How could cosmetic companies use social media in times of crisis?

Paper within: Bachelor Thesis
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Acknowledgement

The authors of this thesis would like to thank those involved in the process of completing this thesis.

First of all, the authors would like to thank their tutor, MaxMikael Wilde Björling, for his guidance, constructive feedback, and encouraging advices. Secondly, the authors would like to thank Oriflame Cosmetics AB for providing crucial information on their communications policy. Thirdly, the authors are thankful to François Trouillet, expert in social media, for the interview conducted for this thesis.

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Abstract

Purpose This thesis aims to provide guidelines for cosmetic companies on how to use social media in times of crisis.

Background In today’s society, cosmetic companies can face crises that can vary according to their level of impact and their level of controllability. These crises can go viral and reach a huge amount of stakeholders since social media can take on many different forms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. It is important to know how to manage these different communication tools and it is even more crucial in times of crisis. However, social media and the cosmetic industry have not been combined in previous studies. Therefore, it is beneficial for cosmetic companies to have guidelines on how to use social media in times of crisis.

Method The method is based on an inductive approach. Benchmarking case studies reflect crises that occurred in industries other than the cosmetic industry. The findings from the case studies are then complemented with a chosen company representative from the cosmetic industry. Finally, a semi-structured interview has been conducted to balance the research and add new valuable information to the investigation.

Conclusion Based on the results of the analysis, the authors of the thesis have been able to provide guidelines to cosmetic companies on how to use social media in times of crisis. These guidelines are divided into two parts: the first part advises guidelines to follow while the second part recommends factors to avoid on social media.
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1 Introduction

Companies have many responsibilities. One of their responsibilities is to be economically responsible towards their stakeholders. Therefore companies need to keep up with new technologies, to come up with profitable advertising, to manage their employees, to face ethical dilemmas, and to handle many other important activities. Among these projects, companies also need to handle crises which are natural features and inevitable (Mitroff, 2001). These can hurt the companies and their stakeholders (Massey & Larsen, 2006). Since the industrialization period, companies are facing more crises as technological improvements are rising (Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999, Perrow, 1984, Seeger, Sellnow & Ulmer, 1998, cited in Massey & Larsen, 2006). Also, these authors add that companies need to be careful when facing a crisis as the attention from media on these is intensifying.

Chris Fill’s (2013) “Organizational Crisis Matrix” places crises into four categories according to their level of impact and their level of controllability. The thesis focuses on the ones that have a wide impact and that are controllable. This category includes product defects crises, environmental pollution crises, customer accidents crises, mergers crises, and poor trading results crises. However, this thesis will only consider three of them, which are product defects crises, environmental pollution crises, and customer accidents crises. Hence, through research on the Internet, the authors of this thesis found that cosmetic companies are most often victims of these types of crises. According to Kumar (2005), technology enables the cosmetic industry to grow rapidly leading customers to be mostly worried about issues such as health, safety, and environment.

![Organizational Crisis Matrix by Chris Fill (2013)](image-url)

*Figure 1.1 – Organizational Crisis Matrix by Chris Fill (2013)*
According to Mitroff (2001), organizations need to know what could be done in order to be as safe as possible in prevention of a crisis occurrence. Indeed, they often realize the importance of having a crisis management plan only once the crisis occurs. This often leads to bad decision-making, which makes the companies rely on inadequate existing knowledge on how to communicate with the stakeholders. An example of repercussions it could bring is well illustrated by Siomkos (1999, p.18) who explains the management of communications during a beverage company’s, Perrier, crisis in 1990. He explains that this communication “broke down so that conflicting messages regarding the company’s efforts to handle the crisis confused the public and the rest of the company’s stakeholders, and resulted in unintentional damage to its reputation”. The problem was that Perrier was not ready to deal with this crisis and did not have any formal crisis plan or crisis management team to handle it. The damage to a reputation “can be minimized by the correct public relations strategy, namely saying the right words at the right moment” (Coombs, 2004, cited in Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012, p.83). Companies might consider others’ experiences as a tool to take a second mover advantage. Benchmarking method helps companies recognize and interpret other companies’ practices in order to enhance their own accomplishments (O’Dell, 1994, cited in McGaughhey, 2002). This method can be a great approach for companies to take when they want to improve themselves.

Once a crisis occurs, the public often bands together, shares information, and demands a solution, all through a support called social media (Choi & Lin, 2009, Stephens & Malone, 2009, cited in Liu, Austinb, & Jin, 2011). Undeniably, social media is part of the daily routine of a huge number of people nowadays. Its use can vary from sharing ideas, keeping contact with family and friends, finding events, to a lot more. Companies themselves are being more aware of the importance of the use of social media and therefore many research studies regarding social media have been undertaken these past years. One undeniable advantage of social media is that it provides a huge platform allowing consumers to interact with companies (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012).

Since many individuals and companies are using social media, this communication channel constitutes an important tool for journalists displaying news in the newspapers. As Ryan Holiday (2012, p. 20) underlines in his book Trust me I’m lying, “89 percent of journalists reported using blogs for their research for stories. Roughly half report using Twitter to find and research stories, and more than two thirds use other social networks such as Facebook or LinkedIn in the same way”. It is therefore easily comprehensive how a tweet, a Facebook post, or a YouTube video, can impact stakeholders in times of crisis. Since social media is very often the principal source of information for stories, companies have to be careful how they handle social media in times of crisis. Companies have the possibility to take advantage of the opportunities these wide communication tools offer when they have to handle these crises.
Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are, according to DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013, p. 4), “three of the most popular social media platforms [that companies use] to communicate […] and engage with their stakeholders”. Facebook is assessed by 80% of organizations, Twitter used by 73%, and YouTube is utilized by 52% (Wright & Hinson, 2012, cited in DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013). Therefore, this thesis will focus on those three platforms. Most of the studies examining social media focus on how to use it as a marketing tool, such as how to advertise products, how to improve the brand’s image in stakeholders’ minds, how to answer quickly to customers’ questions, and much more. Hence, social media reflects the personality of its users as it enables them, when communicating through different platforms, to choose how they want to be perceived by society. Cosmetic companies, through their products, also give customers the opportunity to provide an ideal image of themselves to society.

Since technology is constantly improving, the development of social media channels requires more attention and resources from companies. Lack of resources and knowledge on how to handle the social media platforms will slow down the process of managing a crisis. The 21st century brought both possibilities and challenges for social media (Berthon et al., 2012); therefore, the papers and books regarding crises and social media are quite new and relevant for the thesis.

This thesis focuses on one of the aspects of social media’s usage for companies, which answers the question on how to respond to a crisis that has a wide impact and that is controllable. If an unfortunate event happens in a company, it will be very likely to be rapidly posted on social media, reaching a huge amount of stakeholders. Since keeping a good reputation and staying competitive are important for companies, this thesis will emphasize on how social media could be efficiently used by companies handling a crisis.

However, there has not been enough time for academic writers to study crisis communication in detail through social media for all industries. More specifically, there is a gap of this kind of study in the cosmetic industry. For instance, the head of brand communications of the cosmetic company LUSH expressed that cosmetic companies’ advertising are built “largely on word of mouth, […] the use of Facebook and Twitter [is] vital. People in (their) industry who do not get on board with social media are at serious risk of getting left behind” (Koerne, 2012, p. 1).

For cosmetic companies to learn how to use social media, benchmarking is a relevant method since it bases its research on previous cases of crises in other industries that have already been studied. This thesis will focus on three benchmarking case studies that represent different crises and that have been chosen according to Chris Fill’s organizational crisis matrix published in 2013. These crises are product defects, environmental pollution, and customer accidents.
1.1 Research Question
How could cosmetic companies use social media in times of crisis?

1.2 Purpose
This thesis will provide guidelines for cosmetic companies on how to use social media when handling crisis situations.

1.3 Delimitation of Purpose
The purpose of this thesis is limited, as it does not consider all types of crisis situations presented in Chris Fill’s typology of crises. Indeed the guidelines are only relevant for crises having a wide impact and being controllable.
2 Theory

2.1 Crisis Handling

2.1.1 Crisis

Crises can be defined, used, and controlled in various ways. Several companies see them as an opportunity, while others see them as something negative. The definitions of the term “crisis” have similar features when explained.

According to Klein (2010, cited in Rubin & Klein, 2010), a crisis is an event that appears and that can harm companies. It is hard to know how, why, and when a crisis will occur (Mitroff, 2001). However, when it occurs companies need to start acting (Valackiene, 2011). Rosenblatt and Sheaffer (2002) explain that crises are often seen as something negative (cited in Valackiene, 2011). However, Valackiene (2011) continues justifying that there is a relationship between crises and changes in companies that can be seen as something positive. Crises give the “possibility to learn and improve” in order to become stronger (Valackiene, 2011, Ulmer et al., 2007, cited in Valackiene, 2011, p. 81).

The crises that occur in companies are not always controlled and kept internally (Mitroff, 2001). When a crisis arises it is important to act immediately; if not, the crisis can harm companies' future development (Webster, 2000, Shrivastava, 1987, Hauschildt, 2000, cited in Valackiene, 2011).

2.1.2 Crisis Management

Crisis management is the process by which the organizations handle and avoid a crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1998, cited in Massey & Larsen, 2006). Crisis management deals with internal and external communication, distributing the right position to the right individual and responsibilities regarding decision-making and collaboration (Valackiene, 2011).

2.1.3 Crisis Communication

If companies are too slow addressing problems and communicating with their stakeholders in times of crisis, their reputation can be damaged in a matter of seconds. Therefore, having a crisis communication plan will help companies save their reputation and save them from the damage that could have otherwise occurred (Benoît, 1995, Coombs, 1999, Johansen & Frandsen, 2007, cited in Johansen, Aggerholm & Frandsen, 2012). Crisis communication can be explained as “the collection, processing, and dis-
semination of information required to address a crisis situation” (Coombs & Holladay, 2010, p. 20). Furthermore, crisis communication can also be described as a tool and guide for external and internal environmental changes companies face (Valackiene, 2011).

2.1.4 Crisis Management Team/Plan

When facing a crisis, it seems easier for companies to handle it when there is a suitable plan prepared in advance. It is important to have people from different areas in the organisation on the management team because it will give a broader perspective of what might occur and at what time (Rubin & Klein, 2010). In order for a communication plan to be efficient, it needs to include external and internal communication (Valackiene, 2011).

2.1.5 Risk Mapping

Risk mapping can be used in several situations and contexts (Rubin & Klein, 2010). These authors define risk mapping as a matrix where one can classify potential threats and possible events that will affect companies financially. After categorizing these different events in the matrix, Rubin and Klein (2010) point out that it is necessary to identify which strategy will be most suitable in that particular crisis situation and act upon it. However, it is important to take into consideration that “when you believe you have captured everything that can happen (through modelling), that’s usually where you end up going wrong” (Rubin & Klein, 2010, p. 127).

2.1.6 Reputation

A reputation that quickly evolves and spreads can have both positive and negative effects on companies (Honey, 2009). Reputation can be described as “a perception held by another about you, in anticipation of future behavior” (Honey, 2009, p. 2). On the other hand, a reputation can also be explained as a rumor that stakeholders hear from various media platforms (Coombs, 2007). Companies’ reputation gets damaged when the trust of its stakeholders is misdirected and lost (Honey, 2009).

2.1.7 Reactionary Model of Crisis Management

The crisis management process model created by Spillan (2003) includes different stages that occur in a crisis situation (See Appendix Exhibit 1). Spillan (2003) defines two stages: the reactive stage and the proactive stage. The reactive approach puts an emphasis on how to plan during and after a crisis. This model written by Spillan (2003) consists of several stages. When a crisis hits companies, they start to defend themselves by both reacting against the crisis and planning their response to it. Then the companies
measure the costs incurred, restructure their resources, review their management style, perform changes in the personnel, and evaluate their business failures. The other model that Spillan (2003) mentions is the proactive model. In this model, the crisis is already expected and an investigation is undertaken in order to create a crisis plan. During their pre-crisis stage, the companies analyse their vulnerability; then they plan and prepare for a potential future crisis. Two scenarios can occur: either the crisis occurs or the crisis is averted due to the companies’ effective preparation. In both cases the companies then evaluate their crisis plan, review their vulnerabilities, and prepare for another potential future crisis.

2.1.8 Stealing Thunder

Stealing thunder is defined as revealing negative information about the companies by the companies themselves before other parties do (Williams, Bourgeois, & Croyle, 1993, cited in Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). More specifically, stealing thunder denotes that companies divulge their mistake or their failure before it is published and released by the media. The advantage of stealing thunder, a timing strategy, is that it aids companies to preserve or to obtain more credibility than if a third party releases the negative information (Arpan et al., 2005).

2.1.9 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

SCCT’s goal is for companies to “protect their publics from harm through two strategies: providing instructing and adjusting information” (Coombs, 2012, cited in Liu et al., 2011, p. 347). Since the public is the companies’ most important stakeholder affected by the crisis, organizations’ priority should be to inform them about what happened and how the crisis might affect them (Liu et al., 2011). This reflects, according to Liu et al. (2011), instructing information provided by companies. For example, in the cosmetic industry, the organizations should inform the public to stop using a defective cream that can put them at risk. A crisis creates stress and uncertainty in the mind of stakeholders. Therefore, as Liu et al. (2011) mention, companies need to use the adjusting information strategy to regain trust from their stakeholders and to appease them. After this action, organizations have the possibility to choose different response options. The response options are described by Coombs (2007, 2012, cited in Liu et al., 2011). The first is SCCT’s deny response, which consists of attacking the accuser, denying, and blaming someone else (Coombs, 2012, cited in Liu et al., 2011). The second option is SCCT’s diminish response where companies provide excuses and try to justify why the crisis occurred. The third option is SCCT’s rebuild response which suggests to organizations to compensate the victims and apologize to them. The last option of SCCT’s model is the reinforce response which consists of bolstering, ingratiation, and victimage. Bolstering is defined as using the “positive relationships with stakeholders [to] draw upon [their] sympathy for the organization” (Coombs, 2007, p. 172). It is also de-
fined as “using past good works to counter-balance the current negatives from the crisis” (Coombs, 2007, p. 172). Liu et al. (2011, p. 348) explain that ingratiation is used “to praise stakeholders” and that victimage expresses the companies as “victims of the crisis”.

2.1.10 Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC)

The SMCC model is a framework for crisis communication in the changing media landscape (Jin & Liu, 2010, cited in Liu, Austinb, & Yan, 2011). The model shows how the origin and appearance of the crisis affect the options for organizations to respond. It also suggests strategies to respond to crises in social media (Liu, Austinb, & Yan, 2011). The model links organizations facing the crisis with three types of crisis communication tools identified by Liu, Austinb, and Yan (2011), which are social media, traditional media, and offline word of mouth communication. These authors explain that the source of information can come from organizations or from outside of these organizations. The public concerned with the crisis can be classified as being influential social media creators, social media followers, and social media inactives (Liu, Austinb, & Yan, 2011). Influential media creators are creating the content for others to utilize. Social media followers constitute the group that utilizes this content. Social media inactives get the information through offline word of mouth communication and traditional media. To identify which communication tools the stakeholders would prefer to get information from, the companies need to be aware of five factors (Liu, Austinb, & Yan, 2011). These have an effect on the communication flow before, during, and after the crisis and these five are the crisis origin, the crisis type, the infrastructure, the message strategy, and the message form.

2.2 Social Media Usage

2.2.1 Social Media

Social media is a platform where companies, individuals, and organizations have the opportunity to appear publicly. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are all platforms included in social media.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media is a tool based on different applications that allow individuals to exchange information, communicate, and network on sites such as Facebook (cited in Hamann, 2012). Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube enable stakeholders and companies to interact in a two-way communication (DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013). Phillips & Young (2009) argue that Facebook is a microwebbsite that gives individuals the opportunity to network with friends, view their personal profiles, and be active on discussion lists. Norman Phelps (2007) clarifies that social media is not only a platform used for communication; it can be a tool for companies to have
control over consumers during a crisis. Holiday (2012) includes Facebook, Twitter, and other social media under the term “blog”. He highlights that blogs are often sources for other media, such as newspapers.

2.2.2 Facebook

Champoux, Durgee, and McGlynn (2012) recommend companies to follow seven steps in order to reduce the risk of a crisis occurring on Facebook. (1) The first advice is that companies need to have a team in place that includes people from different departments in the companies, in order to incorporate social media in every job. (2) Then, they should use tracking tools to look for information about the companies on the Internet. Also, constant monitoring of their Facebook pages is crucial to keep good relationships with customers. (3) Furthermore, the authors suggest that the companies should act quickly to not avoid losing control of the flow of information. (4) Indeed, managing ongoing dialogue will facilitate a two-way conversation with their customers. However, although the companies have the right to delete the comments, one must emphasize that they have the opportunity to take advantage of the comments by continuously conversing with their stakeholders. (5) It is essential for companies to take responsibility and apologize even though they do not feel the crisis occurred because of them. (6) A constant flow of information to their stakeholders about how the situation is evolving is crucial in order to resolve the situation. (7) Finally, it is important for companies to stay transparent and move on, focusing on the future, by returning to their normal schedule of social media activity.

![Facebook Seven Steps](image)

*Figure 2.1 - Facebook Seven Steps by Champoux, Durgee, and McGlynn (2012)*
2.2.3 Twitter

Twitter needs to be considered because it is one of the main social media platforms (DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013). Thomases (2010) highlights four recommendations to make the best use of Twitter when communicating through this platform. The first recommendation is to be transparent. The author explains that being transparent is not a synonym of becoming a “total open book [but rather being] open, honest, and [provide] humanized communications” (Thomases, 2010, p. 109). Secondly, companies need to use Twitter as a brand-monitoring tool since this tool helps them keep track of what is being said about them on the platform. The third recommendation is to write messages that are straightforward. Indeed, this platform only allows its users to post 140 characters per tweet. Lastly, the speed of the response is essential on Twitter and therefore companies need to be prepared to respond quickly.

![Twitter Recommendations diagram](Figure 2.2 – Twitter Recommendations by Thomases (2010))

2.2.4 YouTube

According to Miller (2011), there are recommendations to consider when handling a crisis occurring on YouTube. First, if the companies choose to publish a response video, this needs to be short since viewers only pay attention for a short period of time. Secondly, it is important for companies to be aware of the amount of customers that are present on this social media platform. Lastly, companies need to have in mind that the production of videos does not need to be expensive in order for the video to be effective. Simple videos are often the best option.
2.3 Conceptual Model

The Benchmarking Crisis Social Media (BCSM) process has been developed by the authors of this thesis and is inspired by the abstraction process from Elo and Kyngäs (2008). The BCSM process is a result of the definitions and models gathered in the theory part of the thesis. It helps the reader understand how the study is conducted and how the results are met.

The model consists of three parts: the first part is based on benchmarking case studies. Wide impact and controllable crises are classified as the main category. From this classification, three generic categories are identified as product defects crisis, environmental pollution crisis, and customer accidents crisis. For each generic category, the authors of this thesis have chosen case companies from different industries. These industry representatives are Nestlé, British Petroleum, and Air France. Then crisis-handling strategies have been chosen to analyse these companies. Firstly, the reactionary model defines the companies as either being reactive or proactive in their crisis management process. Stealing thunder is the second crisis handling strategy that investigates if the information about the crisis had been released by the affected companies or by the media. Thirdly, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) illustrates the companies’ choices of information and responses to the crises. After these crisis handling strategies, the Social Media Crisis Communication (SMCC) model, which is a social media strategy, is presented. This model enables identification of who releases the information about the crisis on social media and how it affects stakeholders. Lastly, steps and recommendations on how to use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in times of crisis are examined.

In the second part of the BCSM process, the representative cosmetic company, Oriflame Cosmetics AB, is described and analysed. The company’s communication and security
policies are investigated in order to understand if social media is included in its crisis management plan.

The third part consists of an interview with a social media expert. This interview has been conducted in order to test and strengthen the findings from the two first parts of the BCSM process.
3 Methodology and Method

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Hermeneutics

As explained by Sikka (2008, p. 235), the study of hermeneutics can be linked to “bibli-cal texts and the attempt to expose hidden meanings”. Hermeneutics are defined as be-ing the “study of interpretation” and “the process of coming to understand a text” (Bo-land, 1991, cited in Lee, 1994, p. 148). Hermeneutics also emphasize “the relationship between the researcher and the subject of research” (Cassel & Symon, 2004, p. 197). The concept refers to a study where the intellect needs to come across what the meaning of a text was originally (McBurney & White, 2007).

3.1.2 Inductive Method

The inductive method consists of “a range of instructional methods, including inquiry learning, problem based learning, project based learning, case based learning, discovery learning” (Prince & Felder, 2006, p. 2). The inductive method can also be described as the process of collecting data and examining the information to see what topics should be further explored (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, Strauss & Corbin, 2008, Yin, 2003, cited in Lewis, Saunders, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.1.3 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is, according to Yasin (2002, cited in Salhieh & Singh, 2003, p. 490), a "multi-faceted technique that can be utilized to identify operational and strategic gaps, and to search for the best practices that would eliminate such gaps". Benchmarking consists of assembling secondary data in other industries and then applying the results to the industry through study. In other words, ”it is the process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices from organizations anywhere in the world to help an organization improve its performance” (Kumar, Anthony, & Dhakar, 2006, cited in Anand & Kodali, 2008, p. 259). Also, benchmarking can be perceived as analysing different factors from several chosen companies by acquiring information, for example, via data collection, in order to identify the best attributes of other companies to implement these into the concerned company (Anand & Kodali, 2008). Indeed, benchmarking aims to find the best industry performances, which will help the studied company to improve by implementing these practices (Camp, 1989, cited in Anand & Kodali, 2008). Before undertaking this kind of method, one should be aware that it is both re-source and time consuming since it needs to be done carefully (Vaziri, 1993, DeToro, 1995, cited Anand & Kodali, 2008).
3.1.4 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research gives the possibility to investigate experiences from people, such as “in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations” (Bailey & Hennink, 2011, p. 9). Qualitative research aims for understanding “reasons, beliefs, motivations” (Bailey & Hennink, 2011, p. 16). This kind of research also gives the interviewers the possibility to interpret the behaviour of the interviewee, which can help to comprehend the answers in a deeper way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). One advantage of qualitative research is that it increases the level of understanding of the “complexity of a particular context” (Bassey, 1999, p. 36). When conducting a qualitative interview, the representative’s opinions are highly valued (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Indeed, these authors argue that the interviewee has a great freedom when answering to questions from the interview guide.

A “semi-structured interview […] [includes] questions to be asked [which] are planned in advance […] based on open-ended questions” (Fox, 2009, p. 6). As such, Fox (2009) explains that the interviewee can expand on his answers or can choose to only answer the questions without featuring other details. This structure requires preparation from the interviewers before the discussion and engages in creative conversation (Wengraf, 2001). Recording and transcribing interviews permits the researchers to not miss any information since the possibility of reliving the interview exists (Heritage, 1984, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.1.5 Deductive Content Analysis

Deductive Content Analysis gives the opportunity to “retest existing data in a new context” (Catanzaro, 1988, cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111). This analysis can be based “on earlier work such as theories, models, mind maps and literature reviews” (Sandelowski, 1995, Polit & Beck, 2004, Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111). According to these authors, an organization matrix needs to be created when this analysis is undertaken. This matrix can consist of different categories having altered meanings.

3.2 Method

A hermeneutics approach is undertaken in this thesis, where the authors aimed to understand and interpret data. The thesis will follow an inductive technique whose aim is to research how cosmetic companies could use social media in times of crisis. In order to do this, the thesis will contain the theoretical frameworks stated above, which will then be applied to well-known cases. The “Organizational Crisis Matrix,” written by Chris Fill (2013), has been used as a framework to choose the cases.
Benchmarking will help draw general conclusions about what the most suitable approach to different crises is and how it can be complemented with social media usage. Indeed, the study considers crises that occurred in companies in other industries. The extracted information will be interpreted and implemented in the cosmetic industry. The thesis starts by focusing on three cases from companies facing a crisis that occurred in the 21st century. These three cases are well known internationally, discussed extensively in the media, and have accessible data. Therefore, they are applicable for the research. Each of them is included in the same area in Chris Fill’s (2013) organizational crisis matrix, which gathers controllable and wide impact crises. Each case can therefore be related to the cosmetic industry because of their similarity in the characteristics of the crisis that they face. Following the benchmarking method, data from other industries, collected from scientific journals, books, and online material, are transferred to the industry of the thesis’ interest. The different types of crisis that are controllable and that have wide impacts are product defects, environmental pollution, and customer accidents. Merger and poor trading results are not considered in this study. This choice is due to the following criteria: there is a lack of time and the study must not be too broad. More importantly, product defects, customer accidents, and environmental pollution are all consumer related crisis situations. This fact is important to consider, as the main purpose of the thesis concerns cosmetic companies, which have a direct link to the physical appearance of customers. Poor trading results and merger, however, do not directly affect customers in that sense.

3.2.1 Choice of Case Studies

Nestlé, British Petroleum, and Air France are the three companies that will be used to illustrate the three types of crisis situations being product defects, environmental pollution, and customer accidents. Those types of crisis are classified by Chris Fill (2013) in his organizational crisis matrix. Each company represents the crises considered as being controllable and having a wide impact. These different companies illustrate crises that could occur in cosmetic companies. Therefore, they are analysed through the BCSM process in order to perceive how cosmetic companies could use social media in times of crisis. Each company also represents a different level of social media activity, which allows a wide range of cosmetic companies to identify themselves with the cases studied. Nestlé represents both product defect crisis and environmental pollution crisis. This company has been chosen because it is a well-known multinational company that faced a lot of crises in the past. Nestlé was chosen to represent a product defect crisis, howev-
er the company was not yet present on social media when this crisis occurred. Though, Nestlé was highly active on social media when it faced an environmental pollution crisis. This thesis considers both of these crises for the company in order to understand how Nestlé as a company use social media in times of crisis. The way it has managed its environmental pollution crisis has been highly criticized on social media. Therefore, a lot of information was available to build an efficient case study. British Petroleum, a widely well-known company, portrays the environmental pollution crisis. BP has also been selected since it is a representative of companies that, at the time of the crisis, are almost inactive on social media. Finally, Air France illustrates the customer accident crisis. This international airline illustrates a company that was highly inactive on social media when its crisis occurred.

The crisis management plan of Oriflame Cosmetics AB has been investigated through secondary data and then been analysed. This company has been chosen to represent the cosmetic industry. Through the benchmarking cases presented, Oriflame’s communications and security policies have been examined. This helped the study to receive a picture of how much a company from the cosmetic industry had already integrated social media in its crisis management plan. The cosmetic industry is a complex world that provides its customers with products that are visible, vulnerable, and close to customers’ identity, and can therefore be seen as an industry with a high potential for crises. This analysis was then linked with the conclusions extracted from each case study described in the thesis to draw general conclusions about how a cosmetic company could use social media in times of crisis.

3.2.2 Choice of Interview

The secondary data from benchmarking has been combined with primary data. In order to get a broader and wider perspective, a semi-structured interview has been conducted. The interviewee was François Trouillet, a Professor of Marketing who specializes in social media at Grenoble École de Management in France. Since he is an expert in social media and is really interested in the subject, he was able to provide long and detailed responses to each of the questions. In total, eleven questions have been prepared and sent beforehand to the interviewee, which allowed him to prepare his answers in advance. Also, it enabled him to gather relevant sources and material that turned out to be useful for the thesis. The interview was conducted the 24th of March 2014 and lasted 45 minutes. During that interview, the same questions have been asked to the interviewee, which allowed him to expand his responses thanks to a two-way communication with the interviewers. The interviewee had the possibility to put his own words into the existing knowledge in the field. The semi-structured interview was a helpful tool to complement the research and to add new valuable information to the investigation. For example, he provided useful recommendations on how to use Twitter and YouTube. The interview has been conducted through Skype because of the geographical distance between the interviewers and the interviewee. As a Skype session provides the possibility
to converse through a video, it enables to grasp the facial expressions and reactions of the interviewee. Foremost, the interview has been recorded in order for the authors of the study to recall details from the interview session.

3.2.3 Conceptual Model

In order to analyse the cases, the authors of this thesis have done a deductive content analysis. An extended framework, called Benchmarking Crisis Social Media process, inspired by the abstraction process from Elo and Kyngäs (2008) (See Appendix Exhibit 2), was created by the authors of this thesis. The BCSM process is illustrated in part 2.3 on page 12 in this thesis. The first part involves six categories, through which each case is examined. The steps gathered constitute one of other possible ways to analyse how each company handled its crisis and social media together. The order of the steps is built on a funnel approach that aims at giving a suitable description of the companies’ crisis management. The second part consists of the analysis of Oriflame Cosmetics’ communications and security policies, which are evaluated according to the conclusions drawn from the different steps included in the first part of the analysis. Finally, part three consists of an interview with an expert in social media. This interview is intended to strengthen and confirm the data drawn from the two first parts. The three parts of the BCSM process enable the authors of the thesis to draw general guidelines on how to handle a crisis through social media for cosmetic companies.

3.2.4 Limitations of the Method

The use of secondary data for benchmarking studies can be coloured by the source that published it which may put limitations on the findings. Different perceptions and opinions from the authors that wrote information about the crises that happened in the companies can be the cause of distorted information. The information gathered to analyze the case studies could be subject to wrong interpretation from previous authors through time. Indeed, readers can understand a text in a way that was not intended by the author.

The interview is also subject to limitations. First, the questions provided to the interviewee might be one-sided and closed, which could lead to a single possible answer. Secondly, the answers provided might not be fully consistent and objective, as they might be shaped by the interviewers and the context. Also, it is hard for the authors to perceive if the information provided has a reliable origin. In general, interviews are time consuming, and therefore the interviewer requested the session not to be longer than an hour. This time limit affects the amount of information Trouillet was able to provide and explain during the interview. The study about social media is based on a single interview, therefore the information gathered from the session is limited because it is only from one individual perspective. The interview with Trouillet is the only primary data
source on which the thesis is based and can therefore limit the relevant information collected.

One crisis management plan has been analysed to understand how social media is integrated in a cosmetic company. Oriflame Cosmetics AB has been the only company, among several others that have been contacted, willing to provide non-detailed information about how it plans to handle a crisis through social media. Indeed, that type of information is seen as confidential and these plans are often part of the competitive advantage strategies companies have. The thesis generalizes from this restricted information, which might have impacted the results and conclusions drawn for the cosmetic industry.

Furthermore, the information extracted from the benchmarking case studies and the interview is only applied on one representative company from the cosmetic industry. However, Oriflame might not be seen as an adequate representative of the entire cosmetic industry because cosmetic companies can be positioned differently according to their price range, size, market, and other factors.

### 3.2.5 Implications of the Method

The methodology chosen can be discussed, as it could have been conducted in another way. Indeed, it would have been relevant to organize a survey that would have been sent to a variety of cosmetic companies. This would have enabled the research to diversify the answers and get a broader perspective on the subject. Also, instead of requiring the cosmetic companies to provide rather confidential information, the authors could have created scenarios through interviews. Through these scenarios, they would have been able to give their opinion on how they believe their company would have handled the crises that occurred in the case studies chosen.

The interview conducted with only one expert in social media could have been replaced by focus groups. Focus groups would have included interviewees with different backgrounds that would have brought varying perspectives and opinions. These different knowledge and viewpoints could have been more effective than having only one point of view. Several interviews with experts in the field of social media or crisis management could have been conducted. This could have brought conflicting opinions and argumentation among the different experts which could have been interesting.
4 Results and Findings

Since the thesis is based on a benchmarking method, the first results consist of the three chosen benchmarking case studies, which are Nestlé, British Petroleum, and Air France. In the second part of our results, Oriflame Cosmetics AB, which is the chosen representative company of the cosmetic industry, is presented. Lastly, the interview with an expert in social media is explained.

4.1 Nestlé

4.1.1 Company Background

Nestlé, headquartered in Switzerland, was founded in 1866 and is one of the world’s largest corporations (Nestlé, 2013). Nestlé is “the world’s leading nutrition, health and wellness company” according to its official website. Its logo stands for “Good Food, Good Life” which represents its different line of food, beverages, and nutrition it provides to its consumers.

Nutrition is one of the company’s keystones and has been around since 1967 (Nestlé, 2013). Nestlé states on its website that it believes in trust and responsible behaviour. The company also argues that trust is not gained over night but instead earned over a long period of time. Nestlé has earned its trust from the consumers by delivering and acting upon its promises.

4.1.2 Nestlé’s Crises

Nestlé has faced two huge crises, the first being product defect and the second one being environmental crisis. This thesis will consider both since they are seen as having a wide-impact and being controllable. Also, during its product defect crisis Nestlé was not present on social media platforms but during its environmental pollution crisis the company was active on social media.

Nestlé has been providing its customers with nutrition over 140 years (Nestlé, 2013). In 2005, the company experienced a crisis when it was selling milk powder to the Chinese market (Ma, Zhang, & Wang, 2010). These authors explicate that Nestlé accidentally provided the Chinese customers milk powder that contained a high level of iodine, which was beyond what was acceptable in the Chinese market. This raised a large concern among the consumers, which made Nestlé remove its products immediately (AFP, 2005). Having too much or too little iodine in the body can cause a swollen neck for an infant or a young child, which, in the worst case scenario, can stop the thyroid glands producing hormones that can later on affect the normal growth of the child (AFP, 2005,
ATSDR, 2004). This crisis can be labelled as a product defect.

In 2010 Nestlé received bad publicity from Greenpeace. It accused Nestlé for allowing one of its suppliers in Indonesia to ruin the rainforest, affecting the orangutans and worsening the climate by using palm oil when producing the chocolate bar, Kit Kat (Singleton, 2010, cited in Champoux, Durgee, & McGlynn, 2012). Not only did Greenpeace criticize Nestlé’s behavior, but it also launched a video on YouTube (Champoux, et al., 2012). Greenpeace reached Nestlé’s consumers on every social media platform. The authors continue explaining that Greenpeace even convinced the consumers to have a “Kit Kat killer logo” as a profile picture on their accounts. According to Fill’s organizational crisis matrix (2013), this event can be labeled as being an environmental pollution crisis.

4.1.3 Nestlé’s Crises Communication

The product defect accident gained large media attention, which made Nestlé apologize publicly on its website (AFP, 2005, cited in Ma, Zhang, & Wang, 2010). Furthermore, the company was also forced to directly remove the unreliable products. In order for Nestlé to gain its consumers’ trust back and repair the damaged sales that had been unsatisfying during that period, it provided samples to doctors in Beijing’s supermarkets. Nestlé wanted the doctors to deal with the customers’ questions and concerns (Ma et al., 2010). During this crisis, the company was not active on social media platforms yet. Indeed it joined Facebook in 2008, joined Twitter in 2009, and joined YouTube in 2009 (Facebook, 2008, Twitter, 2009, YouTube, 2009).

Nestlé’s environmental pollution crisis went viral, not only because of its consequences on the environment, but even more because of inappropriate responses on social media (Lamb, Hair, & Mc Daniel, 2011). According to these authors, Nestlé’s Facebook page reached over 95,000 fans, most of them being protesters. First, Nestlé announced that it was ending its relationship with the supplying firm that had been criticized (Steel, 2010). This action did not have a transforming impact on Nestlé since the supplier provided only a negligible amount of palm oil to the company. Steel (2010) continues explaining that, when the accident happened, Nestlé started putting pressure on its suppliers to avoid future difficulties. However, the company had a hard time making itself heard by the public. Nestlé’s spokeswomen, Nina Backes, stated that the problems with social media that companies often encounter are that they have “to show that [they] are listening, which [they] obviously are, while not getting involved in a shouting match” (Steel, 2010 p. 1). In order to recover from the environmental crisis, the company also chose to build a partnership with “The Forest Trust to establish Responsible Sourcing Guidelines for palm oil” (Nestlé, 2013). These guidelines ensure that Nestlé minimizes its environmental impact. In addition to these recovery tools, the company significantly used social media. However, in 2012, Nestlé’s new global head of digital and social media, Pete Blackshaw, stated that “on social media perhaps the best measure of suc-
cess is the resounding sound of silence” (Ionescu-Somers & Enders, 2014 p. 3).

4.1.4 Social Media

As mentioned earlier, Nestlé was not present on social media when it faced its product defect crisis in 2005. In 2008 and 2009, the company joined Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Therefore the social media description only concerns the environmental pollution crisis that occurred in 2010.

Facebook

In response to the Kit Kat killer logo created by Greenpeace, Nestlé chose to inform its fans on Facebook that comments of people having such a picture will be deleted (Steel, 2010). However, this comment was not perceived as Nestlé expected, but rather provoked the protesters even more according to Steel (2010). The answers to comments about the accident provided by Nestlé on its Facebook page were not accepted by the public and generated more anger. Here is an example of such a situation, explained by Ridings (2010, cited in Champoux et al., 2012, p. 26):

“- Angry consumer: I’d like to know if the person writing the comments for Nestlé actually has the backing from Nestlé? I doubt it. Even a dumb ass company like them would get such an idiot to be their public voice.
- Nestlé: I think you missed out the ‘not’ there, Helen.
- Angry consumer: Yes well I’m lacking in the first morning NOT NESTLÉ coffee. I think you missed your manners in your comments.
- Curious bystander: I’m not sure why you dislike the moulding of your Kit Kat logo into ‘killer’ I personally think it’s quite catchy.
- Nestlé: @Matt – you could start here:
  http://marketing.about.com/cs/brandmktg/a/Whatisbranding.htm
  
  - Nestlé: This (deleting logos) was one in a series of mistakes for which I would like to apologize. And for being rude. We’ve stopped deleting posts, and I have stopped being rude” (Ridings, 2010, cited in Champoux et al., 2012).

Today Nestlé accounts 6,186,687 likes on Facebook (Facebook, 2014).

Twitter

The crisis started then to spread from Facebook to other platforms, such as Twitter. Nestlé’s Twitter account was created the 6th of March 2009 (Twitter, 2009). Today, there are 36,000 followers and 3,095 tweets that have been posted (Twitter, 2014). This increasingly damaging publicity led many people to boycott Nestlé’s products (Lamb et al., 2011).
When Greenpeace posted the Kit Kat video on YouTube, Nestlé requested Google to eliminate the video due to copyrights (Steel, 2010). However, a certain amount of people already had downloaded it and it continued to propagate on other online platforms (Lamb, et al., 2011, Steel, 2010). The downloaded version is still available on YouTube and has already reached 334,850 views, generating 212 comments (YouTube, 2014).

4.2 British Petroleum

4.2.1 Company Background

British Petroleum Plc (BP) is the world’s third-largest oil and gas company, headquartered in London, UK and operates in 80 countries (Aikaterini & Konstantinos, 2013, BP, 2014). The company provides customers with “fuel for transportation, energy, for heat and light, lubricants to keep engines moving and petrochemicals products used to make everyday items as diverse as paints, clothes and packaging” (BP, 2014). The mission of the company, as stated on its website, consists of being “innovative, progressive, safe and friendly for both its employees and the environment”. BP attempts to increase its profitability, aiming to achieve, and sustain competitive advantage through various routes such as the creation of a reputation, which generates value (Porter, 1985/2004, cited in Aikaterini & Konstantinos, 2013).

4.2.2 BP’s Crisis

On April 20th, 2010, British Petroleum suffered from an explosion on one of its oil rigs on the Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico (Diers & Donohue, 2012). This incident killed eleven workers and led to a huge crisis that lasted around five months. BP had to “manage its image in the face of an environmental catastrophe to a variety of multi-national stakeholders” (Diers & Donohue, 2012, p. 253). This crisis got a huge coverage on the news, and the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism estimated that the oil spill received 22 percent of the US news coverage during the three months following the crisis (Anonymous, 2010, cited in Diers & Donohue, 2012). Some of the main themes undertaken were BP’s poor public relations efforts (Diers & Donohue, 2012). The explosion was responsible for the spread of “5 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico [during] 87 days” (Hsu, Liu, Yang, & Chou, 2013, p. 281). Therefore this accident is considered as an environmental pollution crisis.

4.2.3 BP’s Crisis Communication

Many critics argued that BP failed its communication with its stakeholders through social media. According to Metzgar and Maruggi (2009), Pew Research found that the crisis generated less attention on blogs, Twitter, and YouTube (cited in Diers & Donohue,
This shows that BP’s message did not become viral on social media in a negative way. The company informed traditional media and social media sources about its restoration projects (BP, 2014, Jinbong, 2012). BP used a strategy that included compensation for the victims and continuous information of the crisis (Harlow, Brantley, & Harlow, 2011). For example, it provided money to individuals and businesses and started to work with many agencies to restore the environment (BP, 2014).

4.2.4 Social Media

*Facebook*
BP used Facebook as a communication tool to share stories and engage customers in the company (BP, 2014). It created its Facebook page the 8th of June 2010 and has now 745,080 likes (Facebook, 2010, Facebook, 2014). Diers and Donohue (2012) state that BP used different strategies to interact with social media users. Their study shows the most important response tactics used via Facebook. Once the crisis occurred, the company tried to create relationships with those affected by the crisis and those interested in the Gulf coast. The problem however was that its Facebook page was almost inactive before the crisis and suddenly began to have around twelve posts per day (Diers & Donohue, 2012). This brought even more attention to the public and showed the urgency the company felt to recover from the crisis.

*Twitter*
Right after the crisis occurred, BP posted around 18 tweets per day (Diers & Donohue, 2012). These posts were explaining how the company was correcting the damage done in the Gulf, promoting the company’s corporate identity, and using defensive tactic (Diers & Donohue, 2012). The company uses several Twitter accounts, such as @BP_America and @BP_Press, each of them having a different purpose (BP, 2014). BP uses Twitter to inform its stakeholders about the latest news of the company (BP, 2014).

*YouTube*
BP created its own YouTube channel one month after the crisis started on the 18th of May 2010 (YouTube, 2010). The channel reached around six million viewers by the end of October 2012 (YouTube, 2010). The videos posted were mainly showing how BP was cleaning the Gulf from its petroleum under its “Making it Right” campaign (Veil, Sellnow, & Wickline, 2013).
4.3  Air France

4.3.1  Company Background
Air France, headquartered in Paris, was founded in 1933 and is today one of the largest airlines in the world (KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2014). Air France merged with KLM in May 2004 and is today operating 573 aircrafts (KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2014). Air France and KLM royal Dutch airlines form the largest European airline group since the companies merged. Furthermore, its website states that with 243 destinations in 103 countries, the company is handling over 77 million travellers every year.

4.3.2  Air France’s Crisis
The first of June 2009, the flight AF 447 lost contact with the world (Hichri, 2009). The plane flew from Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and its planned destination was Charles de Gaulle Airport in France. However, when crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the plane lost contact and then crashed into the water. 25 minutes after the expected arrival at Charles de Gaulle, Air France reported that the plane was missing and started initiating its crisis plan according to Hichri (2009). With 216 passengers and twelve crew members, the total loss amounted to 228 people. This crisis can be considered as being a customer accident.

4.3.3  Air France’s Crisis Communication
Since Air France was not present on social media during the time of the crisis, it is valuable for this thesis to have an overview on how it behaved on traditional media. Indeed, it helps the reader understand the approach the company undertook whilst communicating to the public during the crisis.

In the beginning of Air France’s crisis communication, the company handled the situation by being responsible and right on hand (Hichri, 2009). Air France reacted quickly and started the implementation of its crisis communication plan, which involved a crisis management team (Hichri, 2009). Its quick response consisted of the CEO of Air France, Pierre-Henry Gourgeon, making a public statement that he and the company expressed sympathy and commitment to understand what had caused the crash (Hichri, 2009). Air France changed its website and put focus on informing the public about the accident. The company started publishing press releases that contained the information about the passengers who were present on the plane and about technical data.
4.3.4 Social Media

Facebook
Since Air France was not active on Facebook at the time of the crisis, its customers created a Facebook fan page about the flight 447 to discuss and exchange information to each other (Facebook, 2014). Air France created its official Facebook page the 23rd of June in 2010 (Facebook, 2010). Today, the page has 3,524,495 likes (Facebook, 2014).

Twitter
Despite press releases, a huge amount of people found out about the crash on Twitter (Nigam, 2009). However, the company itself did not release the information according to Nigam (2009), but rather the information was delivered by a third party. A year after the customer accident, the company became active on social media. On the 18th of January 2010, the company created a Twitter account (Twitter, 2010). As of today, there are 36,600 tweets and 53,100 followers (Twitter, 2014).

YouTube
During the crisis, Air France did not have any YouTube channel. The company created its channel the first of September in 2011 (YouTube, 2011).

4.4 Oriflame Cosmetics AB

4.4.1 Company Background
Oriflame Cosmetics AB is a Swedish cosmetic company, headquartered in Stockholm and founded in 1967 (Oriflame, 2014). The company is an international company, present in more than 60 countries. Since it is an international company and it has been willing to provide information regarding its communication policies to the authors of this thesis, Oriflame is the chosen company to represent the cosmetic industry. Oriflame’s presence on social media is summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oriflame Cosmetics AB on Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many pages per country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main page: Oriflame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation: 5th of May 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fans: 4,728,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked about: 155,014 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Facebook, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account: @weareoriflame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation: 19th of February 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers: 17,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweets: 565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Twitter, 2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2 Communications Policy of Oriflame Cosmetics AB

The information gathered about Oriflame comes from the communications policy and the security policy documents of the company. A representative of the company authorized the authors of the thesis to use that information for this study.

Oriflame defines crises as “periods during which personnel, assets, reputation or strategy of the company are at risk and require measures beyond normal” (Oriflame, 2012:b, p. 2).

Communication is considered as an important management tool for Oriflame, since efficient communication makes customers continuously confident about the company (Oriflame, 2012:a). Five factors describe how communications should be: active, open, accurate, rapid, and readily available. It is greatly valued by Oriflame that the picture of how the company is presented in the media is correct. Therefore, it aims to be the initiator of the publication of any data concerning the company, as stated on its communications policy document. Employees are told not to answer immediately to the media, but instead to forward the message and contact details to their direct superior or to the individual responsible for the concerned area. Oriflame advises its employees to follow different approaches while responding to the media. First, employees need to be available and need to request time to think before providing an answer to them. They need to speak the truth and admit mistakes. When communicating, it is also essential that employees are open and sure of what they are stating without using confusing language. The personnel of the company needs to not be afraid of media, but to be wary that it does not reveal any confidential information concerning the company.

The CEO is the key person allowed and obliged to make announcements and declarations to the media (Oriflame, 2012:a). The CFO has the responsibility to examine and approve all the legal and financial press releases.

Oriflame is aware of the need to be prepared in order to minimize the harm of the brand’s reputation in times of crisis (Oriflame, 2012:a). A management team is therefore put in place to handle crises and prevent potential future crises. This team consists of managers who have to work with other employees who are relevant for the current crisis situation. The main task of this team is to organize and synchronize communications in response to the crisis. As meetings between the crisis management team members are essential, the CEO is responsible for arranging them. The crisis management team needs to quickly inform the media in an honest and documented manner in order
to maintain trustworthy relationships with the media. Oriflame’s goal is to give clear instructions to all concerned parties when a crisis occurs.

4.5 Interview with an Expert in Social Media

In order to get a broader perspective on what social media consists of and how it should be handled, questions (See Appendix Exhibit 3) have been asked to an expert in the field, Professor François Trouillet (Personal communication, 2014-03-24). According to Trouillet, “social media is a two-way communication tool through which individuals have the possibility to share texts, pictures, and videos, and where they can influence and learn from each other”. He explains that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are still new on the market, as their technology life cycle is only around ten years. Therefore, he believes that “these platforms are here to stay but will have to face many challenges, the dominant one being competition”.

The main advantage of social media is that it makes it easy to access new and old data (Trouillet, Personal communication, 2014-03-24). Nowadays, he argues that one can find information and feedback about almost any product or company. In times of crisis, social media appears to be a useful instrument for companies since it permits them to interact closely with the audience. However, Trouillet also argues that “social media can be a dangerous tool since it is wide, open, and fast spreading”.

As the professor explained:

“Social media can be “quick and dirty,” as negative information can reach stakeholders within seconds and damage companies’ reputation that had been formed during years. The presence of companies on social media involves the risks of full exposure, which they cannot hide from”

Consequently, he adds that they “need to be transparent and honest when communicating through social media platforms”. It is important for companies to identify the strategies they are striving for in order to distinguish which platforms fit best their organization and needs, “it is not about the size, it is about the strategy”.

Trouillet believes that Facebook seems to be a better communication tool than Twitter and YouTube for companies as it has a promising future and gives enough room, as well as time to fully interact with their stakeholders. Twitter is trickier and harder to use since there is a huge amount of hashtags to monitor and it provides very limited space to express one’s message. Trouillet put together three recommendations when communicating through this platform:

“First, Twitter users’ hashtags need to be monitored. It is also to look beyond the main hashtags in order to become aware of what is being said about the company."
Then users have to think of expressing straightforward messages with strong words in order to be efficient. Finally, the responses need to be tweeted quickly before others start to re-tweet and spread the damaging information”.

Trouillet also recommends three different steps that should be undertaken by companies when outside influential social media creators generate information of the crisis on YouTube:

“First, the companies need to be present on the same social platform as the one from where the crisis hit because stakeholders have a tendency to look for further information on that same platform. Secondly, a fast answer in form of a video needs to be provided from the companies, even though it can take a considerable amount of time. Finally, he adds that it is important to be prepared for future potential crises that could occur”.

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Analysis

Through the BCSM process (see p. 12), created by the authors of the thesis, Nestlé, British Petroleum, and Air France, the companies from the case studies, will be analyzed and interpreted. The analysis will include three crisis-handling strategies, one social media strategy, and three sub-categories consisting of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to investigate a product defect crisis, an environmental pollution crisis, and a customer accident crisis. Later on, the communications policies of Oriflame Cosmetics AB will be studied. The interview has been used throughout the analysis and included directly into the two first parts of the process.

5.1 Nestlé

5.1.1 Reactionary Model

When analyzing the cases of Nestlé’s product defect and environmental pollution crises, it appears that the company followed the reactive model. As mentioned earlier, this model enlightens how a company reacts only once the crisis takes place (Spillan, 2003). This means that Nestlé did not possess any prepared crisis management plan that it could put into action when the crisis occurred. This absence harmed the company since, for example, its stakeholders boycotted the company when the environmental pollution crisis got viral and the company’s actions were perceived negatively.

5.1.2 Stealing Thunder

Both in Nestlé’s product defect and environmental pollution crises, the information about the crises was not revealed by the company itself. Therefore, Nestlé did not take advantage of the stealing thunder timing strategy. However, when revealing information about a crisis, the companies themselves confirm that there actually is a crisis occurring in these companies. This can put an uncalled media attention to the companies and create negative publicity (Singleton, 2010, cited in Champoux et al., 2012), which can be the reason why Nestlé did not use stealing thunder.

5.1.3 SCCT

Nestlé responded to the crisis through different strategies as developed by Coombs (2012, cited in Liu et al., 2011). Through its product defect crisis, one kind of response has been identified. Nestlé used the rebuild response option, which consists of compensating and apologizing to the victims (Coombs, 2012, cited in Liu et al., 2011). The company provided samples for doctors so that they could directly converse with the consumers in supermarkets (Ma, et al., 2010). Nestlé also apologized publicly on its
Nestlé’s environmental pollution crisis displayed several response options. First, it used the deny response option by attacking the accuser. The company provided inappropriate response to the public’s questions on social media (Lamb, et al., 2011). For example, the company threatened to delete posts coming from consumers having put a Kit Kat killer logo as a profile picture on Facebook (Steel, 2010). Also, according to Steel (2010), Nestlé requested Google to delete the Kit Kat video that was posted by Greenpeace on YouTube, arguing that the publisher did not have the legal rights to post it. Secondly, the company applied the rebuild response option to compensate the victims by joining the Forest Trust Responsible Sourcing Guidelines for palm oil (Nestlé, 2013). At last, Nestlé made use of the reinforce response option, more specifically, the victimimage response. The company ended its relationship with the supplier criticized by Greenpeace in order to protect itself from further inconveniences (Steel, 2010). When looking at the SCCT model and regarding the information given, the assumption is made that the deny response option has a negative impact towards the stakeholders. However, the rebuild and reinforce response options are more favorable to the stakeholders. The SCCT model also considers two strategies, which are instructing and adjusting information. However, these strategies seem not to have been pursued by Nestlé during its environmental pollution crisis.

5.1.4 SMCC

Nestlé uses social media as a communication tool towards its stakeholders. The origin of the viral crisis started on YouTube where Greenpeace activists launched the Kit Kat video (Champoux, et al., 2012). The Greenpeace activists can be classified as being influential media creators (Liu et al., 2011). Then social media followers started to react to the video on Nestlé’s Facebook page (Champoux, et al., 2012). However, Nestlé’s reaction to the negative comments provoked the social media followers and amplified their anger. The stakeholders perceived Nestlé’s response as a negative message strategy. In this case, the origin of the crisis was from a third-party and Nestlé’s response to the crisis worsened the situation. From the interpretation of the model and Nestlé’s case description, it appears that the company was not aware of which communication tool to use. However, the model illustrates that companies need to identify the source that originated the crisis and the factors that have an effect on the communication flow.
5.1.5 Facebook

When interpreting the seven steps made by Champoux et al. (2012) and considering the case study together with them, it appears that Nestlé did not succeed in following those steps. Furthermore, Nestlé did not take advantage of the comments appearing on its social media platforms. Even though it is important to react quickly to stakeholders’ comments, the company also needs to take time to think of the best answer it could convey. Nestlé, during its environmental pollution crisis, responded rapidly to comments but in an inappropriate way and lost control of the situation. After realizing that its behavior was improper, Nestlé apologized to its Facebook users, which is consistent with the sixth step advised to be taken by Champoux et al. (2012). Through these steps, Nestlé’s case study enlightens that it is important to act quickly and to take advantage of comments by seeing them as an opportunity for the company to improve and show responsibility. Companies also need to be prepared in advance in order to react in a wise manner on Facebook.

5.1.6 Twitter

Nestlé was not present on Twitter during its product defect crisis. Lamb et al. (2011) argue that tweets published during the company’s environmental pollution crisis damaged its reputation, which led many people to boycott Nestlé. This shows a negative impact of Twitter consisting of a loss of control because of a great amount of hashtags to be monitored. Nestlé’s case study description does not permit the authors of this thesis to examine Thomases (2010) and Trouillet’s recommendations when communicating through this platform.

5.1.7 YouTube

Nestlé was not present on YouTube during its product defect crisis. The spread of the environmental pollution crisis started on YouTube because Greenpeace posted a damaging reputation video against Nestlé. However, apart from requiring the suppression of the crisis-inducing video, Nestlé did not create any other video responding to the accusations. Nestlé was, at the time of the crisis, already present on YouTube and asked Google to suppress the video in order to avoid the crisis from spreading on the platform (Lamb et al., 2011, Steel, 2010). However, this attempt did not work since the video already had become viral and available on other platforms. Recalling the second factor underlined by Miller (2011), Nestlé was not aware of the amount of customers present on YouTube and therefore could not predate its going viral. One can assume that it is not beneficial for a company’s reputation to remove content already published and seen on YouTube. Instead of asking Google to remove Greenpeace’s video, the company could have combined factors one and three mentioned by Miller (2011). Indeed, by choosing to respond through a video, this response needs to be short and does not need to be expensive.
5.2 British Petroleum

5.2.1 Reactionary Model

When interpreting BP’s case, it appears that the company followed the reactionary model when facing an environmental pollution crisis. BP was not present on social media at the start of the crisis, therefore it did not have any prepared plan to handle it on these platforms.

5.2.2 Stealing Thunder

BP was the original source of the information released about its crisis to the public. The company took advantage of the stealing thunder timing strategy, as it hindered false rumors to spread. The assumption is made that stealing thunder timing strategy increases the reliability and the credibility of the company.

5.2.3 SCCT

Throughout BP’s environmental pollution crisis, the company used three response options from the SCCT model written by Coombs (2012, cited in Liu et al., 2011). The first option used was the rebuild response. The company apologized on traditional media to its stakeholders and informed them about its restoration projects (BP, 2014, Jinbong, 2012). A month after the crisis, BP started to communicate actively through social media to reach a bigger amount of stakeholders and to prevent false rumors from being even more spread. In its rebuild response option, BP compensated the victims with money to rebuild the economy of individuals and businesses and also started projects aiming to restore the environment (BP, 2014). Secondly, BP used the bolstering approach in its reinforce response. Indeed, it tried to evoke sympathy from stakeholders by promoting the company’s corporate identity on Twitter (Diers & Donohue, 2012). Those response options provided instructing information to the stakeholders, which is a strategy explained in the SCCT model. Finally, BP undertook the diminish response option by being defensive on tweets posted against the company (Diers & Donohue, 2012). The assumption, when interpreting BP’s case study through the SCCT model, is that companies have the opportunity to use several response options. The rebuild response option seems to have a positive impact on stakeholders since the information given is more valid as it comes from the company itself. In the reinforce response option, the bolstering strategies will be efficient only if the companies already have built relationships with stakeholders on the suitable social media platforms. The diminish response option does not seem to be effective during a crisis.
5.2.4 SMCC

After the crisis surfaced, BP became more active on social media. It was already active on Twitter, but this event resulted in an increase in its average tweets posted, reaching approximately 18 tweets per day (Diers & Donohue, 2012). In this case, the influential social media creator was the company itself. This had a favorable effect since the social media followers received accurate and reliable information from its origin. When interpreting BP’s time span of presence on several social media platforms, it seems that if the company is the first to provide information, then the risk of false rumors is diminished and trust from stakeholders can be gained. The company chose its communication tools according to its crisis origin. Since BP is a multinational company that operates in 80 countries, the importance of finding a communication tool that could reach a huge variety of stakeholders from all around the world was necessary. Therefore, BP’s choice of social media platforms was, among others, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Since the company’s message strategy was to provide instructing information, the chosen platforms seem suitable to meet this need. The assumption made out of the SMCC model is that companies gain from being the influential social media creator once a crisis occurs. Also, companies need to be aware of the importance of being present on the platforms that are the most suitable for them.

5.2.5 Facebook

According to Champoux et al. (2012), companies should monitor their Facebook page in order to keep a good relationship with their stakeholders. Even though BP’s Facebook page was created two months after the crisis occurred, the company’s intention with the platform was the same. Once the company became active on Facebook, it started to publish twelve posts per day, which required BP to answer quickly to the questions generated from the posts (Diers & Donohue, 2012). By having taken the initiative to create a Facebook page, the company took the responsibility to provide information to a wide variety of stakeholders. When interpreting BP’s case description, one could assume that BP’s intention with the creation of the Facebook page was to seem transparent by informing its stakeholders. However, this information flow brought even more attention to the public and increased the awareness of BP’s urgent will to recover.

5.2.6 Twitter

In accordance with BP’s behavior on Facebook, the company posted a considerably higher amount of tweets than usual on Twitter, reaching 18 tweets per day (Diers & Donohue, 2012). The effect was similar with the one occurring on Facebook: it captivated more attention to the crisis. On the other hand, this amount of tweets can be interpreted as the intention of the company to be perceived as being transparent as Thomases (2010) recommends. At the time of the crisis, BP monitored its two accounts @BP_America and @BP_Energie. However, no information about BP’s monitoring of
hashtags has been found by the authors of this thesis. As Thomases and Trouillet stated, a tweet posted should be short and straight to the point because this platform authorizes its users to have a maximum of 140 characters per tweet (2010, Personal communication, 2014-03-24). Hence, BP posted 18 tweets per day, which can reveal an inefficient choice of words. The last step recommended by Thomases (2010) and Trouillet (Personal communication, 2014-03-24) is to answer quickly, which BP accomplished. The assumption brought out from this case study description is that companies need to be able to extract the key words when communicating through Twitter. The amount of tweets per day needs to be consistent in times of crisis with the times when there is no crisis.

5.2.7 YouTube

BP followed the first step that Trouillet recommended (Personal communication, 2014-03-24). One month after the crisis occurred, it created a YouTube channel to publish videos informing the stakeholders about how BP was dealing with the environmental pollution caused by the explosion. Since BP took one month to create videos, the assumption can be made that companies need weeks in order to be able to react to a crisis on YouTube. Once a company has faced a crisis on YouTube, one could assume that it would be more prepared for a potential future crisis. As BP published many videos for its stakeholders, it can be assumed that the company was aware of the substantial amount of stakeholders present on this platform. This is in accordance with Miller’s second factor to consider when handling a crisis occurring on YouTube (2011).

5.3 Air France

5.3.1 Reactionary Model

When examining the case study of Air France’s customer accident crisis, one can see it has followed a proactive model. The company started to handle the crisis by implementing its established crisis communication plan, which involved a crisis management team (Hichri, 2009).

5.3.2 Stealing Thunder

25 minutes after the expected arrival time of the plane, Air France started to release information about the crisis. Even though Air France used stealing thunder, one can assume the company had difficulties making the situation clear and giving a true message to its public due to limited communication with the missing plane.
5.3.3 SCCT

Through its customer accident crisis, Air France reacted quickly by providing instructing information to its stakeholders. First, the company changed its website and put more emphasis on the accident (Hichri, 2009). Also, Air France released information about passengers and technical data through traditional media. The company also used the second strategy of the SCCT model, which is providing adjusting information to stakeholders. The company showed sympathy and dedication towards people affected by the crisis according to Hichri (2009). Air France did not use any of the possible response options mentioned in the SCCT model. When using both instructing and adjusting information strategies, the company aimed for strong transparency towards the families of the victims and other stakeholders, which has a positive effect.

5.3.4 SMCC

Air France communicated through traditional media such as its official website on the Internet and press releases (Hichri, 2009). Social media creators, as referred to in the SCCT analysis, initiated a Facebook fan page about Air France’s crisis in order to discuss the updates about the happenings hitting the company. The assumption is that traditional media did not fulfill the need of stakeholders to access data about the crisis. As those third-party creators fulfilled this need by themselves, it can have negative repercussions on the company.

5.3.5 Facebook

Air France created its official Facebook page one year after the crisis occurred. When following the seven steps of Champoux et al. (2012), it is essential for companies to react quickly on Facebook. However, Air France failed to accomplish this requirement, as it created its Facebook page only one year later. The company’s reputation can have been damaged due to no control from the company itself on that platform.

5.3.6 Twitter

Air France created its Twitter account six months after the crisis occurred. Therefore, the recommendations stated by Thomases (2010) and Trouillet (Personal communication, 2014-03-24) cannot be analyzed for this case. However, an extensive number of people became informed about the crash on Twitter (Nigam, 2009). Therefore, one can assume that it is important to not let a third-party take control over the information flow about the crisis.
5.3.7 YouTube

The company created its official YouTube channel approximately three years after the crisis occurred. Therefore, one cannot link the information gathered about the crisis with this social media platform.

5.4 Oriflame Cosmetics AB

Through the analysis of the benchmarking case studies, it appears that if companies have a proactive approach towards their crises, they seem to be able to react faster to the situation. Also, this approach allows them to provide crisis responses that are prepared and well thought through in advance. However, Oriflame’s goal to be rapid and readily available seems conflicting with the instructions employees have to follow. Indeed, they have the responsibility to not answer immediately to the media but instead to forward the message to their superior (Oriflame, 2012:a). Oriflame’s communications policy states that the company aims to be the initiator of the publication of any data concerning the company. Therefore, the company seems to be aware of the importance of stealing thunder theory as it increases the reliability and credibility of the company. Through analyzing the benchmarking case studies, one can conclude that stealing thunder is beneficial for companies facing a crisis.

Oriflame highlights the importance of providing clear information to all parties involved in a crisis. This is connected to the instructing information mentioned in the SCCT. Oriflame recommends its employees to admit mistakes and speak the truth when communicating, therefore one can assume that Oriflame is not planning to use the deny response when facing a crisis, but rather the opposite. If the company had the deny response option included in its crisis management plan, it would have had a negative impact on the company as concluded from the benchmarking case studies. In order for Oriflame to maintain its relationships with its stakeholders, it appears that the company knows the importance of providing them honest and documented information. This is seen as the bolstering strategy, included in the reinforce response option, which is efficient when relationships with stakeholders are built before the crisis considered occurs.

From the previous research presented in this thesis, one understands that the use of traditional media only does not fulfill the needs of all stakeholders. Hence, Oriflame is active on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which enables it to share transparent information and to reach a great amount of stakeholders. Being already present on those platforms, Oriflame has the possibility to become an influential media creator that would be the primary source of information if a crisis occurs. In the case of a third party releasing the information, the company would be negatively affected.
In Oriflame’s communications and security policies, the use of social media platforms is not explained nor described. This is due to the fact that this information is confidential, as it could harm the company if used by competitors.
6 Conclusions and Recommendations

With the help of the analysis, the authors are now able to draw general guidelines on how cosmetic companies could use social media in times of crisis. These guidelines result from the analysis through the BCSM process. This process was analyzed by means of the benchmarking case studies and a chosen company representing the cosmetic industry. The outcome of the interview with a social media expert was used through the analysis to complement the results of the two first parts.

The guidelines provided below are divided into two parts. The first part includes general recommendations of measures that, if taken, will have a positive impact on companies. The second part, on the other hand, contains guidance on what to avoid in order to prevent the companies from negative repercussions from misuse of social media. These guidelines have been researched and verified through benchmarking case studies chosen to represent crises that cosmetic companies could face, which ensures their relevance for applying them to this industry.

6.1 Guidelines to Follow

In times of crisis, cosmetic companies are advised to follow the guidelines stated below in order to ensure that their usage of social media impacts the company in a positive manner.

- Pre – crisis period

Be prepared before a crisis. Having a proactive approach enables the companies to react faster in times of crisis. In order to succeed in managing their future potential crises, companies should have a crisis management team in place. In addition to the companies’ CEOs, this team should preferably include managers from different departments and employees who are directly related to the crisis. Risk mapping is a tool that helps to classify different possible crises. This tool will help the companies to develop a crisis management plan that the crisis management team could act upon in times of crisis. Also, the plan should include social media usage recommendations, as the use of traditional media only does not fulfill the information needs of the stakeholders. Therefore, social media enables the companies to reach a greater amount of customers, which gives them the possibility to interact and stay involved in these companies. It is important for companies to be regularly active on the social media platforms on which they are currently present. This constant monitoring of their social media platform(s) prevents their stakeholders from the surprise of sudden updates from the companies.
- Crisis period

- Release of crisis information on social media
  
  *Release the information about the crisis.* The companies need to be the initiators of the crisis information announced on social media. Preferably, the companies should take advantage of being the influential social media creators instead of allowing a third party to release the information. Being the influential social media creator is commonly known as *stealing thunder,* which helps the companies increase their reliability and credibility.

- First reaction
  
  *Act quickly.* It is essential for cosmetic companies to react quickly, but in a wise manner. In order to do so, the companies need to *identify the source that originated the crisis* and the factors affecting the communication flow on social media. In addition to the crisis origin, the crisis management team also needs to *identify the type of crisis, message strategy, and form.*

- Responses for stakeholders
  
  *Be transparent.* It is necessary for cosmetic companies to *provide honest and documented information* on social media to their stakeholders in order to build good and trustworthy relationships. These will be valuable once the crisis occurs, as these positive relationships can recall previous sympathy towards the companies. This is called “bolstering,” which is included in the reinforce response option.

  *Apologize and compensate the victims.* Stakeholders can be negatively impacted by the crises and, therefore, the companies concerned by the crises need to apologize and compensate the victims, even though they did not cause the crisis. This chosen reaction is commonly called as a *rebuild response.*

- Control the response on social media
  
  *Control the chosen social media platforms.* Cosmetic companies’ reputation depends on how well they control and manage their social media platforms. It is important to *take advantage of comments* posted and see them as an opportunity. Therefore, the companies should reply to comments from their stakeholders in a *responsible and wise manner.*

- Usage of social media
  
  *Monitor mentions.* Companies need to *look beyond* their official pages on Facebook, hashtags on Twitter, and channels on YouTube, in order to know what is being said about them on these platforms.

  When communicating through social media, the companies concerned have to use *powerful words* in order to build *straight to the point sentences* that efficiently convey mes-
sages to the stakeholders. In the case of Twitter, it is important for these to be short. Facebook and YouTube, on the other hand, allow the companies to provide more extensive responses.

- **Post-crisis period**

*Move on.* It is important for companies to focus on their future and move on in order to rebuild their position. By *going back to their normal schedule of social media activity*, the companies have to show their new priorities that are not any more associated with the crisis by their stakeholders.

### 6.2 Factors to Avoid on Social Media

Cosmetic companies need to be aware of certain factors to avoid when handling crises on social media. Following the guidelines stated below would help companies avoid decisions that could harm them.

- *Avoid putting too many restrictions on employees’ response possibilities* in order to prevent from a slow and unavailable communication flow with the companies’ stakeholders.
- *Avoid letting a third party taking control over the information* flow about the crisis by using stealing thunder and monitoring the information flow on social media platforms.
- *Avoid using the deny response.* Companies are advised to not attack the accuser and to not deny or blame someone else for the crisis.
- *Avoid using the diminish response.* Companies are recommended to not provide excuses and to not try to justify themselves.
- *Avoid removing content already published.* Deleting content published on different social media platforms creates more anger and confusion among the companies’ stakeholders.
- *Avoid sharing an inconsistent amount of information.* Companies should not depart from their regular social media activity.
- *Avoid responding to crises on YouTube.* This social media platform makes it harder for companies to reply as it takes time to create a video. However, Facebook and Twitter allow the companies to act quickly.

These guidelines have been put together for companies in the cosmetic industry. The recommendations come from the analysis of the benchmarking case studies specifically chosen to represent crises that are most likely to occur in the cosmetic industry. These have been complemented with the analysis of the chosen representative company in the cosmetic industry. It appears through the BCSM process that it is important for compa-
nies to include social media in their crisis management plans. Also, as it emerged that companies need to be careful when using social media in times of crisis, the cosmetic companies are advised to follow the guidelines stated above.
7 Discussion and Recommendations

Throughout this thesis, the authors have focused on how social media could be used by cosmetic companies in times of crises that are wide and controllable. The research focused on case studies that represented crises which cosmetic companies could face: product defect crises, environmental pollution crises, and customer accident crises. One could aspire to use these guidelines to other industries; however, since the entire research has been based on the cosmetic industry, there is no verification that these guidelines can be applied to other industries.

Through this thesis the authors are more aware of the importance of including social media in the crisis management plans of cosmetic companies. Also, the choices of timing, place, and the content of responses through social media have a huge impact on the effect these have. The authors are conscious that despite the opportunities that social media can bring, there is a risk with using social media as a communication tool with companies’ stakeholders. The social media platforms have to be handled carefully, as they can damage companies’ reputation and worsen the vulnerability of the companies facing a crisis.

It is important to be aware of the limitations of the models chosen in the thesis. The SCCT model was chosen to recognize the different response options for companies facing a crisis. This model identifies four kinds of responses. However, there could be models in academic journals that discuss other types of response options that have not been considered in this thesis and that could be useful for the cosmetic industry. The SMCC model was selected to understand what factors affect the crisis communication. This model aims to classify the public according to its behavior on social media. However, it is not considering that those roles can be taken by the company itself. This non-consideration is the reason why the authors chose to complement these classifications from the SMCC model with stealing thunder.

The recommendations of ways to use Twitter and YouTube are developed by Thomases (2010) and Miller (2011) as well as François Trouillet, an expert in social media. However, Trouillet’s recommendations could have been verified by other sources in order to confirm them. This could have been done through interviews with additional social media experts or other specialists in crisis management.

The information gathered from the benchmarking case studies has been applied on Oriflame Cosmetics AB. Oriflame has been chosen to be the representative of the cosmetic industry. However, Oriflame might not be a typical company in the industry since, for example, the target markets and price ranges differ among cosmetic companies. Therefore, the characteristics generalized from Oriflame’s communications policy may not be fully trustworthy. The benchmarking method could be replaced by another research
strategy. For example, the authors could introduce guidelines that have been previously established by other authors and then investigate if companies are consistent with these.

The authors of this thesis are satisfied with the results produced from the usage of the benchmarking method. The information on how cosmetic companies use social media and how they handled crises were limited; therefore, finding data about both combined was nearly unobtainable. The benchmarking method enabled the authors to find this missing information from companies in other industries, and thus enabled to apply it to the cosmetic industry. One of the advantages with this method is that it examines companies from different industries, which could reveal different perspectives on how to use social media in times of crisis. These perspectives could bring different results than, for instance, if the study had been undertaken only in the cosmetic industry. The benchmarking method contributed to fill in a gap in the literature concerning the use of social media by cosmetic companies in times of crisis, since it utilized more accessible data than if the authors only had focused on the cosmetic industry.

To study how cosmetic companies could use social media in times of crisis, new studies might use the BCSM process but modify it according to their researched topic. As explained by Trouillet, companies have to identify which social media platforms are most suitable for them; therefore the sub-category column in the BCSM process can be modified. In the second part of the BCSM process, the authors have the possibility to study several cosmetic companies in order to have more communication policies from the industry. However, if the authors wish to use the BCSM process for other industries, it is important to modify it according to the characteristics of the crises related to the studied industry. These authors could identify the characteristics of the other possible crises through the organizational crisis matrix developed by Chris Fill (2013). However, it is important to consider which companies would have enough resources to conduct the BCSM process. Factors such as time and money can determine whether or not a company will choose to implement this process.

Future studies can be pursued to complement the results of this thesis. The study of social media in crisis management is a recently developed area that affects the techniques on how to handle crises. Future authors could consider different models to handle crises through social media in order to gain a broader understanding of the use of these platforms. Also future studies can consider other social media platforms than Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.
References


Trouillet, François. Personal Communication. Interview conducted the 2014-03-24


Appendix

Exhibit 1 - Reactionary Model

Exhibit 1 - Reactionary model by E.J. Spillan (2003)

Exhibit 2 - Deductive Content Analysis

Exhibit 2 - Deductive Content Analysis developed by Elo and Kyngäs

Elo and Kyngäs (2008) have built an abstraction process in order to understand "the different meanings that the concept of illness has for teenagers with diabetes". This process is built upon a deductive content analysis and used as a frame of categorization when analyzing their results. The authors of this thesis applied a model from the health to the business context. The authors of this thesis built the BCSM process with categorizations coming from the abstraction model as well as using the deductive content analysis when interpreting the results.

Exhibit 3 - Interview Questions

Exhibit 2 - Interview questions with François Trouillet, social media expert

1: How would you define social media?
2: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube; are they here to stay?
3: How will the future society within social media look like? Which opportunities do you see with social media in crisis management?
4: Which functions of social media do you believe are interesting for companies? How can social media be a tool for companies?
5: Have you noticed a big presence of cosmetic companies on social media or which in-
dustries do you think use it the most?
6: How great is the importance of time with social media? (Replying fast, posting quickly etc)
7: Do you have any steps or any requirements on how companies should react on negative comments on social media? What should companies avoid when using social media?
8: Should companies have specific teams that take care of the company’s social media?
9: Which social media between Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube do you believe is the best to handle a crisis and to convey messages to companies' customers? Should we consider another important social media platform?
10: Since there are many updates on social media, how long do you think an event/crisis stays in the minds of customers?
11: Do you believe multinational companies make greater use of social media than smaller companies, or the contrary?