on Facebook in order to mitigate reputational threat, in terms of not providing

information related to corrective actions (Coombs, 2015). Nevertheless, a positive observation was notified concerning Volkswagens behaviour on Facebook, where Volkswagen answered to negative comments from its audience in the post crisis phase. This indicates that Volkswagen moved towards a higher degree of building intimacy in its relationship with its audience, through monitoring posts with the aim to understand its audience's feelings related to the emissions crisis (Kozinets, 2014).

5.4.2 Twitter Engagement in the Post Crisis Phase

From looking at figure 19, the authors verify that Volkswagen provided more content within the Special Days category, by building excitement around days such as Christmas, New Years and Valentine's Day. This is perceived as a change, compared to content that was mainly shared prior to the crisis. Volkswagen focused more on categories within the Promotion and New Product Launch categories prior to the crisis. This type of content was more informing and product related, than the "softer" content provided in the Special Days category.

From looking at figure 20 and appendix 9.2, the authors verify that content within the Special Days category engaged Volkswagens audience. It is thereby verified that Volkswagen aimed to capture stakeholder's attention, through the use of emotional/softer content (Special Days). It is implied that Volkswagen managed to align with Sicilia & Palazón's (2008) theory, by tweeting content that was appealing to its audience. Another observation that was verified from looking at figure 20 is that the Retweet category received a lot of attention, both in terms of retweets and likes, however this category was not shared frequently in the post crisis phase.

As explained in the Facebook section, it is appropriate to start posting regular content again once the company is no longer dominating headlines (Bradley, 2016). However, a company should be conscious about responding to negative comments in the post crisis phase, and share information concerning actions taken to compensate the audience from the damages (Coombs, 2007). The authors indicate from looking at figure 18, that the audiences' activity level increased in the posts crisis phase, which aligns with the fact that stakeholder's social media use increases during a crisis (Pew Research Center, 2006).

An article from Econsultancy, indicated that Volkswagen has never answered to a tweet after the crisis broke out, Volkswagen mainly used its Twitter account to broadcast information (Davis, 2015). Theory suggests that an organization should be active on Twitter as people are more open to communicate on Twitter, because social media interaction signals higher level of willingness to solve a problem (Kerkhof et Al, 2011). Volkswagen should have taken into account that its social media audience are more likely to perceive content posted on Twitter as more credible, than what is posted on traditional media channels during a crisis (Procopio & Procopio, 2007). The fact that Volkswagen avoided sharing information concerning the crisis, or answering to tweets in the post crisis phase, may fire back at the company, since it is clear that the audience desired to interact on Twitter in the post crisis phase (Figure 18). This aligns with theory stating that the public often comes together to offer each other support on social media, during a crisis (Choi & Lin, 2009).

Despite the fact that Volkswagen did not actively respond to tweets on Twitter, it is perceived from looking at figure 18 that Volkswagen enjoyed a significant increase in audience activity, in terms of likes and retweets in the post crisis phase. The twitter storm that broke out along with the crisis, and also the fact that Volkswagens number of followers increased when the crisis took place, may be critical factors that motivated people to notice Volkswagens Twitter account (Davis, 2015). These two factors may explain why Volkswagen experienced an increase in engaging audience (Figure 18) in the post crisis phase. This aligns with the fact that stakeholders may turn to social media to seek for information, because they are more likely to accept messages on social media, than messages published on regular media concerning a crisis (Kerkhof et Al, 2011).

The authors conclude that Volkswagens should have more actively taken avail of Twitter in the post crisis phase. Volkswagen should have aimed to tweet crisis related messages, as it was evident that Volkswagens audience increased their activity level on Volkswagens Twitter account, in the post crisis phase. Twitter may therefore have been a viable site to reach out with crisis related information, before any other sources were able to. Communicating information in a consistent and honest manner on Twitter may have increased Volkswagens ability to predict level of reputational threat (Huang, 2008). From lacking consistency in its communication, it is perceived that

Volkswagen underestimated the influence Twitter may have on stakeholders in a crisis situation.

5.4.3 Sub Conclusion

From examining Volkswagen's frequency of content published on Facebook in the post crisis phase, the authors were able to verify that Volkswagen tried to promote new car features in order to catch audiences' attention. The New Feature Launch was a category that contained entertaining videos and pictures, aiming to promote safer and more convenient car rides. It was implied that the New Feature Launch category did not receive as much attention from Volkswagens audience, as the Promotion and Sponsored Event categories received in the post crisis phase. Hence, a drawback was perceived in terms of New Feature Launch being more frequently shared, despite that it enhanced less engagement.

The authors verified that Volkswagen primarily shared tweets within the Special Days category, which received engagement from Volkswagens audience in the post crisis phase. Promotion, New Product Launch and Sponsored Events were categories that had been most frequently shared on Twitter prior to the crisis, which also received attention from the audience in the post crisis phase. Hence, Volkswagens categories most frequently shared on Twitter in post crisis phase enjoyed equal amount of engagement level.

The authors indicated that Volkswagen took avail of a rightful strategy, by going back to posting regular content, as soon as the emissions crisis was not dominating news headlines anymore. Content within the Special Days category contained entertaining cartoon videos, which satisfied the audiences' senses, both through sight and hearing. Cartoon videos were also included in the New Feature Launch category, which was frequently posted on Facebook in the post crisis phase. Thereby, the authors discovered a pattern revealing that Volkswagen aimed to enhance audience engagement, through stimulating emotions in the posts crisis phase. Hence, there was a significant change in the type of content Volkswagen posted both on Facebook and Twitter in the post crisis phase, compared to what was most frequently posted prior to the crisis. Content provided in the post crisis phase was perceived as "softer", through

indicating that Volkswagen applied cartoon characters and other elements that appealed to emotions.

A drawback that was observed on both Facebook and Twitter in the post crisis phase, was that Volkswagen failed to share consistent information regarding the crisis. Volkswagen did not provide any information on social media in the post crisis phase, concerning actions taken to compensate its customers. Despite that Volkswagen answered to complaints on Facebook in the post crisis phase, the authors believe that Volkswagen could have executed a more consistent two-way interaction in the post crisis phase, on Twitter as well. Sharing information and answering to comments are crucial elements that should be present on social media, because it signals a higher degree of willingness to solve problems.

6.0 Discussion

In this section, a set of surprising findings revealed in the analysis, will be outlined and further discussed in relation to the problem formulation. The findings selected for discussion, will together reveal Volkswagens use of social media as a crisis communication tool. Findings that will be discussed in this section are related to elements from the theoretical framework, outlined in chapter two. This chapter is divided into four different sections, firstly discussing Volkswagens lack of a crisis communication plan on social media, followed by outlining Volkswagens inconsistent communication on social media in the post crisis phase. Subsequently, reasons for the increased audience engagement that Volkswagen experienced in the post crisis phase, will be discussed based on the two foregoing sections. The last section of the discussion will outline Volkswagens change in behaviour when responding to comments on Facebook in the post crisis phase. The discussion will be summarised in a sub conclusion, at the end of this chapter.

6.1 Volkswagens Lack of a Crisis Communication Plan on Social Media

In the first part of the analysis, it was revealed that Volkswagen possessed strong online brand communities prior to the crisis, as Volkswagen availed of elements crucial for engaging an audience on social media (DeVries et al., 2012; Cova & Pace, 2006; Sicilia & Palazón, 2008; Hettler, 2010). The authors anticipated that Volkswagen would have more actively used its established online brand communities, to provide the audience with a quick initial response. The authors expected Volkswagen to handle the crisis in a manner that aligns with suggested SCCT strategies (Figure 9; Coombs, 2007). Hence, findings from Volkswagens case study align with Ki & Nekmat's (2014) theory, revealing that companies often fail to choose a rightful initial crisis response strategy on social media, aligning with SCCT. Since Volkswagen already enjoyed an actively engaged audience on its online brand communities prior to the crisis, the company was in a strong position to avail of social media in the crisis event phase. The following elements should have been in place in Volkswagens initial response, in order to mitigate reputational threat; instructing stakeholders with information on how to deal with the crisis, expressing concern and sympathy (Coombs, 2007).

By revealing that Volkswagen lacked a rightful initial crisis response, does not align with stakeholder theory, in terms of proactively and interactively engaging stakeholders with the aim to enhance strong relationships (Global Corporate Governance Forum, 2009). The analysis revealed that Volkswagen failed to interactively and consistently communicate information in a timely manner during the crisis event phase, which may result in unfavorable attitudes toward the brand (Yang et al., 2010; Huang, 2008). Perry et al. (2003), states the importance of availing of a proactive discussion between the public and the organization beforehand, during and following a crisis. The fact that Volkswagen did not avail of social media as a crisis communication tool in a favorable manner, led to Volkswagen losing the opportunity to create a real time dialogue at an early stage. Later research has proven that interactive open dialogues with stakeholders during a crisis, lead to greater positive emotions towards the company after the crisis (Yang et al., 2010). The more timely, consistent, and honest manner Volkswagen had managed to communicate the emissions crisis, the more likely the company would have been to effectively predict

levels of reputational threat, and thereby be able to mitigate it (Huang, 2008). These findings prove that Volkswagen is yet another company, failing to provide its audience with a quick initial response, and thereby underestimating social media as a crisis communication tool.

The analysis also revealed that Web 2.0 along with the social media phenomenon increases the speed of sharing user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For instance, Twitter storms with hashtags such as #dieselgate contributed to stakeholders' opinions related to the crisis spreading at a fast speed. A pattern was discovered on both Facebook and Twitter, revealing that crisis related content significantly increased audience engagement in the crisis event phase. This was illustrated by observing the increased degree of engagement Volkswagen received within its posts in the Crisis category. In turn, this aligns with the authors' knowledge gained from other scholars, indicating that people increase their activity level on social media during a crisis (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2006; Procopio & Procopio, 2007). It was therefore expected that Volkswagen would have increased its activity level in the crisis event phase, along with its audiences' increased activity level, which may in turn have reduced uncertainty and psychological stress among stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

The ability for any stakeholder to contribute to user-generated content was indicated, since anyone was able to join Volkswagens online brand communities and share information related to the crisis. This corresponds with Conway et al. (2007), stating that social media may be perceived as a risk in a crisis situation, as stakeholders who usually hold low power are able to influence other stakeholders, due to the fact that they can spread information without gatekeepers withholding them from doing so. These are underlying factors, placing emphasis on the importance of providing a quick initial response, since stakeholders who usually hold low power may be less emotionally attached to the company, and thereby spread inaccurate information about the crisis. Volkswagen may have reduced uncertainty and avoided other sources from sharing inaccurate information (Coombs, 2007), if interactive open dialogues had been in place at an early stage. This is considered vital as social media users seek for interactive communication to reduce uncertainty during a crisis (Procopio, 2007). Hence, Volkswagens lack of a quick response may have created uncertainty among its

social media audience, which could have been avoided by providing detailed crisis related information in Volkswagens initial response on both Facebook and Twitter.

Volkswagens use of social media in the crisis event and post crisis phase, verified that Volkswagen lacked a plan for using social media during a crisis. It is thereby assumed that Volkswagen lacked a crisis communication plan beforehand, relating to applying social media as a crisis communication tool. It is recommended by scholars that any company should have a crisis management plan outlined before a crisis outbreak (Burnett, 1998; Coombs, 2007). The authors believe that companies should increase their awareness of the impact social media may have on their reputational outcome in the 21st century (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), as there are several cases where companies have failed to take avail of social media during a crisis.

Further on, the analysis implied that Volkswagen had a communicate strategy (Kozinets, 2014), where the company built excitement in its relationship with its audience prior to the crisis. Content posted on Facebook and Twitter was in line with this strategy, as Volkswagen emphasized on sharing promotional content with e.g. the use of brand ambassadors to promote Volkswagens cars and sponsored events. The authors believe Volkswagen might have succeeded to give a rightful initial crisis response once the crisis took place, if the company had possessed a strategy for building intimacy in relationships with its audience prior to the crisis (Kozinets, 2014). A commune strategy emphasizes on understanding the audiences interests, through listening and monitoring posts (Kozinets, 2014). If Volkswagen had possessed a commune strategy prior to the crisis, the company may have obtained a better understanding for attributing the cause of the crisis, with the purpose of decreasing stakeholders' psychological stress (Coombs, 2007).

6.2 Inconsistency on Social Media

The fact that Volkswagen posted information unrelated to the crisis on Facebook and Twitter the same day as the crisis broke out, was an unexpected action. This increased the ability for other sources to publish information regarding the crisis before Volkswagen. It was revealed in the analysis that Volkswagens social media audience significantly increased their engagement towards the crisis related posts, which should

have motivated Volkswagen to increase its frequency of posts within the Crisis category. Yet, the findings indicated that Volkswagen had a low amount of posts within the Crisis category in the event and post crisis phase. This does not align with the fact that the audience should be placed in the centre of attention, in order to build a strong online brand community (Cova & Pace, 2006). By not providing content that is expected by the audience during a crisis, may lead to lack of trust, which in turn may lead to negative attitudes towards the company (Coombs, 2007; Yang et al., 2010).

Coombs (2007) and Huang (2008), argue for the importance of following up with information concerning actions taken to repair damages in the post crisis phase. This type of content was lacking on both Facebook and Twitter in the post crisis phase, as findings revealed insights verifying that Volkswagen stopped posting crisis related posts by the 01st of January 2016. The authors have discovered that other sources e.g. Cars.com, E24, The Guardian etc. have provided on going information regarding the crisis in the post crisis phase. Volkswagen should have continued to update informing content relating to the crisis on social media in the post crisis phase, such as a plan of action and information regarding product recalls. Theory suggests that an organization should be active on social media, because people are more open to communicate on social media, as it signals higher level of willingness to solve problems (Kerkhof et al., 2011).

By not providing the audience with consistent information on social media, may have created an impression that Volkswagen was holding back on information and was therefore less willing to solve the crisis. This is a vital element that should be in place, since stakeholders usually turn to social media to seek for information, as they are more likely to accept messages on social media, than messages published in regular media (Kerkhof et al., 2011). If Volkswagen had provided consistent information on social media, it is likely that the audience would have found the information about the crisis more reliable, which may in turn have enhanced the ability for the company to earn back stakeholder trust (Huang, 2008). Since Volkswagen lacks consistency in its communication on social media, the company may experience difficulties when earning back stakeholder trust in the long run.

6.3 Increased Audience Engagement in the Post Crisis Phase

The analysis revealed that the engagement of Volkswagens audience, increased on Facebook and Twitter in the post crisis phase, despite the fact that Volkswagen had a lower activity level in the crisis event phase. Despite the fact that Volkswagen only posted a few number of posts containing crisis related content, the Crisis category received significant engagement in the crisis event phase. As Volkswagens audience should be placed in the centre of attention when enhancing engagement on online brand communities (Cova & Pace, 2006), the authors presumed that the lack of providing consistent crisis related posts, would have led to a decrease in audience engagement. Based on the discussion in section 6.1 and 6.2, it was clarified that Volkswagen lacked a coherent social media strategy for communicating the crisis. Hence, it was not anticipated that the audiences' social media engagement would increase in the post crisis phase.

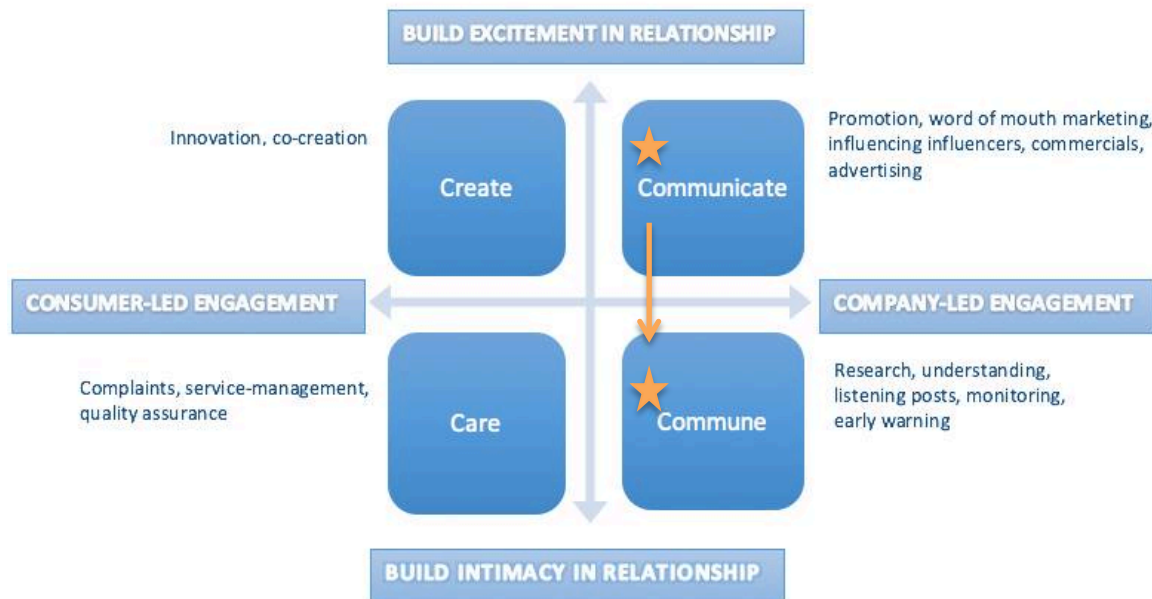
Volkswagen experienced an increase in the level of its audience's engagement, in terms of comments on Facebook in the post crisis phase, which may derive from Volkswagen actively responding to comments in the crisis event phase. Since Volkswagen handled its Facebook site by replying more actively to audience's comments in the crisis event phase, it would have been anticipated that Volkswagens Facebook site would have experienced more engagement than its Twitter site, also in terms of likes and shares. However, Volkswagen received more followers on Twitter once the crisis broke out, which in turn might explain the significant increase in audience engagement in the post crisis phase. A primary reason for people turning to Twitter to seek for information about the emissions crisis, may derive from the fact that people are more likely to accept messages that are tweeted than messages in regular media (Kerkhof et al., 2011). This aligns with the authors' knowledge gained from other scholars, indicating that people increase their activity level on social media during a crisis (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2006; Procopio & Procopio, 2007).

Along with the significant increase in audience engagement, the authors assume that stakeholders expected Volkswagen to be present with on-going information on social media. The authors therefore believe that people's interest for seeking crisis related

information on social media, was the main reason for increased audience engagement in the post crisis phase. People seem more willing to gather information from interactive mediums, such as Facebook and Twitter. Hence, it is considered vital that Volkswagen strives to continuously meet stakeholder motivations to engage in the post crisis phase, as there was a clear shift in audience motivations to engage on social media after the crisis took place. Increased positive attitudes toward Volkswagen may emerge if Volkswagen meets audience's needs, and foster motivations, that lay behind its audience participation on Facebook and Twitter in the post crisis phase (Jin & Liu, 2010; Yang et al, 2010).

6.4 Volkswagens Change in Behavior when Responding to Comments on Facebook

The authors observed that Volkswagen did not answer to negative comments on Facebook prior to the crisis. However, the authors noticed that Volkswagen more actively responded to negative comments on Facebook in the crisis event and post crisis phase. It is therefore presumed that Volkswagen changed its behaviour after the crisis took place, and enhanced its understanding towards its audience motivations to engage. This is related to the fact that answering to negative and positive comments are equally important, as brand fans want to engage in vivid discussions that are both negative and positive (De Vries et al., 2012; Fournier & Lee, 2009). As mentioned in section 6.1, it would have been desired for Volkswagen to increase intimacy in its relationship with its audience (Kozinets, 2014), in order to understand underlying motivations for engaging them on social media in the crisis event and post crisis phase. It was observed that Volkswagen changed its behaviour, and started answering to its audiences' negative comments on Facebook in the event and post crisis phase. Hence, the authors assume that Volkswagen changed its strategy, towards building intimacy in its relationship with its audience on Facebook (Kozinets, 2014).



By shifting its strategy for leveraging social brand engagement, from a communicate strategy towards a commune strategy, the authors believe Volkswagen increased its focus towards understanding stakeholders motivations to engage on Facebook after the crisis took place (Kozinets, 2014). The fact that Volkswagen answered to its audiences comments on Facebook during the crisis event and post crisis phase, may have resembled more connecting and open dialogues, which in turn may have increased audiences' motivations to engage (Mayfield, 2008). Volkswagens change of behaviour may be beneficial, as organizations should embrace conflicts in their brand communities, instead of walking against the fire. This is believed to be a winning strategy to mitigate reputational threat, as people seek for emotional support and look for communities where they can cultivate interests (Fournier & Lee, 2009). As mentioned earlier, the Crisis category increased the audiences' activity level, especially on Facebook. Thus, a pattern was discovered, revealing that the Crisis category was the new category of interest among Volkswagens audience. This was a change from the more engaging categories prior to the crisis, which merely contained promotional and entertaining content. Therefore, Volkswagen should have posted crisis related content more frequently in the crisis event and post crisis phase, as this category was desired by the audience. Once personal needs in an online brand community are met, brand awareness may increase (ibid).

6.5 Sub Conclusion

Firstly, the authors have discovered that Volkswagen lacked a crisis communication plan beforehand, outlining how to handle social media in a crisis situation. This led to the company failing to provide a quick initial response on Facebook and Twitter once the crisis occurred. Volkswagen should have communicated the crisis in a more timely and honest manner to reduce uncertainty and psychological stress among its stakeholders. Secondly, it became evident that Volkswagen lacked consistency when providing crisis related information, as the company significantly lowered its activity level in the crisis event phase. People are more open to communicate on social media, as it signals a higher level of willingness to solve problems, which is why Volkswagen should have increased its presence there. The lack of consistent information may have created an impression that Volkswagen was less willing to solve the crisis, which in turn may lead to difficulties when earning back stakeholder trust.

Having revealed that Volkswagen failed within crucial areas when managing the crisis, it was surprising to observe that the company experienced an increase in audience engagement in the post crisis phase. A shift in audience motivations was detected on Volkswagens social media channels, in the event and posts crisis phase. It was observed that motivations to engage went from the audience being interested in promotional and entertaining content, to a higher degree of interest in crisis related posts. The authors assume, that the increased engagement derived from audiences desire to seek for information concerning the crisis, on interactive communication channels. Volkswagen should therefore have increased its awareness of the shift in audiences' motivations, to engage on social media in the post crisis phase.

As a final surprising finding, the authors perceived that Volkswagen changed its behavior on Facebook after the crisis took place. The company went from neglecting negative comments prior to the crisis, and started paying more attention to negative sentiments, by providing answers to negative comments. This implies that Volkswagen shifted its strategy from a communicate (building excitement in relationships) to a commune strategy (building intimacy in relationships), as the company increased its understanding towards stakeholders motivations. This was

revealed from observing that Volkswagen answered to both negative and positive comments on Facebook, in the event and post crisis phase. The authors have detected that Volkswagen has increased its understanding towards audiences' motivations to engage on Facebook. However, the company should have provided a higher level of consistency on both Facebook and Twitter, by publishing crisis related information, to keep its audience informed, and avoid that they seek information from other sources.

7.0 Conclusion

This chapter will outline the conclusion, where the authors aim to answer the problem formulation, based on the sub conclusions from the analysis and the discussion. The conclusion aims to answer the problem formulation: *How has Volkswagen used social media as a crisis communication tool?* As a result of using mixed methods in this exploratory case study, the authors obtained new insights to how Volkswagen used social media as a crisis communication tool. This study requires further research in order to be generalized, however some of the revealed findings complement existing theory.

This study provided insights, confirming that the most critical factor for engaging an audience on social media is to meet their underlying motivations for engaging; content should be fun, exciting and informing. The authors verified that Volkswagen enjoyed strong online brand communities prior to the crisis, through building excitement in its relationships with its audience. It was discovered that Volkswagen engaged its audience with the use of entertaining, dynamic and informative content; hence, a pattern was discovered, in coherence with Volkswagen frequently posting a certain set of categories prior to the crisis (e.g. Promotion, Sponsored Events). Based on these findings, the authors verify that Volkswagen motivated its audience to engage on social media prior to the crisis. Hence, by enjoying strong online brand communities prior to the crisis, Volkswagen was able to take avail of social media to engage with its stakeholders in the crisis event phase and post crisis phase.

Findings verified that Volkswagen significantly decreased its activity level on both Facebook and Twitter in the crisis event phase, while its audience increased its activity level. It was revealed that Volkswagen was more interactive in its

communication with its audience on Facebook than Twitter, by answering to negative comments in the event and post crisis phase. Hence, Volkswagen had a higher degree of consistency on Facebook than on Twitter, in the event and post crisis phase. On the basis of Volkswagen answering to comments on Facebook, the authors revealed that Volkswagen went from building excitement in its relationships prior to the crisis, towards building a higher degree of intimacy in its relationships once the crisis took place. However, Volkswagen could have provided a higher degree of consistency in its communication on both Facebook and Twitter, as information concerning the crisis was absent in the post crisis phase. The company should have taken advantage of Facebook and Twitter more actively, with the aim to mitigate reputational threat, since people come together during and after a crisis, to provide each other with emotional support through sharing information.

The findings revealed insights, proving that Volkswagen failed to choose a rightful initial crisis response strategy. This is critical to point out, since social media should be availed as a communication tool for offering a quick response, once a crisis occurs. Volkswagen was late to offer a full apology, which means that other sources were able to offer insights about the crisis on social media before the company did. Hence, the authors conclude that Volkswagen lacked an established plan before the crisis broke out, outlining how the company should have handled social media channels to offer an initial crisis response. Despite the poorly executed initial response, it is assumed that Volkswagens reputational goodwill, and the fact that the company has not suffered from a similar crisis in the past, will enhance its possibility to earn back stakeholder trust in the future.

Crisis history	Previous relationship with stakeholders	Crisis responsibility	Crisis communication strategy first applied on social media as an initial response	The appropriate crisis communication strategy that should have been applied on social media as an initial response
Good	Good	Medium	Denial	Apology

Based on the findings, the authors conclude that Volkswagen availed of social media in a way that was desired by its audience prior to the crisis. Once the crisis took place, Volkswagen failed to use its online brand communities as a crisis communication

tool. Volkswagen should have offered an apology much quicker and been more consistent when sharing information about the crisis. If Volkswagen had managed to offer a higher level of consistency with crisis related information in the post crisis phase, the company may have met its audience's motivations to engage, and increased the ability to mitigate reputational threat.

7.1 Managerial Implications

A set of managerial implications will be outlined, in order to link the findings from this single case study to real life. The managerial implications will be based on findings indicating that Volkswagen is yet another company lacking the ability to utilize social media as a crisis communication tool. Since an organization is likely to experience a crisis at some point, it is vital to have a crisis management plan outlined beforehand, which will in turn, mitigate reputational threat (Coombs, 2007). With the rise of Web 2.0, it has become crucial for managers in the 21st century to incorporate social media as a crisis communication tool. The managerial implications outlined below are based upon the three distinct phases of a crisis – pre crisis, crisis event and post crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Pre-Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish strong online brand communities, through providing content that engages the audience. • Build a two-way interaction with stakeholders who are present on social media. • Place the audience in centre of attention through building excitement and intimacy in relationships. • Plan for a potential crisis taking place, and allocate tasks within the crisis management team beforehand (scenario planning).
Crisis-Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a rightful crisis communication strategy (SCCT). • Provide a quick initial response, on regular and social media channels. • Provide consistent and honest information regarding the crisis, and answer to every stakeholders concern on social media. Do not neglect negative comments from the audience.
Post-Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a two-way interactive communication with the audience. • Keep providing information regarding the crisis, and continue to answer to negative comments. • Monitor the social media sites, to understand which elements should be in place, in order to motivate audience to engage in the post crisis phase.

Figure 26: *Managerial Implications based on the case study of Volkswagens emissions crisis*

8. Reference List

Barab, S. & Squire, K. (2004). Design-based research: putting our stake in the ground. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 13(1), 1–14.

Baron, G. (2010). Focus: Unending Flow – Case Study on Communications on the Gulf Oil Spill, *PIER founder and executive Vice President, O'Brien's Response Management*. Retrieved 29/03, 2016, from http://www.epi2oh.org/external/content/document/3571/1009367/1/Unending%2520Flow_v1.01.pdf

BBC Business. Mitsubishi Motors admits falsifying fuel economy tests. *BBC News*. Retrieved 27/04, 2016, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-36089558>

Benoit, W. (1997). Image Repair Discourse and Crisis Communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23 (2), 177-186.

Berman, S., Wicks, A., Kotha, S. & Jones, T. (1999). Does stakeholder orientation matter? The relationship between stakeholder management models and firm financial performance. *Academic of Management Journal* 42 (5): 488-506.

Blumberg, B., Cooper, D. & Schindler, P. (2008). *Business Research Methods, Second European Edition*. Berkshire:McGraw-Hill Education.

Bowler, T. (2015). Volkswagen: From the Third Reich to emissions scandal. *BBC News*. Retrieved 26/01, 2016, from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-34358783>

Bradley, D. (2016). How long should brands stay silent on social media after a deadly crisis? *PRweek* Retrieved 04/03, 2016, from: <http://www.prweek.com/article/1384777/long-brands-stay-silent-social-media-deadly-crisis>

Brodie, R., Ilic, A., Biljana, J. & Hollebeek, L. (2011). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: an exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 61 No. 1, pp. 105-114.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007). *Business research methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burnett, J. (1998). A Strategic Approach to Managing Crises. *Public Relations Review*. Vol. 24, No.4, pp.475-488.

Capriotti, P. & Morieno, A. (2007). Corporate citizenship and public relations: The importance and interactivity of social responsibility issues on corporate websites. *Public Relations Review*, 33(1), 84–91.

Cho, C. (1999). How Advertising Works on the WWW: Modified Elaboration Likelihood Model. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 21, 1, 33–50.

Choi, Y. & Lin, Y. (2009). Consumer responses to Mattel product recalls posted on online bulletin boards: Exploring two types of emotion. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(2), 198-207.

CNN Money. (2015). Volkswagen scandal... in two minutes. *CNN*. Retrieved 27/01, 2016, from: <http://money.cnn.com/2015/09/28/news/companies/volkswagen-scandal-two-minutes/>

Convince & Convert. (2015). *Words Associated With Volkswagen*. Retrieved 25/03, 2016, from <https://twitter.com/convince/status/648840137971924992>

Coombs, T. (2007). Protecting Organization Reputations During a Crisis: The Development and Application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. *Corporate Reputation Review* 10 (3): 163-176.

Coombs, T (2012). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, managing, and responding* 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Coombs, T. (2015). The Value of Communication During a Crisis: Insights from Strategic Communication. *Business Horizons* 58: 141- 148.

Coombs, T. & Holladay, S. (2002). Helping Crisis Managers Protect Reputational Assets: Initial Tests of The Situational Crisis Communication Theory. *Management Communication Quarterly* 16 (2): 165- 186.

Conway, T., Ward, M., Gerard, L. & Anke, B. (2007). Internet Crisis Potential: The Importance of a Strategic Approach to Marketing Communications. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 13(3), 213-228.

Cova, B. & Pace, C. (2006). Brand community of convenience products: new forms of customer empowerment- the case of “My Nutella- The Community”. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (9/10): 1087- 1105.

Coyle, J. & Thorson, E. (2001). The Effects of Progressive Levels of Interactivity and Vividness in Web Marketing Sites. *Journal of Advertising*, 30, 3, 65–77.

Culnan, M., McHugh, P., & Zubillaga, J. (2010). How Large U.S. Companies Can Use Twitter and Other Social Media to Gain Business Value. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, Vol. 9 (4), pp. 243- 259.

Damodaran, A. (2015). Putting price tag on scandal sturm. *Blogspot: Aswath Damodaran* Retrieved 02/04, 2016, from <http://aswathdamodaran.blogspot.dk/2015/10/putting-price-tag-on-scandal-sturm-und.html>

Davis, B. (2015). Social Media and Crisis Management- a Case study of Volkswagen. *Econsultancy*. Retrieved 03/05, 2016, from <https://econsultancy.com/blog/66972-social-media-and-crisis-management-a-volkswagen-case-study/>

DeBord, M. (2015). What VW is getting right in the emissions-cheating scandal. *Business Insider*. Retrieved 03/03, 2016, from <http://uk.businessinsider.com/what-vw-is-getting-right-in-the-emissions-cheating-scandal-2015-9?r=US&IR=T>

DeVries, L., Gensler, S., & LeeFlang, P. (2012). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: An investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 83-91.

Durden, D. (2015). The VW Scandal is bad news for Diesel. *ZeroHedge*. Retrieved 26/01, 2016, from: <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2015-09-24/vw-scandal-bad-news-diesel>

Dykeman, B. (2005). Cultural Implications of Crisis Intervention. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*. Vol.32, No.1, pp. 45-48.

Easterby-Smith, M. Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P.(2012). *Management Research*. 4th Edition. SAGE Publications Ltd: London.

Eler, A. (2012). Study: Why Do People Use Facebook? *Read Write*. Retrieved 29/03, 2016, from http://readwrite.com/2012/01/16/study_why_do_people_use_facebook/

EPA. (2015). Laws and regulations regulated to the Volkswagen violations. Retrieved 01/02, 2016 from: <https://www.epa.gov/vw/laws-and-regulations-related-volkswagen-violations>

Evwind. (2009). *The auto industry is highly concentrated: Toyota Motors, Nissan, Honda Motor, Ford and Daimler*. Retrieved 30/01, 2016, from: <http://www.evwind.es/2009/12/31/the-auto-industry-is-a-highly-concentrated-toyota-motors-nissan-honda-motor-ford-and-daimler/3144>

Facebook. (2016). About Facebook. Retrieved 21/03, 2016, from https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info/?tab=page_info

Fieseler, C. & Bucher, E. (2015). How to engage social media audiences. *BI Business Review*. Retrieved 03/04, 2016, from <http://www.bi.edu/bizreview/articles/how-to-engage-social-media-audiences/>

Fjeld, K. & Molesworth, M. (2006). PR practitioners' experiences of, and attitudes towards, the internet's contribution to external crisis communication. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. 11(4), 391–405.

Fortin, D. & Dholakia, R. (2005). Interactivity and Vividness Effects on Social Presence and Involvement with a Web-Based Advertisement. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, 3, 387–96.

Fournier, S. & Lee, L. (2009). Getting Brand Communities Right. *Harvard Business Review*. 87 (April), 105-11.

Freeman, E. (2010). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freeman, E., Harrison, J., Wicks, A., Parmar, B. & De Colle, S. (2010). *Stakeholder Theory- The State of the Art*. Cambridge University Press.

Freeman, R. & Reed, L. (1983). Stockholders and stakeholders: A new perspective on corporate governance. *California Management Review*, 25(3): 93-94.

Gates, G., Ewing, J., Russell, K. & Watkins, D.. (2016). Explaining Volkswagen's Emissions Scandal. *NYTIMES* Retrieved 30/03, 2016, from:
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/business/international/vw-diesel-emissions-scandal-explained.html?_r=0

Global Corporate Governance Forum. (2009). *Focus: Stakeholder Engagement and the Board: Integrating Best Governance Practices*. Retrieved 03/02, 2016, from:
http://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/19017b8048a7e667a667e76060ad5911/FINAL%2BFocus8_5.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Goldenberg, S. (2010). BP oil spill blamed on management and communication failures. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 02/02, 2016, from
<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/dec/02/bp-oil-spill-failures>

González-Herrero, A. & Smith, S. (2008). Crisis Communications Management on the Web: How Internet-Based Technologies are Changing the Way Public Relations Professionals Handle Business Crises. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 16 (3), 143-153.

Goodrich, K. (2011). Anarchy of Effects? Exploring Attention to Online Advertising and Multiple Outcomes. *Psychology and Marketing*. 28, 4. 417-40.

Griffin, E. (2009). *A first look at Communication theory*. 7th Edition. McGraw-Hill Higher Education, International edition.

Habibi, M., Laroche, M. & Richard, M. (2014). Brand communities based in social media: How unique are they? Evidence from two exemplary brand communities. *International Journal of Information Management*, 34 (2014): 123-132.

Harrison, S. & John, C. (1994) Managing and partnering with external stakeholders. *Academy of Management Executive*. 10(2).

Hellier, D. (2015). Former BP boss on VW scandal: "With these big crises, you have to overreact". *The Guardian*. Retrieved 06/02, 2016, from
<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/sep/26/former-bp-boss-on-vw-scandal-big-crises-overreact>

Hettler, U. (2010). *Social media marketing: Marketing mit blogs, sozialen netzwerken und weiteren anwendungen des web 2.0*. Oldenbourg, München.: Walter de Gruyter.

Hewitt, K. (1983). *Interpretation of Calamity: From the Viewpoint of Human Ecology*. Boston: Allen & Unwin Inc.

Houston-Waesche, M. (2016). Volkswagens sales drop for the first time in 13 years. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved 28/01 2016, from :
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/volkswagen-group-sales-drop-for-first-time-in-13-years-1452275074>

Hsieh, H. & Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.

Huang, Y. (2008). Trust and Relational Commitment in Corporate Crises: The Effects of Crisis Communicative Strategy and Form of Crisis Response. *Journal of Public Relations Research* 20 (3): 297-327.

Hussein, D., Alaa, G. & Hamad, A. (2009). Classifying Web 2.0 Supported Applications By Pattern of Usage: Functional & Technical Issues. *MCIS 2009 Proceedings. Paper 94*.

Internet World Stats. (2015). Internet Users in the World by Regions, November 2015. Retrieved 03/02, 2016, from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

Jakste, L. & Kuvykaite, R. (2012). Consumer Engagement in Social Media by Building the brand. *Electronic International Interdisciplinary Conference*.

Jin, Y. & Liu, B. (2010). The blog-mediated crisis communication model: Recommendations for responding to influential external blogs. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 22(4), 429-455.

Jin, Y., Liu, B., & Austin, L. (2014). Examining the Role of Social Media in Effective Crisis Management: The Effects of Crisis Origin, Information Form, and Source on Publics' Crisis Responses. *Communication Research*, 41 (1): 74- 94.

Kallstrom, H. (2015). Why growth shifted in the global automotive industry. *Market Realist* Retrieved 01/02, 2016, from: <http://marketrealist.com/2015/02/shift-growth-global-automotive-industry/>

Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.

Kelleher, T. (2009). Conversational voice, communicated commitment, and public relations outcomes in interactive online communication. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 172-188.

Kelly, A. (2012). Has Toyota's Image Recovered From The Brand's Recall Crisis? *Forbes*. Retrieved 15/04, 2016, from
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/annemariakelly/2012/03/05/has-toyotas-image-recovered-from-the-brands-recall-crisis/#68eeefb0943ae>

- Kerkhof, P., Schultz, F. & Utz, S. (2011). How to choose the right weapon. Social media represent both a catalyst for and weapon against brand crises. *Communication Director*, 76-79.
- Ki, E. & Nekmat, E. (2014). Situational crisis communication and interactivity: Usage and effectiveness of Facebook for crisis management by Fortune 500 companies. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 35 (2014): 140-147.
- Kohlbacher, F. (2006). The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(1), Art. 21.
- Kondracki, N., Wellman, N. & Amundson, D. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 34(4), 224-230.
- Kozinets. (2014). Social Brand Engagement: A New idea. *GfK Marketing Intelligence Review*. 6(4).
- KPMG. (2015). *KPMG's Global Automotive Executive Survey*. Retrieved 02/02, 2016, from: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/insights/2015/02/kpmg-global-automotive-executive-survey-2015.html>
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content Analysis- An Introduction to its Methodology*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Kuada, John E. (2012). *Research methodology: a project guide for university students*. 1st Edition. Samfundslitteratur.
- Levick, R. (2009). Dominos' Discover Social Media. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved 25/02, 2016, from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2009-04-21/dominos-discovers-social-mediabusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>
- Lilleby, J. (2016). Volkswagen tilbakekaller 524 biler i Norge. *E24*. Retrieved 21/04, 2016, from <http://e24.no/naeringsliv/volkswagen/volkswagen-tilbakekaller-800-000-biler/23646199>
- Lincoln, YS. & Guba, EG. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Littlejohn, S. & Foss, K. (2008). *Theories of Human Communication*. 9th Edition. Thomson Learning, Inc.: USA.
- Magness, V. (2008). Who Are the Stakeholders Now? An Empirical Examination of the Mitchell, Agle and Wood Theory of Stakeholder Salience. *Journal of Business Ethics* (2008) 83: 177-192; Springer.
- Malhotra, N., Birks, D. & Wills, P. (2012). *Marketing Research: An Applied Approach*. 4th Edition. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

MarketWatch. (2016). *Investing Stock- Volkswagen AG*. Retrieved 01/03, 2016, from: <http://www.marketwatch.com/investing/stock/vow?countrycode=xe>

Mayfield, A. (2008). *What is Social Media? An e-book from iCrossing*. Retrieved 28/02, 2016, from http://www.icrossing.com/uk/sites/default/files_uk/insight_pdf_files/What%20is%20Social%20Media_iCrossing_ebook.pdf

May, K. (2010). Qantas A380 incident: a lesson in social media and web PR. *TNooz*. Retrieved 27/01, 2016, from <https://www.tnooz.com/article/qantas-a380-incident-a-lesson-in-social-media-and-web-pr/>

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), 2015-10-05.

McHugh, D. (2015). VW chief warns workers of “pain” to come because of scandal. *Associated Press*. Retrieved 15/02, 2016, from: <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e77d5ab90cea49a4a69a175b21c5aa2d/new-vw-chief-brief-workers-fallout-scandal>

McKinsey. (2016). *Report January 2016- Disruptive trends that will transform the auto industry*. Retrieved 27/02, 2016, from: <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/high-tech/our-insights/disruptive-trends-that-will-transform-the-auto-industry>

Mitchell, K., Bradley, R. & Donna J. (1997). Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts. *The Academy of Management Review*. Vol. 22, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), pp. 853-886.

Mitroff, I. & Pearson, C. M. (1993). *Crisis Management: Diagnostic Guide for Improving your Organization Crisis Preparedness*. New York: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

O'Reilly, T. (2007). What is web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software. *Communications & Strategies*. 65(1), 17–37.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative, research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage publications Inc.

Pearson, C. & Clair, J. (1998). Reframing Crisis Management. *Academy of Management Review*. Vol. 23, No.1, 59-76.

Perlberg, S. (2015). The Biggest PR headaches of 2015. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved 27/01, 2016, from: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-biggest-pr-headaches-of-2015-1451386802>

Perry, D., Taylor, M. & Doerfel, M. (2003). Internet-Based Communication in Crisis Management. *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.2, pp. 206-232

Pew Research Center. (2006). *Blogger call-back survey*. Retrieved, 07/03, 2016, from <http://www.pewinternet.org>

Pick, T. (2015). 106 More Amazing Social Media and Marketing Statistics for 2014 and 2015. *Business to Community*. Retrieved 29/02, 2016, from <http://www.business2community.com/social-media/106-amazing-social-media-marketing-statistics-2014-2015-01151764#ds8WOHRKZUbUoyAY.99>

Plungis, J. & Hull, D. (2015). VWs Emissions Cheating Found by Curious Clean-Air Group. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved 29/01, 2016 from: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-09-19/volkswagen-emissions-cheating-found-by-curious-clean-air-group>

Pressault, A. (2014). How to Use Social Media to Engage With Customers and Build Your Brand. *Hootsuite*. Retrieved 26/03, 2016, from <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-use-social-media-to-engage-customers/>

Procopio, C. & Procopio, T. (2007). Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans? Internet communication, geographic community, and social capital in crisis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35, 67–87.

Quinton, S. (2013). The community brand paradigm: A response to brand management's dilemma in the digital era. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29 (7-8): 912-932.

Raney, A., Arpan, M., Pashupati, K. & Brill, D. (2003). At the Movies, on the Web: An Investigation of the Effects of Entertaining and Interactive Web Content on Site and Brand Evaluations. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 17, 4, 38–53.

Rosenthal, U., Charles, M. & Hart, P. (1989) *Coping with Crises: The Management of Disasters, Riots, and Terrorism*. Springfield: Charles C Thomas.

Ruddick, G. (2015). Volkswagen customers demand compensation over the emissions scandal. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 20/02, 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/oct/15/vw-customers-demand-answers-and-compensation-over-emissions-scandal>

Sandman, P. (2006). Crisis Communication Best Practices: Some Quibbles and Additions. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*. Vol. 34, No.3, pp. 257-262.

SAP. (2014). *The Evolving Automotive Industry- Executive Overview Automotive*. Retrieved 01/02, 2016, from: http://www.sap.com/bin/sapcom/en_us/downloadasset.2013-01-jan-03-16.industry-executive-overview-automotive-the-innovation-driven-enterprise-pdf.html

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 6th Edition. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Seeger, M. (2006). Best Practice in Risk and Crisis Communication: An Expert Panel Process. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*. Vol. 34, No.4, pp. 232-244.

Schmidt, O. (2012). Volkswagen Group Powertrain and Fuel Strategy. *Center For Automotive Research*. Retrieved 27/01, 2016, from:
http://www.cargroup.org/assets/speakers/presentations/40/schmidt_oliver.pdf

Shah, S. (2015). The Impact of Corporate Deception on Social Perception. *Pulsarplatform Social Data Intelligence..* Retrieved 20/03, 2016, from
<http://www.pulsarplatform.com/blog/2015/dieselgate-the-impact-of-corporate-deception-on-social-perception/>

Shively, K. (2014). New Study: 80% of Fortune 500 Companies Active on Facebook and Twitter. *Simply Measured*. Retrieved 10/03, 2016, from
<http://simplymeasured.com/blog/2014/09/30/new-study-80-of-fortune-500-companies-active-on-facebook-and-twitter/#i.1hc185366qfb01>

Sicilia, M. & Palazón, M. (2008). Brand communities on the internet: A case study of Coca-Cola's Spanish virtual community. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 255-270.

Sklar, C. (2013). How to use social media to understand and engage your customers. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 28/03, 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2013/mar/13/social-media-customer-engagement>

Smith, D. (1990). Beyond contingency planning: towards a model of crisis management. *Organization Environment*. Sage Publishing, No. 4, pp. 263-275.

Smith, C., Ansett, S. & Erez, L. (2011). How Gap Inc. Engaged With its Stakeholders. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. Summer 2011. 52 (4).

Social Media Examiner. (2016). *Your guide to the Social Media Jungle*. Retrieved 18/03, 2016, from <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com>

Social Times. (2014). Twitter vs Facebook: Key Statistics, Facts & Figures. Retrieved 08/03, 2016, from <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/twitter-vs-facebook-stats/502309>

Stake, R. (2000). Case studies. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.435-453). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Statista. (2015). *Volkswagen Statista Dossier about Volkswagen Group*. Retrieved 03/03, 2016, from: <http://www.statista.com/study/15785/volkswagen-statista-dossier/>

Statista. (2016) *Leading social networks worldwide as of April 2016, ranked by number of active users (in millions)* Retrieved 20/04, 2016, from
<http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

Steuer, J. (1992). Defining Virtual Reality: Dimensions Determining Telepresence. *Journal of Communication*. 42, 4, 73-93.

Taylor, D., Jeffrey, L. & David, S. (2011). Friends, Fans, and Followers: Do Ads Work on Social Networks? *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51, 1, 258–75.

The Volkswagen Group. (2014¹). *Brands and Product*. Retrieved 26/01, 2016, from: http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/brands_and_products.html

The Volkswagen Group. (2014²). *History*. Retrieved 26/01, 2016 from: http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/the_group/history.html

The Volkswagen Group. (2014³). *Annual Report*. Retrieved 27/01, 2016, from: http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/misc/pdf-dummies.bin.html/downloadfilelist/downloadfile/downloadfile_30/file/Y_2014_e.pdf

The Volkswagen Group. (2014⁴). *Sustainability Report*. Retrieved 26/01, 2016, from: http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/sustainability_and_responsibility/Sustainability_Report_2014.html

The Volkswagen Group. (2014⁵). Sustainability Report 2014- Stakeholder Management. Retrieved 02/02, 2016, from: <http://sustainabilityreport2014.volkswagenag.com/strategy/stakeholder-management>

The Volkswagen Group. (2014⁶). Shareholder Structure. Retrieved 09/03, 2016, from http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/investor_relations/share/Shareholder_Structure.html

The Volkswagen Group. (2016). *News*. Retrieved 10/03, 2016 from: http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/info_center/en/news/2016/03/Volkswagen.html

Tinsley, H. & Weiss, J. (2000). Interrater reliability and agreement. In H. E. A. Tinsley & S. D. Brown, Eds., *Handbook of Applied Multivariate Statistics and Mathematical Modeling*, pp. 95-124. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak, R. & Vetter, E. (2000). *Methods of text and discourse analysis* (Bryan Jenner, Trans.). London: Sage.

Twitter. (2016¹). Retrieved, 01/04, 2016, from <https://business.twitter.com/basics>

Twitter, (2016²). Retrieved 02/03, 2016, from <https://about.twitter.com/company>

Twitter. (2016³). Retrieved, 02/03, 2016, from <https://support.twitter.com/articles/13920>

Walther, J. B., Gay, G., & Hancock, J. T. (2005). How do communication and technology researchers study the Internet? *Communication and Technology*, 55(3), 632–657.

Web Foundation. (2015). *World Wide Web Foundation Home/About us*. Retrieved 03/04, 2016, from <http://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/>

Weiner, B. (2006) *Social Motivation, Justice, and the Moral Emotions: An Attributional Approach*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Publishers.

Wolcott, M. (2007). What is Web 2.0?. *CBS News*. Retrieved 05/03, 2016, from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-is-web-20/>

Yang, S., Kang, M. & John, P. (2010). Effects of Narratives, Openness to Dialogic Communication, and Credibility Engagement in Crisis Communication Through Organizational Blogs. *Communication Research*, 37 (4): 473-497.

Yin, R. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1)58-65.

Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. 5th Edition. Los Angeles: Sage publications.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix: Facebook Posts

#Nr.	Date	Post	Likes	Comment	Share	Category	Picture	Video
1	02.01.15	Four incredible reasons to celebrate. The all-new VW Golf Family wins 2015 Motor Trend Magazine Car of the Year®. #MTCOTY #VWGOLF4theWin	1048	31	132	New product launch		x
2	06.01.15	This week we load up the bike racks and head to Austin, TX, with our partners at USA Cycling for the Cyclo-cross National Championships. Enjoy this recap from last year with VW-sponsored rider Tim Johnson!	207	3	34	Sponsored event		x
3	06.01.15	Make 2015 a year of family adventures: see more places in the Passat TDI	389	4	18	Promotion	x	
4	07.01.15	In September 2014, Tanner Foust debuted the 544-HP GRC Beetle at the Port of Los Angeles. #VWRacing	757	9	142	Sponsored event		x
5	09.01.15	In 1994, Chad got his first Volkswagen: a 1974 Super Beetle. He's been hooked ever since. He's owned three different Jetta models, and his current daily driver is a 2012 GTI. He says that one of his favorite things about driving a VW is making friends with like-minded owners. We couldn't agree more. #VWDriver	2373	157	47	Promotion	x	
6	09.01.15	Here are four reasons why we love USA Cycling #CXNats riders.	1456	11	27			
7	09.01.15	It takes a lot of strength and endurance to conquer a Cyclo-cross course. Watch VW-sponsored athlete Tim Johnson walk us through the 2015 USA Cycling #CXNats course in Austin, TX.	402	13	220	Sponsored event		x
8	11.01.15	We spent a week with our USA Cycling partners at the Cyclo-cross National Championships in Austin, TX. These riders are some of the toughest we've seen!	4365	28	61	Sponsored event	x	
9	13.01.15	We spent a week with our USA Cycling partners at the Cyclo-cross National Championships in Austin, TX. These riders are some of the toughest we've seen!	1768	100	413	New product launch		x
10	14.01.15	The updated 2015 Volkswagen Touareg: ready for action and available now. #VWNAIAS	5688	127	175	Promotion	x	
11	16.01.15	Your chance to experience the all-new 2015 Volkswagen Golf R is just around the corner. #VWNAIAS	7784	168	282	New product launch	x	
12	22.01.15	After winning 2015 North American Car of the Year, the all-new Volkswagen Golf and Golf GTI have taken home more than 10 awards in the U.S. #VWNAIAS	9252	176	412	Promotion	x	
13	26.01.15	Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila take the long and winding road to the podium in a Polo R WRC. #VWRacing	4982	90	17	Promotion	x	
14	30.01.15	Tyler bought this 1967 Beetle when he was only 16. Over the next 14 years, he lovingly restored and customized what he calls his "dream come true." #VWDriver	8176	122	291	Promotion	x	
15	12.02.15	What happens when Tanner Foust gets ahold of a Volkswagen Beetle? You get one wicked machine. #VWChicago	4252	1016	4208	Promotion	x	
16	19.02.15	What's a Fat Bike? We checked it out this past weekend at the USA Cycling Fat Bike National Championships, up at Powder Mountain, UT. #VW4Cycling	3553	161	1230	Sponsored event		x
17	24.02.15	Through his 2011 Jetta Sportwagen TDI, Aaron passed his #VWDubLove on to his kids, who love the German engineering as much as he does.	4083	118	98	Promotion	x	
18	27.02.15	We don't know about you, but all we see is white and gold.	16040	298	940	Promotion	x	

19	03.03.15	Turn your dream of owning a Volkswagen into a vivid reality. Right now, Volkswagen is offering some truly inspired deals for a limited time only. So hurry in, hop in the seat of your dream Volkswagen and drive off during the Stop Dreaming, Start Driving Sales Event going on now.	465	15	65	Promotion	x	
20	08.03.15	Some say his launches have sped up the Earth's rotation. Watch Tanner Foust this Monday at 8:30pm ET on Top Gear as he teaches James May how to race a 600 hp rallycross Volkswagen. #VWRacing	10401	121	450	Sponsored event	x	
21	18.03.15	The 2015 Volkswagen Golf is the most awarded car of the year. At this rate, we may need a bigger hatch.	4328	139	283	Promotion	x	
22	06.04.15	On opening day, we wish pitcher Daniel Norris the best of luck. Even though he's in the big leagues now, Daniel chose to live out of a 1978 Volkswagen Westfalia during spring training. He bought the van, which he calls "Shaggy," right after graduating high school in 2011. Every year, he drives it to spring training in Florida from his home in Tennessee. Good luck this season, Daniel!	10699	222	637	Promotion	x	
23	08.04.15	At the 2015 New York International Auto Show, there truly is a Beetle for everyone.	837	74	271	Promotion		x
24	14.04.15	The newest Volkswagen Vision GT concept, #GTISupersport, has made its way to consoles and is now playable in Gran Turismo 6. #VisionGTI #GT6	1456	76	451	New product launch		x
25	15.04.15	When you're part of the 2015 Volkswagen Golf family, everyone's a winner.	808	22	202	Promotion		x
26	18.04.15	Frankie Andreu, former professional cyclist, drove us through the USA Cycling #CritNats course in the GRC Beetle. What will it take to win? According to him: maneuverability, speed and a great setup. #VW4Cycling Tune in now: https://youtu.be/M8Z5n0NX74s	289	28	39	Sponsored event		x
27	21.04.15	For Samantha Hill, her blue 1971 VW Super Beetle, Jasper, was the key to adventure. Soon, the rest of her family joined the party. With yellow, orange and blue Beetle models in the driveway, the Hills proudly claim the nickname of "the crazy Bug family."	16121	379	1039	Promotion		x
28	01.05.15	Do two wheels fuel your passion as much as four? It's #NationalBikeMonth! Post your favorite biking destinations pics on Instagram using #VW4Cycling.	6745	160	221	Sponsored event	x	
29	05.05.15	Celebrate #NationalBikeMonth! Get out and ride: Join the National Bike Challenge with PeopleForBikes.org: http://nationalbikechallenge.org/ #VW4Cycling	890	35	745	Sponsored event		x
30	08.05.15	"It's good to adapt to what drives you that day while keeping the original mission near the forefront." Volkswagen-sponsored cyclist Tim Johnson's endless determination makes him our rider of the week. #VW4Cycling	4485	36	54	Sponsored event	x	
31	14.05.15	This Friday is National Bike to Work Day. Get in gear and make your commute heart healthy. #VW4Cycling #NationalBikeMonth	240	20	69	Sponsored event	x	
32	19.05.15	From hidden trails to the open road, where do you like to ride? Celebrate #NationalBikeMonth and post your favorite biking getaway pics on Instagram using #VW4Cycling.	750	19	23	Sponsored event	x	

33	21.05.15	Mirrored off a similar show in Austria, the ninth annual Southern Wörthersee Volkswagen enthusiast gathering took place last weekend in Helen, GA. With the recent launch of the 2015 Golf R, we brought all four generations of .R models to the show.	3367	220	1027	Promotion		x
34	21.05.15	Let's take a preview ride around this Saturday's USA Cycling Time Trials course on the handlebars of Tanner Foust's 900 horsepower Rockstar Drift vehicle! #VW4Cycling	5389	314	3831	Sponsored event		x
35	23.05.15	What does it take to compete at this weekend's Volkswagen USA Cycling Professional Road Race? Watch as Tim Johnson shows Tanner Foust what it's all about! #VW4Cycling	494	10	296	Sponsored event		x
36	27.05.15	Tanner Foust and Scott Speed: professional drivers... or summer interns?	1766	67	741	Promotion		x
37	27.05.15	Introducing the Volkswagen Andretti Rallycross Team liveries for the start of the 2015 Red Bull Global Rallycross Season.	910	19	75	Sponsored event		
38	29.05.15	Don't miss the first race of the season! Tune-in to see Tanner Foust and Scott Speed tear it up at GRC Ft. Lauderdale this Sunday, May 31st at 3:00pm ET on NBC. #VW4Racing #VWGRC	6049	48	275	Sponsored event	x	
39	05.06.15	Ever wondered what Red Bull Global Rallycross racing is all about? From the tarmac to the jumps, Tanner Foust and Scott Speed school you in all things #VWGRC!	846	27	384	Sponsored event		x
40	07.06.15	Tune in to Food Network tonight at 9/8c as Volkswagen helps kick the 11th season of #FoodNetworkStar into high gear. #VW	107	7	20	CSR		x
41	19.06.15	Red Bull Global Rallycross racing heads to Florida for the first double-header of the season! Tune-in to see Tanner Foust and Scott Speed at GRC Daytona this Sunday, June 21st at 2:00pm ET on NBC. #VWGRC	1222	56	235	Sponsored event		x
42	20.06.15	It's official: Tanner Foust advances to the finals; Scott Speed will go to the LCQ at Red Bull Global Rallycross Daytona. Go Team #VWGRC!!!	376	4	25	Sponsored event	x	
43	21.06.15	An inside look into Tanner Foust's WIN at Red Bull Global Rallycross Daytona yesterday. Go Team #VWGRC!!! #HumbleBrag	407	19	42	Sponsored event		x
44	21.06.15	Team #VWGRC FTW: No. 34 and No. 41 are in the Red Bull Global Rallycross Daytona Supercar Finals!	478	12	26	Sponsored event	x	
45	21.06.15	What an amazing weekend here at Red Bull Global Rallycross Daytona! We're so proud of our very own Tanner Foust for his 1st place WIN of Round 2 Supercar championships. Next stop for Team #VWGRC? #RedBullGRC MCAS New River!	5918	61	245	Sponsored event		
46	22.06.15	Happy Father's Day!	653	21	173	Promotion		x
47	25.06.15	#TBT to earlier this month when we visited Fastivus with Tanner Foust and Tim Johnsoncx. Who is going to WaterWerks NW this weekend?	3635	236	1079	Sponsored event		x
48	26.06.15	Car maintenance tips. Answers from our Volkswagen Certified Technicians. Features on VW Accessories. All on video. How convenient. Explore the video page here: http://bit.ly/1FkzYsj	87	14	5	Promotion	x	
49	29.06.15	From gaming to reality! Watch as #ForzaHorizon2 gamer, Zach Lamb, gets behind-the-scenes access with Tanner Foust and the Rockstar Energy Drink US Beetle GRC in Daytona at Red Bull Global Rallycross! #VWGRC	991	29	188	Sponsored event		x
50	30.06.15	Passing on the left! Flashback to 1972, when the #VWBeetle became the most produced car model of all time.	2200	55	365	Promotion	x	
51	07.07.15	The all-new Golf SportWagen is the sportier-utility vehicle that's changing how people think of wagons. Now VW is on a mission to change how you think of sharks. Visit SharksReScored.com to learn more. #VW #SharkWeek	234	17	80	New product launch		x
52	08.07.15	Volkswagen is donating \$50K to @Oceana. Visit SharksReScored.com and share the site experience to help save sharks. #VW #SharkWeek	949	42	121	CSR	x	
53	13.07.15	Here are some of our favorite pictures from Red Bull Global Rallycross 2015. Special shout-outs to our drivers Tanner Foust and Scott Speed, and partner Andretti Autosport. #VWGRC	614	43	73	Sponsored event	x	

54	13.07.15	You make the sounds. We make the video. Harness the power of your voice and create a unique Volkswagen Golf R film. http://rrr.vw.com #VW #GolfR #UnleashYourRrrr	721	72	390	Promotion		x
55	17.07.15	With custom rides, a drag strip and autocross, who wouldn't want to soak up #Waterfest21? Learn all you need to know here: http://www.waterfest.net/	11278		327	Sponsored event	x	
56	18.07.07	We're headed off-road this week for the USA Cycling Mountain Bike Nationals.	4513	53	65	Sponsored event	x	
57	19.07.15	Sneak peak from our stunt filming with Tanner Foust and Charlie Harrison during the USA Cycling Mountain Bike Nationals. Look for the full video release next week.	3502	18	74	Sponsored event	x	
58	19.07.15	Day 2 of #Waterfest21 is underway. It's going to be a hot one - stay tuned!	386	9	13	Promotion	x	
59	20.07.15	Press play to see all the amazing custom rides from #Waterfest21. Let us know your favorites in the comments.	941	60	129	Promotion		x
60	20.07.15	#Waterfest21	6832	157	363	Promotion	x	
61	21.07.15	Do you have racing in your blood? Watch as Scott Speed and Tanner Foust take it from the RC tracks to the #RedBullGRC MCAS New River base. #VWGRC	1189	58	287	Sponsored event		x
62	22.07.15	Take the all-new #VW #GolfR for a spin. Rrrright now. Tanner Foust did! http://rrr.vw.com	295	21	137	Promotion		x
63	24.07.15	Our three old wives are back for the model rear end event. http://www.vw.com/special-offers #yearend #rearend #VWSummerSale	219	143	146	Promotion		x
64	24.07.15	This Saturday, Red Bull Global Rallycross takes to the Motor City as Tanner Foust and Scott Speed show the Midwest what #VWGRC is made of!	482	37	147	Sponsored event	x	
65	28.07.15	Wake your inner beast and take the all-new Volkswagen Golf R for a spin! We want to hear you roarrr. http://rrr.vw.com #VW #GolfR #UnleashYourRrrr	618	47	228	Promotion		x
66		What do Jill Kintner, Riley Mueller, Evelyn Dong, Charlie Harrison, and Tanner Foust all have in common? Competitive drive. #VW4Cycling	1631	80	700	Sponsored event		x
67	03.08.15	Tanner Foust waxes poetic about the new #GolfR in this behind the scenes clip from our shoot at Willow Springs. http://rrr.vw.com #UnleashYourRrrr	879	54	249	Promotion		x
68	07.08.15	King Tuff, Greater Alexander, Dreamers and Jessica Hernandez & The Deltas hear their music for the first time on the VW Fender Premium Audio system after performing!	132	20	37	Promotion		x
69	13.08.15	Take a look at the crew that drives the #VWGRC team to victory in the #RedBullGRC Series.	417	23	98	Sponsored event		x
70	17.08.15	Here are some of our favorite pictures from Red Bull Global Rallycross 2015. Special shout-outs to our drivers Tanner Foust and Scott Speed, and partner Andretti Autosport. #VWGRC	614	43	73	Sponsored event	x	
71	25.08.15	This summer, get more from your ride with #VWAccessories. http://bit.ly/1g66oT4	424	57	52	Promotion	x	

72	26.08.15	Team Speed and Team Foust proved to be both quick and clever, but who won the race to escape at Escape Room Live DC? #AlwaysRacing #VWGRC #RedBullGRC	240	37	126	Sponsored event		x
73	28.08.15	A prepaid maintenance plan can help protect your VW—and your wallet. http://bit.ly/1J1a1WS	143	65	30	Promotion	x	
74	12.09.15	Let's hear it for the boys! #VWGRC's Tanner Foust and Scott Speed finish 1st and 2nd in the #RedBullGRC Supercar Qualifying Round 1.	490	8	57	Sponsored event	x	
75	13.09.15	And that is how the west was won. #RedBullGRC #VWGRC	7569	120	255	Sponsored event	x	
76	17.09.15	From a pre-med track to the racetrack, sit down with Volkswagen Andretti driver Tanner Foust for an intimate look at his road to Rallycross.	2723	164	1051	Sponsored event		x
77	17.09.15	The USA Cycling Volkswagen Golf SportWagen will be making an appearance in #Richmond2015 this coming week. Here's a look into the Life of the USAC Team Car and its role supporting the #USACycling Team. #VW4Cycling	662	163	134	Sponsored event		x
78	18.09.15	Adam Scott is throwing a party. Are you on the list? #VW #AppConnect	418	594	178	Promotion	x	
79	25.09.15	Volkswagen would like to offer our deepest apologies to those affected by our violation of CARB and EPA emissions standards. We will remedy the issue, and we will make things right in order to win back the trust of you, our customers, our dealers, the government, the public, and our employees. We kindly ask for your patience as we work very hard to address this complex issue, and we will share more information as soon as we can. Michael Horn President and CEO Volkswagen Group of America	20397	7420	4316	Crisis	x	
80	27.09.15	We've launched http://VWDieselInfo.com to keep our community updated with information regarding affected TDI vehicles. Thank you for your patience as we work to remedy this issue and regain your trust.	24935	4703	4019	Crisis	x	
81	16.10.15	We have updated our VIN look up tool to help you determine if your 2.0L TDI vehicle is affected by the emissions issue. Please consult your Owner's Manual for information on locating your vehicle's VIN. We appreciate your ongoing patience and support.	864	294	154	Crisis	x	
82	28.10.15	To help keep our customers informed with the latest information, we encourage owners of affected 2.0L TDI vehicles to sign up to receive communications and updates. Visit vwdieselinfo.com to sign up.	8042	1278	1177	Crisis	x	
83	17.11.15	2.0L TDI Owners, we're working hard to make things right. Visit http://www.vwdieselinfo.com/goodwill_package/ for more information. (Providing a goodwill package, compensation)	802	428	177	Crisis	x	
84	04.01.16	Safety is core to our values and we're happy to see others are taking notice.	3725	239	327	CSR	x	
85	07.01.16	The all-electric, concept BUDD-e, bringing our past to your future. See its reveal at #CES2016 in Las Vegas.	11986	857	1867	Promotion	x	
86	07.01.16	Tackle driving while sneezing thanks to the newly redesigned Volkswagen Passat with available Lane Assist.	3760	373	869	New product launch		x
87	08.01.16	We're off to the Cyclo-Cross Nationals at the #BiltmoreEstate in Asheville, NC to support USA Cycling. Stop by for VW giveaways all weekend! #CXNats #VW4Cycling	256	174	140	Sponsored event	x	
88	09.01.16	Mud, sweat, and gears. Watch the Cyclo-Cross competition live at 11 AM tomorrow: http://ultrasport.tv/cxnats/ . #CXNats #VW4Cycling	162	114	144	Sponsored event	x	
89	10.01.16	Congratulations to the 2016 #CXNats Elite Champions Katie Compton and Jeremy Powers! #VW4Cycling	239	139	161	Sponsored event	x	

90	12.01.16	Introducing the Tiguan GTE Active concept SUV: just add adventure. http://media.vw.com/release/1128/	8296	519	860	Promotion	x	
91	12.01.16	Meet the newly redesigned Volkswagen Passat. Available with Adaptive Cruise Control.	150	224	137	New feature launch		x
92	15.01.16	The 2016 Volkswagen Passat available with Forward Collision Warning and Autonomous Emergency Braking.	54	134	142	New feature launch		x
93	19.01.16	The midsize family sedan for full-size family fun. Meet the newly redesigned Volkswagen Passat.	141	42	73	New product launch		x
94	22.01.16	Dune or Denim, which is your favorite Beetle at the North American International Auto Show? http://www.vw.com/models/2016-beetle-dune-denim	70	24	33	New product launch		x
95	22.01.16	Keep your family connected with available App-Connect and the newly redesigned Volkswagen Passat.	87	24	45	New feature launch		x
96	23.01.16	The 2016 Volkswagen Passat with available driver assistance features. Learn more at http://www.vw.com/models/passat/ .	110	21	55	New feature launch		x
97	25.01.16	Available Autonomous Emergency Braking. And father-daughter bonding. All happening in a newly redesigned Volkswagen Passat.	68	19	68	New feature launch		x
98	26.01.16	It's not magic. It's the newly redesigned Volkswagen Passat available with Park Assist.	71	45	125	New feature launch		x
99	26.01.16	Mark your calendars! Defending #RedBullGRC champion Scott Speed and fan favorite Tanner Foust will hit the pavement for the 2016 race season on May 21st. #VWGR	216	237	63	Sponsored event	x	
100	31.01.16	Have your kids' back. The new Passat available with Rear Traffic Alert.	66	72	113	New feature launch		x
101	01.02.16	It's got your back, and front. The new Volkswagen Passat available with Park Pilot.	94	56	164	New feature launch		x
102	03.02.16	Handle your food coma like a pro thanks to the new Passat available w/ Blind Spot Monitor.	134	15	93	New feature launch		x
103	06.02.16	The car is the star under South Florida's Friday night lights. Hope to see you at #EuroTripper tomorrow! #et4prep	3796	164	168	Promotion	x	
104	06.02.16	#EuroTripper is a family affair. #weDUB	255	114	151	Promotion	x	
105	07.02.16	Why be Type A or Type B when you can be Type 3? #EuroTripper #weDUB	183	25	25	Promotion	x	
106	07.02.16	#EuroTripper was a blast this year. Here are a few of our favorites from the show.	2064	71	402	Promotion	x	
107	12.02.16	We're showing off the MOMO Motorsport Edition Jetta GLI show car, a compelling blend of performance, practicality and style, at The Chicago Auto Show.	6988	620	715	Promotion	x	
108	14.02.16	Love, everyday. #VDubLove	10265	339	1419	Promotion	x	
109	28.02.16	The riders are pushing rubber to snow out at #FatBikeNats today #VW4Cycling	366	143	67	Sponsored event	x	
110	29.02.16	When it comes to fun, we're leaps and bounds above the competition.	824	113	156	Sponsored event	x	
111	29.03.16	What do the Tiguan R-Line and Tiguan GTE Active concept have in common? A lot more than you think. With powerful performance for every season, we invite you to choose your own adventure.	251	75	81	Promotion	x	
112	11.04.16	What does it take to be on top? Precision, drive, & of course, Speed. 41 days until Scott Speed defends his title at Red Bull Global Rallycross!	6572	49	160	Sponsored event	x	

9.2 Appendix: Twitter Posts

#Nr.	Date	Post	Retweet	Like	Categories	Picture	Video
1	01.06.15	The e-Golf drives without emissions – depending on the passengers... #VWThinkBlue #VWGolf	6	9	Promotion		X
2	02.06.15	Think ahead with Volkswagen. Meet a new generation of talents – from the One Young World Summit in #Dublin #OYW http://magazine.volkswagen.com/one-young-world-dublin.html ...	5	5	CSR		
3	03.06.15	It's challenging to be a father. If you'd like to thank your father, just share our video with him. #Volkswagen	8	7	Special Days		X
4	04.06.15	Would you have loved to drive such a classic model? #VWlove #Volkswagen #VW #tbt #vintage	16	23	Promotion	X	
5	05.06.15	Can you guess who has fallen in love with the Beetle's curves? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLo-Op9zOGQ ... #VWBeetle #Beetleandanimals	12	4	Promotion		X
6	06.06.15	Walking on sunshine! What was your greatest sunny ride with your Volkswagen? #Volkswagen #VWGolf	24	27	Promotion	X	
7	07.06.15	Fear and rallying in Las Vegas. See the #BeetleGRC in action at the US racing series Global Rallycross Championship: http://magazine.volkswagen.com/grc-beetle-las-vegas.html ...	3	4	Sponsored Event		
8	08.06.15	Our fact #2 proves: The #VWGolf also looks great on your plate. #Volkswagen #VW	12	21	Promotion	X	
9	09.06.15	A start-up is developing an electric hybrid drive for wheelchairs. See what the modern inventors developed: http://magazine.volkswagen.com/project-manelec.html ...	1	9	Promotion		
10	10.06.15	Digital dreams come true! We just can't get enough from the GTI Supersport. Do you feel the same? #VisionGTI	37	61	New Product Launch	X	
11	11.06.15	Oldie but goldie. Our Volkswagen T1 transporter from the 1950s still has that magic touch. #VWT1 #Volkswagen #tbt	23	52	Promotion	X	
12	12.06.15	Someone is eating the flower decoration out of the Beetle. But who is it? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=636iu4tUvIc ... #VWBeetle #Beetleandanimals	4	5	Promotion		X
13	13.06.15	How the #Golf mastered its longest endurance test from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego: http://magazine.volkswagen.com/golf-40th-anniversary.html ... #Volkswagen	13	26	Promotion	X	

14	14.06.15	Hit the road with the new Passat Alltrack – Where would you go? #VWPassat #Volkswagen #VW	13	23	New Product Launch	X	
15	15.06.15	Faster than the dust: congrats to Sébastien Ogier for winning the Rally d'Italia Sardegna. #WRC	6	7	Sponsored Event		X
16	16.06.15	What time of the day is your favorite for driving? #VWPassat #VWThinkBlue #Volkswagen	14	27	Promotion	X	
17	17.06.15	Choose: Which rims do you like the most? #Volkswagen	9	25	Promotion	X	
18	18.06.15	Do you know why the odd number of 15.007.034 produced #Beetles was a reason for celebration in February 1972? #tbt	8	12	Promotion	X	
19	19.06.15	Truly a winner: the Passat Saloon was honored at the 2015 #plusaward! #volkswagen	14	32	Promotion	X	
20	19.06.15	The #GolfSportsVan has been declared as "Compact Van of the Year" at the #plusawards! #cardesign #Volkswagen	2	14	Promotion	X	
21	19.06.15	Try to guess who fell in love with the Beetle from jump! https://youtu.be/lGOlPJghHqM #VWBeetle #Beetleandanimals	1	5	Promotion		X
22	19.06.15	We are proud to announce: the Passat has been awarded as "Estate of the Year" at the #plusawards! #Volkswagen	7	13	Promotion	X	
23	19.06.15	Well done, our #Volkswagen design team has just been crowned as "Design Team of the Year"! #plusaward.	9	25	Promotion	X	
24	20.06.15	Make your choice: in which Volkswagen convertible would you like to go for a ride? #VWGolf #VWBeetle	13	16	Promotion	X	
25	21.06.15	Happy #FathersDay!	70	106	Special Days	X	
26	21.06.15	Is it possible to drive from Norway to South Africa in less than 28 days? http://magazine.volkswagen.com/touareg-worldrecord-journal #VWTouareg	4	12	Promotion	X	
27	22.06.15	Experience the art of sound with #Volkswagen at the current Björk exhibition at NYC's #MoMa http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Bjoerk-Exhibition	9	11	Sponsored Event	X	
28	23.06.15	The toughest job in the world. Today: Persuading. Who asserts themselves the most in your team and why? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKdV3sEmzqA ... #VWTouran	4	6	Promotion		X
29	23.06.15	The affiliation between Volkswagen and Porsche is well known, but this fact might still surprise you #Volkswagen.	31	29	Promotion	X	
30	24.06.15	Enjoy and explore the amazing world of Volkswagen on #Instagram: https://instagram.com/volkswagen/ #Volkswagen	20	14	Promotion	X	
31	25.06.15	The toughest job in the world. Today: Working through it. What is the biggest challenge you have faced? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ld5j1KnrHI ... #VWTouran	10	3	Promotion		X
32	25.06.15	Decades after its first release in 1968 "the thing" is still very popular among car enthusiasts. #Volkswagen #tbt	13	23	Promotion	X	
33	26.06.15	Playing your favorite song in the car is simply one of the best things to do. #VWPolo #Volkswagen	27	49	Promotion	X	
34	27.06.15	The toughest job in the world. Today: The Interview. Can you remember your first one? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTZ9UQw6pVk ... #VWTouran	2	5	Promotion		X

35	27.06.15	A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. #vwlove #carwash #Volkswagen	29	49	Promotion	X	
36	27.06.15	#LoveWins	27	63	Promotion	X	
37	28.06.15	Thousands of Volkswagen models waiting at the dealers to get test-driven. Why not take a test drive? #Volkswagen	13	24	Promotion	X	
38	29.06.15	What does silence sound like? Star violinist Iskandar Widjaja tests the sound system in the new #VWPassat.	9	18	Promotion	X	
39	30.06.15	The toughest job in the world. Today: Extra Hours. So when is your home time? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr52Tu1xkUQ ... #VWTouran	3	1	Promotion		X
40	30.06.15	Fact #4 shows that even history can hit the road. #VW Golf #Volkswagen #VW	17	23	Promotion	X	
41	30.06.15	You've nearly made it! Good luck in the semi-finals. #WomensWorldCup #USAGER	8	12	Sponsored Event	X	
42	01.07.15	Experience the Sachsen Classic with Herbie, the most amazing Beetle in the world: http://magazine.volkswagen.com/sachsen-classic.html ... #VWBeetle	16	35	Promotion	X	
43	01.07.15	Who'll make it to the final? Good luck to both teams. #WomensWorldCup #JPNENG	6	13	Sponsored Event	X	
44	02.07.15	The toughest job in the world. Today: The new one. Are you planning on expanding? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvtveXEzi7w ... #VWTouran	2	4	Promotion		X
45	02.07.15	He's got that magic touch: our sporty Scirocco R-Line. #VWScirocco #Volkswagen	44	48	New Product Launch	X	
46	03.07.15	When you don't have to choose between classy & comfy: the Touareg with R-Line interior. #VWTouareg #Volkswagen	14	30	New Feature Launch	X	
47	04.07.15	Who will win the „Think Blue. Challenge“? Test your fuel-saving skills: http://thinkblue.volkswagen.com/com/en/thinkblue-quiz ... #VWThinkBlue	2	16	CSR	X	
48	05.07.15	Congratulations to Sébastien Ogier for winning the Rally Poland!	4	6	Sponsored Event		
49	05.07.15	Chase for the championship! #WomensWorldCup #USAJPN	11	14	Sponsored Event	X	
50	05.07.15	Congratulations to the Team USA on winning the Women's World Cup! #USAJPN #WomensWorldCup	19	29	Sponsored Event	X	
51	06.07.15	Fact number five is evidence how closely the city of Wolfsburg and #Volkswagen are linked.	13	22	Promotion	X	
52	07.07.15	Thanks for 6 million races and 150.000 likes for Das Autorennen! Enjoy the game! https://apps.facebook.com/vwdasautorennen/ ... #Volkswagen	5	12	Application	X	
53	08.07.15	Efficiency in production, reducing the environmental impact by 25% - "Think Blue. Factory." http://thinkblue.volkswagen.com/com/en/about-think-blue.html ...	6	23	CSR	X	
54	09.07.15	Bringing some joy to the boredom of traffic jams? Yes, we can! #Volkswagen	8	7	Promotion		X
55	10.07.15	Everything that matters is close at hand. #VW Golf #Volkswagen	29	49	Promotion	X	

56	11.07.15	Pin boards full of concept cars, travel tips and photos from the past. Visit us on http://www.pinterest.com/volkswagen #Pinterest	2	6	Promotion	X	
57	12.07.15	The 17th classic car meeting in Mühlheim was a total success. Check out these impressions from the event. #Volkswagen	35	43	Sponsored Event	X	
58	13.07.15	Polo rules in the Ruhr. A visit to its passionate fans in Duisburg. http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Polo-Fans-im-Ruhrgebiet.html ... #VWPolo #Volkswagen	6	13	Promotion	X	
59	14.07.15	A true classic turns 60 today: the Volkswagen Karmann Ghia. Happy Anniversary! #Volkswagen #VWKarmannGhia	23	33	Promotion	X	
60	15.07.15	No matter which obstacles are in your way, it's important that you see them and have the chance to react. #VWPassat	6	7	Promotion		X
61	16.07.15	You like oldtimers and classic cars? Then off you go to the Schloss Bensberg Classics. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8tHnMxo6Fk ... #Volkswagen	4	6	Sponsored Event		X
62	17.07.15	Celebrating your birthday the Volkswagen way. #Volkswagen	8	25	Promotion	X	
63	18.07.15	Let's go out on a drive – here's an overview of the season's finest fan gatherings http://magazine.volkswagen.com/open-air-gatherings-vintage-car-rallies.html ... #Volkswagen	8	12	Promotion	X	
64	19.07.15	Three men and one prayer book. Read what the Rally co-drivers have to report. http://magazine.volkswagen.com/wrc-rally-co-drivers.html ... #WRC #Volkswagen	4	4	Sponsored Event	X	
65	20.07.15	The e-Golf drives without emissions – depending on the passengers... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pP3qYTy200c ... #VWThinkBlue #Volkswagen	4	10	CSR		X
66	21.07.15	You can barely get to the end of your street in an e-car? Just a myth or the truth? https://youtu.be/b4FoxVYLFak #Volkswagen #VWeGolf	4	10	Promotion		X
67	22.07.15	With the Beetle you always look on the bright side of life. Which Bug would you take for a ride? #VWBug #Volkswagen	23	42	Promotion	X	
68	23.07.15	You love your GTI, but have problems getting it through your bedroom door? This fluffy pillow solves your problem!	9	19	Promotion	X	
69	23.07.15	Discover the new "Rally Experience Training" of Volkswagen. #VWPolo #Volkswagendrivingexperience #WRC #Rally #Rallye	6	10	Sponsored Event		X
70	24.07.15	Wouldn't you just love to cruise around in this lovely Beetle Bug with the top down? #VWBeetle #Volkswagen	27	53	Promotion	X	
71	25.07.15	Must be really complicated to charge an e-car! Another myth or the truth? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4FoxVYLFak ... #eGolf #Volkswagen	3	4	Promotion		X
72	26.07.15	Current issues, tomorrow's challenges and ideas that move us forward at the inaugural exhibition at DRIVE http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e29am4OiMew ... #Volkswagen	1	7	Sponsored Event		X
73	27.07.15	Our fact number six: the most favored Volkswagen part for lunch time. #Currywurst #Volkswagen	7	17	Promotion	X	
74	28.07.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Career. What do you consider more important: an education or realising a dream?	6	9	Promotion	X	

75	29.07.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Car pooling. #VWTouran #Volkswagen	3	6	Promotion	X	
76	30.07.15	Your adventure is waiting for you. What are you waiting for? http://volkswagen-driving-experience.de/de/en/Startseite ... #Volkswagen	4	15	Promotion	X	
77	31.07.15	If you're looking for a visual synonym for luxury. Look no further. #Volkswagen	35	64	Promotion	X	
78	01.08.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: A head for business. What kind of wacky things do your kids trade? #VWTouran	4	9	Promotion	X	
79	02.08.15	Congrats Jari-Matti Latvala for winning the Rally Finland, that was pretty fast! #Volkswagen	2	7	Sponsored Event		X
80	03.08.15	Our fact number seven proves that we've been working on electric solutions for decades. #Volkswagen	12	15	Promotion	X	
81	04.08.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Creativity. How do your kids display their creativity? #Volkswagen	3	6	Promotion	X	
82	05.08.15	New challenges: "Volkswagen. Das Autorennen." 22 models, 8 tracks and 3 Game modes. Play now: http://www.facebook.com/games/vwdasautorennen ...	2	5	Applications	X	
83	06.08.15	40 years of Polo! More films about his big one here: http://www.volkswagen.de/polo #volkswagen #40yearsofpolo	25	25	Promotion		X
84	07.08.15	This gaze is always timeless. #VWGolf #GTIWoerthersee #Volkswagen	15	31	New Product Launch	X	
85	08.08.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Fast food. What do your kids like eating most in the car? #Volkswagen	2	6	Promotion	X	
86	09.08.15	Time to breathe and clear your mind. http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Tour-in-a-Passat-through-England.html ... #Volkswagen	13	21	Promotion	X	
87	10.08.15	Confetti for a party banger! More about his 40th birthday here: http://www.volkswagen.de/polo #Volkswagen #40yearsofpolo	7	12	Promotion		X
88	11.08.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Generosity. Would you lend anyone your car? #Volkswagen	9	18	Promotion	X	
89	12.08.15	A compact car that never fails to make a big impression: the Polo. #VWPolo #Volkswagen	18	36	Promotion	X	
90	12.08.15	40 years of Polo! More films about his big one here: http://webspecial.volkswagen.de/40yearspolo/com/en ... #Volkswagen #40yearsofpolo	13	18	Promotion		X
91	13.08.15	Part of the family routines. Each Saturday mum, dad and this classic Beetle went shopping. #tbt #Volkswagen	11	37	Promotion	X	
92	13.08.15	What happens when Mom tells us to put on our best clothes ... #Volkswagen	12	16	Promotion	X	
93	14.08.15	Looks like this classic Beetle is ready for a spin. #VWBeetle #Volkswagen	24	44	Promotion	X	
94	14.08.15	The Volkswagen CC handles any situation with great aplomb. #Volkswagen	9	14	New Product Launch	X	

95	14.08.15	Retweet: 13.08.15: RALLYTHEWORLD.com @vwrrallytheworld 13 Aug 2015 Still more than a week until #RallyGermany. Let's kill some time & look at this beautiful picture from last year.#TBT	15	22	Retweet	X	
96	15.08.15	Emil and Gustav are junior detectives. But why are they shadowing the new Touran? #Volkswagen http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Touran-and-the-	4	10	New Product Launch	X	
97	16.08.15	The Polo R WRC as it can be seen at the "Drive" exhibition in Berlin .#Volkswagen http://drive- volkswagen-group.com/	21	42	New Product Launch	X	
98	16.08.15	Up hill and down dale – it's all part of the Volkswagen Driving Experience. #Volkswagen https://www.volkswagen-driving- experience.de/de/en/Startseite.html ...	6	23	Promotion	X	
99	17.08.15	In the future you can send your car keys via smartphone. Find out more: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/stories/digital-car- key.html ... #Volkswagen #ThinkNew	7	15	Promotion	X	
100	17.08.15	Fact number eight shows that the Beetle seems to remind different people of different things. #Volkswagen	14	22	Promotion	X	
101	18.08.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Curiosity. What have your kids been up to in the car? #Volkswagen	5	9	Promotion	X	
102	18.08.15	New is what makes your life better. Think New. http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/start.html?tc=soc- tw-thinknew-2 ... #Volkswagen #ThinkNew	7	9	Promotion		X
103	19.08.15	Do you think that a good car seat can help to reduce stress? More at http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/stories/ergonomi seats.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-3 ... #Volkswagen #ThinkNew	7	13	Promotion	X	
104	19.08.15	Retweet: RALLYTHEWORLD.com @vwrrallytheworld 18 Aug 2015 It does not always have to be donuts! #RallyGermany #pretzeldrift	156	201	Retweet		X
105	20.08.15	Did you think that one day our cars would be connected like our phones? http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/stories/car-to-x- technology.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-4 ... #Volkswagen #ThinkNew	5	13	Promotion	X	
106	20.08.15	Fact number nine shows that the Polo's name is not just fictional but rather a tribute. #Volkswagen	8	13	Promotion	X	
107	21.08.15	Just as much as clear blue skies invite you to enjoy outside. #Volkswagen	12	21	Promotion	X	
108	21.08.15	Adding that magic touch: the Scirocco Sport Edition with R-Line interior. #VWScirocco #Volkswagen	26	45	New Product Launch	X	
109	22.08.15	Things Mums & Dads don't say. Today: Technology. Which games are hot favourites with your kids? #Volkswagen	4	9	Promotion	X	
110	22.08.15	From the Salzburg Beetle to the Race Touareg: milestones of #Volkswagen rallying. http://www.volkswagen- motorsport.com/index.php?id=321 ...	7	18	Sponsored Event	X	

111	23.08.15	Take your time and relax. No need for parking space. #Volkswagen	7	20	Promotion	X	
112	23.08.15	It was about time ADAC Rallye: first win and a triple on top! Ogier 1st, Latvala 2nd, Mikkelsen 3rd! Congrats! #WRC	4	11	Sponsored Event		X
113	24.08.15	We #ThinkNew so that you can breathe freely in the major cities of the world: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovation/efficiency-emobility/gte-technology.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-5 ... #Volkswagen	5	8	Promotion	X	
114	24.08.15	The heritage of Volkswagen: today the Polo - evolution of a true beauty. #VWPolo #Volkswagen	20	27	Promotion	X	
115	25.08.15	When an amateur invests in poor quality, he risks an encounter with a bear. Never compromise on quality. #Volkswagen	20	24	Promotion		X
116	25.08.15	The heritage of Volkswagen: today the Beetle - the people's car. #VWBeetle #Volkswagen	58	62	Promotion	X	
117	26.08.15	We #ThinkNew so that you can relax – even in a traffic jam: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connectivity-infotainment/online-traffic-information.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-6 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	3	6	Promotion	X	
118	26.08.15	The heritage of Volkswagen: today the Golf - a best-seller since decades. #VWGolf #Volkswagen	35	45	Promotion	X	
119	27.08.15	Tough choice. Which one would you take for a spin? #VWGolf #Volkswagen	16	37	Promotion	X	
120	27.08.15	The heritage of Volkswagen: today the Golf GTI - the performance hot hatch. #Volkswagen	36	57	Promotion	X	
121	28.08.15	Take a seat in the Golf R Estate. Are you ready to handle this powerful, superfast car? #Volkswagen	28	53	New Product Launch	X	
122	28.08.15	The heritage of Volkswagen: today the Passat - the family companion since 1973. #Volkswagen	16	30	Promotion	X	
123	29.08.15	We #ThinkNew so that you know what's happening on your backseat: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connectivity-infotainment/cam-connect.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-7 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	4	4	Promotion	X	
124	29.08.15	Blink and you'll miss him - the Beetle. #VWBeetle #Volkswagen	17	33	Promotion	X	
125	30.08.15	Driving Experience Spain: steep slopes and muddy puddles. Read more: http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Touareg-V6-TDI-Offroad-Tour-Sierra-Nevada.html ... #Volkswagen	9	16	Promotion	X	

126	30.08.15	Gone, but not forgotten. #VWGolf #Volkswagen	24	57	Promotion	X	
127	31.08.15	We #ThinkNew so that you can use a remote to park your car: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/future-technologies/remote-parking.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-8 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	5	9	Promotion	X	
128	31.08.15	A dream in black leather. Don't get nasty thoughts as we are referring to our C Coupe GTE concept car. #Volkswagen	18	62	New Product Launch	X	
129	01.09.15	A soccer club welcomes its new goalie. No one would have expected this ... Never compromise on quality. #Volkswagen	7	8	Promotion		X
130	01.09.15	An ice scraper hidden in every smartphone. #VWThinkNew Learn more: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connected-activity-infotainment/window-defroster.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-9 ... #Volkswagen #IFA2015	51	78	Promotion		X
131	02.09.15	We #ThinkNew so that you can open your trunk with your foot: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connected-activity-infotainment/window-defroster.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-10 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	10	14	Promotion	X	
132	02.09.15	Pure confidence: the GTI Roadster Vision GT. #Volkswagen #conceptcar	18	32	New Product Launch	X	
133	03.09.15	Gardening can be dangerous. Don't put your life in jeopardy. Never compromise on quality. #Volkswagen	16	25	Promotion		X
134	03.09.15	Looking good for the first day of school. #Volkswagen #tbt	23	54	Promotion	X	
135	04.09.15	The Golf GTI is shining bright. #VWGolfGTI	38	77	Promotion	X	
136	04.09.15	The Volkswagen Scirocco shows the sporty side of life. #VWScirocco #Volkswagen	15	35	New Product Launch	X	
137	05.09.15	We #ThinkNew so that ice scraping leaves you cold: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connected-activity-infotainment/window-defroster.html =soc-tw-thinknew-11 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	6	7	Promotion	X	
138	05.09.15	Are we nearly there yet? Our tips will help keep your back seat quiet. http://magazine.volkswagen.com/driving-with-kids-Sharan.html ... #Volkswagen #Travel	5	7	Promotion	X	
139	06.09.15	Do women park better ...?!?! http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Women-and-cars.html ... #Volkswagen	7	11	Promotion	X	
140	06.09.15	Feels like being back in the summer of 1974. #VWGolf #Volkswagen	23	45	Promotion	X	

141	07.09.15	That's what we call true fandome. #Volkswagen #VWBeetle	7	32	Promotion	X	
142	07.09.15	Most other drivers will only get to see the backside of the hybrid powered Golf GTE. #Volkswagen	11	26	New Product Launch	X	
143	08.09.15	The perfect viewpoint for every Beetle fanatic. #VWBeetle #Volkswagen	18	44	Promotion	X	
144	08.09.15	You have thought of everything but forgot where your car is? Ask your smartphone: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connectivity-infotainment/last-parking-position.html?tc=soc-tw-thinknew-12 ... #Volkswagen	8	9	Applications		X
145	09.09.15	As close to a spaceship as you can get. #VWXL1 #Volkswagen	18	39	New Product Launch	X	
146	09.09.15	Ever enjoyed a Volkswagen cookie? #Volkswagen	36	46	Promotion	X	
147	09.09.15	#iPad comes in two different sizes: 9,7" & 12,9". Just like #PassatGTE comes as Saloon and Estate. #AppleEvent	17	24	New Product Launch	X	
148	09.09.15	iPad mini, iPad Air & #iPadPro: one Product, 3 different sizes. Reminds us of #Volkswagen up!, Golf & #PassatGTE.	10	25	Promotion	X	
149	09.09.15	If you don't like the new #iPhone colours - just buy a nice coloured case. Here's our suggestion. #AppleEvent	34	44	Promotion	X	
150	09.09.15	The #iPhone6s has one gorgeous display. The #PassatGTE has actually two. #AppleEvent #iPhone #Volkswagen	24	30	Promotion	X	
151	09.09.15	Wow, a 12 MP #iSight camera. The Passat can see what's behind you. And in front of you. And beside you. #AppleLive	7	21	Promotion	X	
152	10.09.15	We #ThinkNew so that your car is no threat for pedestrians: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/driveassistance/pedestrian-monitoring.html =soc-tw-thinknew-13 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	4	8	Promotion	X	
153	10.09.15	Time to say goodbye. No need to worry. #ThenewTiguan will be unveiled via livestream on	21	28	New Product Launch	X	
154	11.09.15	We #ThinkNew so that your dashboard suits your demands: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/connectivity-infotainment/active-info-display.html =soc-tw-thinknew-14 ... #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	5	6	Promotion	X	
155	11.09.15	Making of #VolkswagenGarageSound: Felix Jaehn, Jasmine Thompson & the team are totally exited! #Volkswagen		9	Sponsored Event	X	
156	11.09.15	Let's get dirty! Drifting on muddy race tracks is surely an amazing driving experience. #VW Golf #Volkswagen	19	46	Promotion	X	
157	12.09.15	We #ThinkNew so that you can rank your #Volkswagen easily even with a big trailer: http://thinknew.volkswagen.com/int/en/innovations/driveassistance/trailer-assist.html =soc-tw-thinknew-14 ... #VWThinkNew	7	11	Promotion	X	
158	12.09.15	Mum sees everything. Thanks to Car-Net Cam-Connect in the new Touran. http://touran.volkswagen.com/int/en/home.html ... #WVTouran #Volkswagen	31	30	New Feature Launch		X
159	12.09.15	All three titles stay with us! What a great season, thanks to all team members and fans around the world #Volkswagen	24	39	Promotion	X	
160	13.09.15	It has everything but an ejector seat. Well, you wouldn't want to use it anyways. #XLSport #ConceptCar #Volkswagen	42	72	New Product Launch	X	

161	13.09.15	A reigning world champion will be present at the Group Night tomorrow. Guess who! #VWIAA15 #ThinkNew #Volkswagen	5	5	New Product Launch	X	
162	14.09.15	The face of a new generation. Tomorrow you'll look at SUVs in a different way. #VWIAA15, #TheNewTiguan, #VWGroupIAA	37	46	New Product Launch	X	
163	14.09.15	90 min to go: discover the new Tiguan via stream https://secure.footprint.net/gomexlive/vw_live_gn/player.stn=vw_gn&lang=en ... and enjoy the show. #VWIAA15 #TheNewTiguan	8	6	New Product Launch	X	
164	14.09.15	#VolkswagenGarageSound Takeover starts now! Preparations for the concert are almost done. We can't wait!	8	19	Sponsored Event	X	
165	14.09.15	#VolkswagenGarageSound is on!!	18	24	Sponsored Event		X
166	15.09.15	Join our livestream from the #IAA at 10:50am CEST! https://secure.footprint.net/gomexlive/vw_live_pk/player.stn=vw_pk&lang=en ... #VWIAA15 #TheNewTiguan #VWGroupIAA	7	9	Sponsored Event	X	
167	15.09.15	Relax and enjoy the show as we introduce the new Volkswagen Tiguan in action. #VWIAA15 #VWnewTiguan #VWGroupIAA	57	61	New Product Launch		X
168	15.09.15	The new Tiguan has finally been unveiled. http://www.tiguan.com #VWIAA15 #VWnewTiguan #VWGroupIAA	44	55	New Product Launch	X	
169	16.09.15	If you're at the IAA, make sure to try our Motor Show App to enjoy many benefits! #VWIAA15 #VWnewTiguan #VWGroupIAA	4	12	Applications	X	
170	16.09.15	A small gesture goes a long way. Especially if it helps you to control your car: #VW Golf RTouch. #VWIAA15 #ThinkNew	31	45	New Feature Launch	X	
171	17.09.15	Can you imagine that soon you'll be able to control many of your car's features with a gesture? #VWIAA15 #VWThinkNew	22	37	New Feature Launch		X
172	17.09.15	Experience Volkswagen at the IAA 2015 http://www.volkswagen.com/INT/IAA2015 #VWIAA15 #VWnewTiguan #IAA	80	417	New Product Launch	X	
173	17.09.15	Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel is Volkswagen's guest at the #IAA. #VWIAA15	21	33	Sponsored Event	X	
174	18.09.15	Discover the latest #Volkswagen innovations at the #IAA: http://www.volkswagen.com/INT/IAA2015 #VWIAA15 #VWnewTiguan	30	129	New Feature Launch	X	
175	18.09.15	Everyone has a social (media) aura. What is yours? Join us at the #IAA and find out. #VWIAA15 #VWThinkNew	5	10	Sponsored Event	X	
176	18.09.15	Lined up like rainbow colours. #VW Golf #Volkswagen	42	72	Promotion	X	
177	18.09.15	Enjoy these impressions from the IAA and tell us what you liked best so far. #VWIAA15 #VWThinkNew	17	32	New Feature Launch	X	
178	19.09.15	The new Touran. Made for the heroes of today – and those of tomorrow. #Volkswagen #FamilyIsAToughJob	13	27	New Product Launch		X
179	19.09.15	May we introduce: the Volkswagen powerhouses! Which one do you think is the most powerful? #VWIAA15 #VWThinkNew	46	85	Promotion	X	
180	20.09.15	Different colours, different innovations. Are you ready to ThinkNew? #Volkswagen #VWThinkNew	20	20	Promotion		X

181	20.09.15	Sébastien Ogier calls it WRC Virtual Reality. Are you ready for this experience? Join us at the IAA. #VWIAA15	8	18	Sponsored Event	X	
182	20.09.15	More power or autonomous driving? At the #IAA you can tell us about your wishes. #VWIAA15 #Volkswagen	12	12	Promotion	X	
183	21.09.15	Are you ready to move forward? Think Blue. #VWIAA15 #VWThinkNew	34	49	Promotion	X	
184	21.09.15	The best stories start with a gesture. #VWIAA15 #VWThinkNew	27	26	Promotion		X
185	22.09.15	More than just another app. Discover the World of Volkswagen. #VWIAA15 #Volkswagen	27	36	Applications		X
186	22.09.15	Video statement of Prof. Dr. Martin Winterkorn: https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Video-statement-Prof-Dr-Martin-Winterkorn-English/view/2718368/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=9iRucc6i ...	88	62	Crisis		X
187	25.09.15	Matthias Müller appointed CEO of the Volkswagen Group: https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Matthias-Müller-appointed-CEO-of-the-Volkswagen-Group/view/2726856/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=f7tbDE3a ...	33	51	Crisis	X	
188	25.09.15	The Volkswagen Group is restructuring: Supervisory Board passes resolutions for new organization: https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/The-Volkswagen-Group-is-restructuring-Supervisory-Board-passes-resolutions-for-new-organization/view/2726863/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=f7tbDE3a ...	18	26	Crisis		
189	25.09.15	Statement by the Supervisory Board of Volkswagen AG: https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Statement-by-the-Supervisory-Board-of-Volkswagen-AG/view/2726870/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=f7tbDE3a ...	14	26	Crisis		
190	25.09.15	Dr Herbert Diess, CEO of the Volkswagen Passenger Cars brand, explains: "We are working at full speed on a solution." https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Dr-Herbert-Diess-CEO-of-the-Volkswagen-Passenger-Cars-brand-explains-We-are-working-at-full-speed-on-a-solution/view/2727405/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=f7tbDE3a ...	21	39	Crisis		

191	01.10.15	Volkswagen AG announces action plan to update diesel vehicles with EA 189 EU5 engines. https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Volkswagen-AG-announces-action-plan-to-refit-diesel-vehicles-with-EA-189-EU5-engines/view/2741113/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=Y82vWGHr ...	21	23	Crisis		
192	01.10.15	Statement from the Executive Committee of Volkswagen AG's Supervisory Board following its meeting on Sept. 30, 2015 https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Statement-from-the-Executive-Committee-of-Volkswagen-AGs-Supervisory-Board-following-its-meeting-on-September-30-2015/view/2764570/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=sA	17	20	Crisis		
193	03.10.16	Recent customer information: http://www.volkswagen.com/info	16	31	Crisis		
194	06.10.15	Matthias Müller: "We will overcome this crisis" https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Matthias-Müller-We-will-overcome-this-crisis/view/2778966/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=MIpuikO8 ...	30	43	Crisis		
195	13.10.15	Volkswagen Brand Board of Management takes strategic decisions. https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Volkswagen-Brand-Board-of-Management-takes-strategic-decisions/view/2797663/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=zkVBpd9v ...	8	26	Crisis		
196	15.10.15	Federal Motor Transport Authority (KBA) decides on recall for affected EA 189 diesel vehicles https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Federal-Motor-Transport-Authority-KBA-decides-on-recall-for-affected-EA-189-diesel-vehicles/view/2803458/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=2XgAnZZb ...	6	13	Crisis		
197	20.10.15	One of our employees has sent us a little heart. Thank you Ellen, we won't break it. #wirsindVW	36	129	Crisis	X	
198	22.10.15	Thank you to all employees & supporters who are standing by our side. Jan-Erik, we won't disappoint you! #wirsindVW	33	91	Crisis	X	
199	23.10.15	Volkswagen confirms: EA288 engines designed for EU5 and EU6 are not affected. https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Volkswagen-confirms-EA288-engines-designed-for-EU5-and-EU6-are-not-affected/view/2827451/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=eJ0OeWIT ...	19	21	Crisis		
200	27.10.15	No ifs. Not buts. No risks. Every single new Volkswagen passenger car with current Euro 6 technology fulfills the strict European emissions regulations.	45	59	Crisis	X	
201	28.10.15	Matthias Müller unveils next steps for Volkswagen Group. Please read here: https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Matthias-Müller-unveils-next-steps-for-the-Volkswagen-Group/view/2838969/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=8H2sBDVU ...	6	21	Crisis		

202	30.10.15	The weather can change faster than you think. It's time to fit your winter tyres! #Volkswagen	21	30	Promotion		X
203	31.10.15	Happy Halloween! #Halloween #Volkswagen	43	94	Special Days		X
204	03.11.15	Statement on the announcement by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Statement-on-the-announcement-by-the-United-States-Environmental-Protection-Agency-EPA/view/2853105/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=0TTx1aRP ...	12	13	Crisis		
205	03.11.15	"Bunka no Hi" is the name of the holiday celebrated in which country today? Any ideas? #Volkswagen	13	28	Special Days	X	
206	05.11.15	Here are our special features for undercover agents. #spectre #bond	30	54	New Feature Launch	X	
207	10.11.15	46 years ago a famous TV show was broadcasted for the first time. We have sent a VW to congratulate. #sesamestreet	10	34	Special Days	X	
208	13.11.15	Black cat crossing from the left? No worries. You are safe in a #Volkswagen, even on Friday the 13th.	27	64	Special Days	X	
209	14.11.15	#friendship is one of the most important things in life. Do you have a best buddy that takes you places? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkPMrObiYl0&list=PLns6jwhzScJEa-UVlgRs0WW_3PoXUkai	9	27	Promotion		X
210	15.11.15	Our autumn impressions. How are yours? #Volkswagen	21	46	Promotion		X
211	16.11.15	Join us now for a minute of silence. Joignez-vous à nous maintenant pour une minute de silence #NousSommesUnis	9	34	Special Days		
212	16.11.15	Hey guys! Do you know what kind of car this is? Perhaps a glance at the speedometer would help.	16	43	Promotion	X	
213	18.11.15	Looks a bit like a #race #car, right? But which car model do you see in this picture? #DasAuto #Volkswagen	10	36	Promotion	X	

214	19.11.15	Wanna be a perfect gentleman on #internationalmensday? Suit and tie are mandatory. Here's some inspiration.	22	36	Special Days		X
215	20.11.15	Here's the #Volkswagen range for our younger customers. #childrensday	27	56	Special Days	X	
216	21.11.15	Life offers you many adventures. Today is Go for a Ride Day. So jump into your car and enjoy! #Volkswagen	23	33	Promotion		X
217	22.11.15	Ever visited Eastern Europe's Silicon Valley – #Tallinn. http://magazine.volkswagen.com/10-hotspots-in-Tallinn ... #volkswagen #vw #dasauto #startups	7	15	Promotion	X	
218	23.11.15	Our chief designer still can't take his eyes off the new Tiguan. How do you like the design? #vwnewtiguan	27	56	New Product Launch		X
219	24.11.15	Are you a real car expert? Which model is waiting by the road here? Let us know! #Volkswagen	23	44	Promotion	X	
220	25.11.15	Technical measures for EA 189 diesel engines affected presented to German Authority #VWGroup https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Technical-measures-for-the-EA-189-diesel-engines-affected-presented-to-the-German-Federal-Motor-Transport-Authority/view/2925586/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ad445da?p_auth=AZHEe4G7 ...	28	32	Crisis	X	
221	26.11.15	Film concerning technical measures for EA 189 diesel engines affected. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKN8danplfE ...	17	31	Crisis		X
222	26.11.15	Cake is one of the most delicious things humans have ever made to eat. Happy #cakeday! #Volkswagen	9	39	Special Days	X	
223	27.11.15	Can you guess which company was founded in Tallinn? #Volkswagen #vw #dasautomagazine http://magazine.volkswagen.com/Passat-GTE-Silicon-Tallinn.html ...	6	29	Promotion	X	
224	27.11.15	Thought about your holiday shopping? Time to find some bargains! It's #blackfriday. #Volkswagen	11	35	Special Days	X	
225	28.11.15	Mars Rover has been exploring the planet since August 2012. Time for a replacement? #redplanetday #Volkswagen	14	32	Special Days	X	
226	29.11.15	The first candle is lit! What are your most cherished Christmas traditions? #Volkswagen	16	35	Special days	X	
227	01.12.15	Don't give AIDS a chance. #worldaidsday #Volkswagen	16	39	Special days	X	
228	02.12.15	Already bought your Christmas tree? There's not much time left! #christmas #volkswagen	23	46	Special days	X	

229	03.12.15	Have a cracking wintertime! #nutcracker #volkswagen	13	40	Special days	X	
230	05.12.15	A #volkswagen Christmas jumper. Here's how to make one! http://bit.ly/1PC4kRO	28	63	Special days	X	
231	06.12.15	It's Saint Nicholas Day! What was in your boot or stocking? #christmas #volkswagen	9	37	Special days	X	
232	06.12.15	Another candle is another step closer to #christmas. What do you like best about the Christmas spirit? #volkswagen	13	18	Special days	X	
233	08.12.15	How does the MQB work and what can it do for you? Click here! http://bit.ly/1OnYhwZ #vwthinkfuture #volkswagen	25	32	Promotion	X	
234	09.12.15	CO2 issue largely concluded https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/CO2-issue-largely-concluded/view/2966215/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=s3QAROmK ...	17	22	Crisis		
235	09.12.15	Have fun with your cool #volkswagen Christmas tree. Simply print it out and off you go! http://bit.ly/1N9cRt3	18	40	Special days	X	
236	10.12.15	Volkswagen making good progress with its investigation, technical solutions, and Group realignment https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/Volkswagen-making-good-progress-with-its-investigation-technical-solutions-and-Group-realignment/view/2973818/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=6eJfkmVp ...	7	25	Crisis		
237	10.12.15	Ready for some Christmas songs? What about this one? #volkswagen #JingleBells	22	30	Special days		X
238	11.12.15	Video summary from press conference on status of investigations at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyMz9zwTUFk&feature=youtu.be ...	8	10	Crisis		X
239	13.12.15	All good things come in threes. #christmas #advent #volkswagen	14	25	Special days	X	
240	14.12.15	What are your favourite all-time Christmas songs? #christmas #volkswagen	11	25	Special days		X

241	15.12.15	Käfer, Bug or Coccinelle: what is the #vwbeetle called in your country?#volkswagen	15	31	Promotion	X	
242	16.12.15	NOx issue: customers are being informed, implementation is starting https://www.volkswagen-media-services.com/en/detailpage/-/detail/NOx-issue-customers-are-being-informed-implementation-is-starting/view/2998299/7a5bbec13158edd433c6630f5ac445da?p_auth=1g4VudGw ...,	6	13	Crisis		
243	16.12.15	Enjoying the snow in Germany in the 1970s. #volkswagen #classic #70s	38	92	Promotion	X	
244	17.12.15	May the cars be with you! #volkswagen #theforceawakens	87	347	Promotion		X
245	18.12.15	It's Bake Cookies Day! Got a cookie? #volkswagen #cookieday	9	39	Special days	X	
246	19.12.15	A business trip or your holidays: #volkswagen Plug-In Hybrids are made for every kind of ride! #vwthinkfuture	18	34	New product launch		X
247	20.12.15	The fourth candle is lit! Only a few days left until #Christmas! #advent #volkswagen	15	21	Special days	X	
248	21.12.15	Enjoy the #volkswagen Christmas drummers. #merrychristmas #holidays	39	59	Special days		X
249	22.12.15	e-reindeer power #xmas #volkswagen	16	39	Promotion	X	
250	25.12.15	What was your favorite #Christmas present this year? #volkswagen #presents	10	39	Special days	X	
251	26.12.15	Sometimes even the most excited #reindeer needs to take a nap. #christmas #volkswagen	9	28	Special days	X	
252	28.12.15	What does your perfect #winter moment look like? #volkswagen	20	58	Promotion	X	
253	29.12.15	Whether you're at home, with friends or behind the wheel: #volkswagen wishes you a happy new year! #happynewyear	367	1200	Promotion		X
254	01.01.16	Psst! Are you awake yet? Hangover? Happy New Year, everybody! #volkswagen #happynewyear	33	55	Promotion		X
255	01.01.16	Happy New Year! Any good resolutions for 2016? #happynewyear #volkswagen	20	90	Special days	X	

256	02.01.16	What gadget should your #volkswagen have in 20 years' time? #sciencefiction	30	48	Promotion	X	
257	05.01.16	Keynote at #CES2016 Las Vegas: Watch the #VWCES2016 live stream now http://vwgroup.to/WE425	10	18	Sponsored Event		
258	06.01.16	We wish you a happy #threekingsday! #volkswagen	33	87	Special dayx	X	
259	06.01.16	A new era of mobility with BUDD-e at #CES2016 in Las Vegas #VWCES2016 http://vwgroup.to/WHcwn	40	75	New product launch	X	
260	07.01.16	Next generation of infotainment & a new control concept which includes gesture control: the e-Golf Touch #VWCES2016	17	55	New feature	X	
261	08.01.16	We met someone really special on our way to Memphis. #volkswagen #rocknroll	12	53	Promotion	X	
262	09.01.16	Would you like to drive three cars at the same time? The new #PassatGTE makes it possible! #volkswagen	23	37	New Product Launch		X
263	10.01.16	A #snowman? We prefer a snowcar. How does yours look like? #volkswagen	25	73	Promotion	X	
264	11.01.16	Congratulations to all winners in #hollywood. #goldenglobes #volkswagen #redcarpet	15	62	Promotion	X	
265	11.01.16	#VWNAIAS: See today's press conference live http://vwgroup.to/WMSm3	4	12	Promotion		X
266	12.01.16	Do you know what car it is? Do you fancy a trip around town now? #volkswagen	22	56	Promotion	X	
267	13.01.16	Driving pleasure with low emissions: On the road with the new e-Golf. #volkswagen #thinkfuture #emobility	19	51	CSR	X	
268	14.01.16	It's #organizemyhomeday! We have already started! Have a look! #organizationtips	15	35	Special Days	X	
269	15.01.16	NAIAS Detroit has opened its doors and #volkswagen will be presenting its latest innovations. Stay tuned. #VWNAIAS	7	29	Sponsored Event	X	
270	16.01.16	Can you guess what the #PassatGTE and a camel have in common? #volkswagen	17	23	Promotion	X	

271	17.01.16	Ready to have a great time? #sundayfunday	8	28	Promotion	X	
272	18.01.16	Good luck to all the players in Melbourne. #ausopen #ao2016 #volkswagen	8	27	Sponsored Event	X	
273	18.01.16	We know which colors are state-of-the-art this season. Real "autocouture." #bfw #volkswagen	22	74	Promotion	X	
274	19.01.16	On the road on the sunny side of life – but in which car? #volkswagen	19	51	Promotion	X	
275	20.01.16	Best regards to all fashion victims. Here are our colour recommendations for next season. #bfw #volkswagen	10	39	Promotion	X	
276	21.01.16	Hug everyone. It's #hugday. #volkswagen	22	45	Special Days	X	
277	22.01.16	You love movies? Our interpretation of a drive-in theatre! #volkswagen	8	36	Promotion	X	
278	23.01.16	Lost your car after enjoying a great night out? No problem! Thanks to the Car-Net Parking Position app. #volkswagen	20	37	Applications		X
279	24.01.16	What a great start into WRC season 2016! @SebOgier wins #RallyMonteCarlo, @AMikkelsenRally on 2nd position. Chapeau!	42	74	Retweet	X	
280	24.01.16	Waiting for the perfect wave? What does your perfect day at the beach look like? #sundayfunday	23	60	Promotion	X	
281	25.01.16	In which #volkswagen did you have your first #kiss?	10	34	Promotion	X	
282	26.01.16	Love this panoramic view? Guess which #volkswagen has this feature. #sky	17	56	Promotion	X	
283	27.01.16	Being stuck in #traffic jams? What's your trick to pass the time? #volkswagen	12	22	Promotion	X	
284	28.01.16	Best Cars 2016: #VW Golf continues its winning streaks with total of 30. awards! #volkswagen	42	87	Promotion	X	
285	28.01.16	#4motion will manage every climb with you, however steep and icy the road is. #volkswagen #winter	38	71	New Feature Launch	X	
286	29.01.16	Do you know what kind of #volkswagen this is?	18	45	Promotion	X	
287	30.01.16	The #PassatGTE hits a top speed of 225 km/h powered by two engines. #thinkfuture #volkswagen #emobility	31	78	Promotion	X	
288	31.01.16	Ready for a ride on a big wheel? #sundayfunday #volkswagen	13	39	Promotion	X	
289	01.02.16	Your Volkswagen deserves a pleasant home. What does your garage look like? #volkswagen #home	12	32	Promotion	X	
290	02.02.16	Tasty crêpes! Happy #crepeday! #volkswagen	6	34	Special Days	X	

291	03.02.16	#Volkswagen starts implementing technical measures for EA189 diesel engines in Europe http://vwgroup.to/XQnA2	17	28	Crisis	X	
292	03.02.16	It's not about a car. It's about keeping your promises. What do you want to experience together? #volkswagen	17	33	Promotion	X	
293	03.02.16	You and your car share the same taste in music? Great! Discover Car-Net: http://volkswagen-carnet.com/int/en/start.html#volkswagen#music ...	9	15	Applications	X	
294	04.02.16	Another one rides the dust. How do you like this Volkswagen Rallye Beetle from the early 1970s? #tbt #volkswagen	35	79	Promotion	X	
295	05.02.16	Wherever you are, there's no reason not to celebrate carnival. #volkswagen #carnival	14	28	Promotion		X
296	06.02.16	It's not about a car. It's about being faithful for 50 years. For which Volkswagen does your heart beat? #volkswagen	55	109	Promotion	X	
297	06.02.16	Which car do you think is it? Let us know! #volkswagen	15	65	Promotion	X	
298	07.02.16	Happy Chinese New Year! Have a safe ride home with your Volkswagen! #chinesenewyear #volkswagen	15	30	Special Days	X	
299	07.02.16	What's your favourite family activity on a beautiful day? #sundayfunday #volkswagen	5	29	Special Days	X	
300	08.02.16	We wish everyone a great start to the Year of the Red Fire Monkey! #chinesenewyear #volkswagen	17	27	Special Days	X	
301	08.02.16	Whatever the weather forecast says, there's no reason not to celebrate carnival. #rosenmontag #carnival	8	28	Promotion		X
302	08.02.16	Tired of winter? For those who love to enjoy summer anytime – the Beetle Dune: http://www.beetle.com/int/en/home/Models/Original/Du.html ... #volkswagen	23	45	New Product Launch		X
303	09.02.16	Red is the colour of Chinese New Year! We wish you a great start! #chinesenewyear #volkswagen	18	43	Special Days	X	
304	09.02.16	Looks comfortable, doesn't it? Do you know which Volkswagen has these seats? #volkswagen	16	50	Promotion	X	
305	10.02.16	Spring is coming. Time for #outdoor adventures with your best friends. Pack your bags! What are you waiting for?	21	41	Promotion	X	
306	10.02.16	Having a restaurant guide always with you can be so easy. Ask your #Volkswagen with Car-Net: http://volkswagen-carnet.com/int/en/start.html ...	26	36	Applications		X
307	11.02.16	On our way to see some great movies in Berlin! #berlinale2016 #volkswagen	11	40	Promotion	X	
308	11.02.16	Longing for summer? Enough of the cold days? The new Beetle Dune gets you summer anytime! #vwbeetle	29	68	New Product Launch	X	
309	11.02.16	Look at this great Volkswagen 1500 Type 3 Variant from 1962. #tbt #volkswagen	19	59	Promotion	X	
310	13.02.16	The Volkswagen e-up! produces less noise on average than many vacuum cleaners. #emobility #volkswagen	19	44	New Product Launch	X	

311	13.02.16	It's more than just a car. It's feeling at home wherever you are. How do you relax while driving? #volkswagen	11	30	Promotion	X
312	14.02.16	Little gifts & great passion. #valentinesday #love #volkswagen	11	17	Special Days	X
313	14.02.16	Volkswagen wishes you a happy Valentine's Day! #valentinesday #love #volkswagen	18	34	Special Days	
314	14.02.16	It's hard to beat the feeling of freedom on a roadtrip. #sundayfunday #volkswagen	11	38	Promotion	X
315	15.02.16	Many people love listening to music while driving. What's your favourite playlist for the road? #volkswagen	13	26	Promotion	X
316	16.02.16	We go out tonight. But with which Volkswagen? Take a guess. #volkswagen	20	57	Promotion	X
317	17.02.16	Four little things that make your Volkswagen more classy. Do you know what these are? #volkswagen	28	64	Promotion	X
318	18.02.16	Enjoy the old times with this Volkswagen Karmann Ghia Type 14 Coupé. #tbt #volkswagen	48	80	Promotion	X
319	19.02.16	Do you know what kind of Volkswagen you can see in this puzzle? #volkswagen	12	23	Promotion	X
320	19.02.16	#VWGroup making progress as planned with first wave of technical measures for diesel engines. http://vwgroup.to/Yvr4F	13	17	Retweet	
321	19.02.16	It's more than just a car. It's quality time with friends. What have you experienced together in your #volkswagen?	10	23	Promotion	
322	20.02.16	Several ways of charging – even at a conventional household socket! #emobility #volkswagen	14	37	Promotion	X
323	21.02.16	Sunday is finally here. Time to go out and #play. Enjoy! #sundayfunday #volkswagen	11	32	Promotion	X
324	22.02.16	What was your dreamcar when you were young? #volkswagen	15	27	Promotion	X
325	23.02.16	The new #VWup! at the Geneva International Motor Show 2016. #VWGIMS16	7	19	Sponsored Event	
326	23.02.16	Buckle up and enjoy the ride. Do you know which Volkswagen this is? #volkswagen	6	30	Promotion	X
327	24.02.16	Do you know which country celebrates Dia de la Bandera – also known as #flagday – today?	16	26	Special Days	X
328	25.02.16	Always good to find a shortcut – but please don't try this with your own Volkswagen! #tbt #volkswagen http://t.co/pRK61Xh98c	17	45	Promotion	
329	26.02.16	Do you know in which year this beautiful Passat was first made? #classic #volkswagen #passat	15	59	Promotion	X
330	26.02.16	It's more than just a car. It's protection for what matters most. Which Volkswagen is your hero? #volkswagen	12	22	Promotion	X

331	27.02.16	The trunk of the e-Golf holds 341 liters. Enough space for a small regular elephant. #mobility #volkswagen	14	43	New Product Launch	X	
332	28.02.16	Volkswagen 2016 Geneva Concept Car: Sneak Preview - #VWGIMS16	13	32	New Product Launch		X
333	28.02.16	Fun in the snow? No problem with a Volkswagen! #sundayfunday #volkswagen	31	56	Promotion		X
334	28.02.16	It's more than just a car. It's where it takes you. Where does your Volkswagen take you to? #volkswagen	22	32	Promotion		X
335	29.02.16	Are you one of those people who can celebrate their birthday only every four years? Happy Birthday! #volkswagen	25	40	Special Days	X	
336	29.02.16	Bye-bye Sweden, it's time to defrost! Next stop: Mexico. The #volkswagen WRC team is ready for hot rally action!	19	28	Sponsored Event		X
337	29.02.16	Volkswagen live: Group Night at Geneva International Motor Show 2016 #VWGIMS16 https://secure.footprint.net/gomexlive/vw_live_ag/playerstn=geneva2016&lang=en ...	5	16	Sponsored Event		
338	29.02.16	olkswagen live: Press Conference at Geneva International Motor Show 2016 #VWGIMS16 http://volkswagen.gomexlive.com/vw_live_pk/?lang=en ...	3	11	Sponsored Event		
339	01.03.16	These three buddies are getting ready for the slopes. Are you going to ski this year? #ski #volkswagen	7	37	Promotion	X	
340	01.03.16	Volkswagen T-Cross Breeze - #VWGIMS16	5	11	New Product Launch		X
341	01.03.16	The new Volkswagen up! - #VWGIMS16	14	24	New Product Launch		X
342	01.03.16	A highlight at the #VWGIMS16 - the new #VWup! beats. Can you feel the sound? #volkswagen	15	32	New Product Launch		X
343	01.03.16	Fans, you're awesome! Whom will you send a compliment today? #worldcomplimentday #volkswagen	6	34	Special Days		X
344	02.03.16	Our favourite fashion models for Paris. #pfw #volkswagen	31	60	Promotion	X	
345	02.03.16	What's your personal highlight at the Geneva International Motor Show 2016? #VWGIMS16 #volkswagen	24	58	Sponsored Event	X	
346	02.03.16	Welcome to the family #VWup! beats. #VWGIMS16 #volkswagen	16	31	New Product Launch	X	
347	02.03.16	It's more than just a car. It's having someone that always brings you home. Who takes care of you? #volkswagen	10	24	Promotion	X	
348	03.03.16	Did you see the Tiguan GTE concept car at the #VWGIMS16? #volkswagen	22	51	New Product Launch	X	
349	03.03.16	Sporty design at the Geneva International Motor Show: The #VWGolfGTI Clubsport #VWGIMS16 #VW	45	101	Retweet	X	
350	04.03.16	Inside Volkswagen T-Cross Breeze: Design presentation at #VWGIMS16	13	10	New Product Launch		X
351	04.03.16	Car-Net technology helps you to connect with your car, e.g. send a destination to your car while in bed. #volkswagen	8	27	Application	X	
352	04.03.16	Geneva 2016: Jürgen Stackmann presents the Volkswagen Highlights - #VWGIMS16	3	12	Sponsored Event	X	

353	05.03.16	The new #VWup! Live every moment. #VWGIMS16	19	38	New Product Launch		X
354	05.03.16	It's more than just a car. It's being ready whenever you are. How does your #volkswagen help you?	10	26	Promotion	X	
355	06.03.16	It's back! But what kind of Volkswagen is it? #beautyspot #volkswagen	15	28	Promotion		X
356	06.03.16	How do you spend time with your grandparents? #sundayfunday #volkswagen	11	27	Promotion	X	
357	07.03.16	Can you guess when this Volkswagen was made? #volkswagen	26	69	Promotion	X	
358	07.03.16	It's more than just a car. It's what it can become. #volkswagen	9	19	Promotion	X	
359	08.03.16	The world championship of the sport played with this wooden bat starts today. Do you know what it is? #twenty20	3	9	Promotion	X	
360	08.03.16	Today we celebrate International Women's Day. #womensday #internationalwomensday	17	22	Special Days	X	
361	08.03.16	Superhero challenge: Who will be the winner? #superhero	8	36	Promotion	X	
362	09.03.16	Our recommendation for time travelers looking for a new car. #x11 #volkswagen	18	31	New Product Launch	X	
363	09.03.16	Sebastian, a #volkswagen mechanic, shows how a vehicle affected by the diesel emission issue is being fixed.	33	55	Crisis		X
364	10.03.16	Cruising through a winter wonderland. What's your favourite throwback snow memory? #tbt #volkswagen	22	46	Promotion	X	
365	11.03.16	Rock the ice with Volkswagen. Our Driving Experience makes it real! #sweden	14	45	Promotion	X	
366	11.03.16	It's more than just a car. It's about the good times. #volkswagen	11	13	Promotion	X	
367	12.03.16	Night rider! Which car is this? #volkswagen	23	75	Promotion	X	
368	13.03.16	Family time at its best! #sundayfunday #volkswagen	11	45	Promotion	X	
369	13.03.16	It's more than just a car. It's about spending lives together. #volkswagen	8	26	Promotion	X	
370	14.03.16	What a cutie! Future driver! #vwlove #volkswagen	8	24	Promotion	X	
371	14.03.16	#CeBIT16: Start of hackathon #InnoJam presented by #SAP und #VW. Students develop software. http://vwgroup.to/Zqbxtd	16	17	Retweet	X	
372	15.03.16	Volkswagen GTI documentary: 35 years of #GTIWoerthersee and 40 years of #GolfGTI. Here is part 1. #volkswagen	43	59	Promotion		X
373	15.03.16	It's more than just a car. It's about passion. #volkswagen	15	21	Promotion	X	
374	16.03.16	Ice, ice, baby! Enjoy the spectacular drifts of our Golf R drivers in snowy Sweden. #golfr #volkswagen	29	46	Promotion		X
375	16.03.16	#InnoJam presented by #SAP & #Volkswagen – Students code around mobility of the future & internet of things. #CeBIT16	18	26	Sponsored Event		
376	16.03.16	A new season is coming – time to change tyres! #volkswagen	8	26	Promotion		X
377	16.03.16	100 students, 30h coding, lots of solutions for future mobility - visit #volkswagen & #SAP #InnoJam at #CeBIT16	45	45	Applications	X	
378	17.03.16	Dia dhuit - Happy St. Patrick's Day from Volkswagen. #stpattricksday #volkswagen	79	158	Special Days		X
379	17.03.16	Shamrocks all around! #stpattricksday #volkswagen	16	44	Special Days	X	

380	18.03.16	Put the pieces together and try to guess which Volkswagen this is. #volkswagen	18	32	Promotion	X	
381	18.03.16	"Smart Driving School" wins #Volkswagen & #SAP #InnoJam at #CeBIT16	10	21	Sponsored Event	X	
382	18.03.16	Which mood are you in today? The DCC lets you choose between sport, comfort and normal. So enjoy! #volkswagen	19	59	Promotion	X	
383	19.03.16	Staring at the steering wheel? But from which #volkswagen?	11	30	Promotion		X
384	20.03.16	Spread happiness! #happiness #volkswagen	26	45	Special Days		X
385	20.03.16	Ready for a race round the circuit in your favourite car? #sundayfunday #volkswagen	24	79	Promotion	X	
386	21.03.16	Springtime is Beetle time! #vwbeetle #volkswagen	26	55	Promotion	X	
387	21.03.16	Happy Birthday @Twitter @TwitterDE #LoveTwitter	29	107	Special Days	X	
388	21.03.16	Volkswagen GTI documentary: 35 years of #GTIWoerthersee and 40 years of #GolfGTI. Here is part 2. #volkswagen	37	62	Promotion		X
389	22.03.16	We offer an eight year or 160.000 km guarantee on the high voltage batteries of our e-cars. #emobility #vwthinkblue	15	54	Promotion	X	
390	22.03.16	Different generations in one shot! Has your family driven Volkswagen for generations? #volkswagen	51	149	Promotion	X	
391	23.03.16	Lots of space, low consumption and a huge range: the Passat GTE is the perfect family car. #passatgte #volkswagen	19	62	Promotion	X	
392	24.03.16	Some things never change: like pictures with your Volkswagen. #tbt #volkswagen	12	87	Promotion	X	
393	25.03.16	Do you love your car? Please say yes! #volkswagen	54	145	Promotion	X	
394	26.03.16	Hello sunshine! Can you guess which Volkswagen this is? #volkswagen	10	68	Promotion	X	
395	27.03.16	Happy Easter everyone! #easter #volkswagen	22	73	Special Days	X	
396	27.03.16	Ever wondered how the Easter Bunny hides all the eggs in just one day? #easter #volkswagen	22	49	Promotion		X
397	28.03.16	Happy Easter! Being an Easter Bunny can be so exciting and exhausting at the same time! #easter	11	46	Special Days	X	
398	28.03.16	Can you guess when this Volkswagen model was made? #volkswagen	23	71	Promotion	X	
399	29.03.16	Flower Power in Japan. Let's celebrate the new life and beauty. #cherryblossom #volkswagen	20	56	Promotion	X	
400	30.03.16	Driving fun at its best in snowy Sweden! #volkswagen	41	89	Promotion		X
401	31.03.16	Classics are never old-fashioned. Wherever they are. #tbt #volkswagen	28	58	Promotion	X	
402	31.03.16	Volkswagen GTI documentary: 35 years of #GTIWoerthersee and 40 years of #GolfGTI. Here is part 3. #volkswagen	33	55	Promotion		X