



A Crisis Case

Maxime in het Veld
Student nr.: 335362
Supervisor: Vidhi Chaudhri, PhD
Second reader: Ericka Menchen-
Trevino, PhD

School of History, Culture and
Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam
2013

Acknowledgements

The product in front of you is my master thesis, this is the end result of my research investigating the image repair strategies employed by the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda in the wake of the Fyra suspension. However, this thesis means a lot more to me than just a written representation of my research. The thesis does not only mean the completion of my master Media & Business, but also the completion of my life as a student. Adult life is about to begin, which means that I will be looking out for a challenging and interesting job.

In the past couple of months I have been working with much enthusiasm to complete this thesis. It was hard work, especially during the last couple of weeks. But this caused me to have a feeling of satisfaction.

Throughout the past months, I did not stand alone to complete the thesis. That is why I would like to thank several people. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Vidhi Chaudhri. Not only for her substantive advice, but also for the pleasant cooperation I have experienced with her. Every time, she pushed me in the right direction and I am very thankful for that. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, brothers and my boyfriend for supporting me, not only during the thesis period, but also during my entire study. Special thanks to my parents for supporting me financially as well as mentally throughout my study. Special thanks go to my brother, Bob, for reading my thesis, sharpening formulations, and filtering for writing and language errors. I am very thankful for that.

I hope you will enjoy reading my thesis.

Abstract

December 2012 was the start of the new high-speed train, Fyra, connecting Amsterdam to Brussels. Unfortunately, the trains coped with many technical problems from the beginning onwards. Those technical issues set in motion a chain of unfortunate events that eventually caused the suspension of the service on January 18, 2013. Due to this suspension, reputations were at risk, NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda faced a difficult crisis to manage. This thesis analyzes the organizational statements of the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda within the framework of Benoit's (1997) Image Restoration Theory in order to investigate the attempts of the image repair discourse of each of the three organizations. Company statements in press releases and Dutch newspapers were selected in a specific time frame. Qualitative content analysis was used as the method. It was found that NS has used four strategies intertwiningly (defeasibility, mortification, shift of blame, and bolstering) while NMBS was more straightforward and used only two strategies (shift of blame, and bolstering). In contrast, AnsaldoBreda used five strategies over time to repair its image (simple denial, mortification, minimization, bolstering, and victimization). Overall, this thesis extends and builds on existing scholarship in crisis communication in general and image restoration in particular.

Key Words: Crisis communication, Fyra, Image Restoration Theory, Legitimacy, Reputation, Strategies.

Table of Content

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
Introduction	5
Organizations under Pressure	5
Academic and Societal Relevance	7
Case outline	8
The ‘Nederlandse Spoorwegen’ (NS)	8
The ‘Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen’ (NMBS).....	9
AnsaldoBreda	10
The development of the Fyra	10
Accumulation of Problems	12
The Consequences.....	12
Literature Review	14
Defining Key Concepts.....	15
Reputation	16
Legitimacy.....	18
The Theory of Image Restoration Discourse	19
Previous Organizational Crises	22
Method	25
Findings	28
Discussion	46
Implications of the Analysis.....	47
Limitations and Future directions	53
Conclusion	54
References	58

Introduction

'Fyra falls through the ice', 'Fyra- Floptrain', 'Fyra worst purchase of the century', 'Fyra might never ever return', 'NS is to blame for the failing Fyra', 'Delay seems trademark of the Italian manufacturer'. A sampling of headlines from major Dutch newspapers signaled the sentiment following the suspension of the Fyra V250 on January 18, 2013. The train was the new high-speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels. It started operating on December 9, 2012, but only lasted for one month due to an accumulation of technical problems.

Within the first month, the Fyra train experienced many problems; trains were cancelled and the majority was delayed. On the 17th of January 85% of the trains were cancelled (Treinreiziger, 2013). The Fyra V250 trains experienced many problems with the door system, the brakes, electronic motor, the security system, and the communication system. The problems were compounded by bad weather, especially snow and ice on the rail tracks.

The high-speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels was an enormous investment for both the Dutch and Belgian government as well as for the respective national transporters, NS and NMBS. In total, the NS ordered 16 of these trains and the NMBS 3 (Derix & De Groot, 2013). Each train cost 18,9 million Euros. Also, the costs of the construction of the high speed line between Amsterdam and Brussels was enormous and took years to build. The costs were about 7 billion Euros (NShispeed, 2013). But, so far the Fyra turns out to be a big fiasco. Whether the Fyra services will ever be pursued remains unknown and depends upon the results of the technical review by AnsaldoBreda the upcoming months. (Fyra, 2013).

Organizations under Pressure

The Belgian transporter NMBS (*Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen*) and the Dutch transporter NS (*Nederlandse Spoorwegen*) decided to suspend the Fyra, since both transporters, found these damages and technological problems unacceptable and too risky to pursue the service. Both organizations have put the Italian Fyra V250-manufacturer, AnsaldoBreda, on default. In a press release, the NS mentioned that the Fyra V250 does not meet the requirements the NS agreed to with AnsaldoBreda.

The Dutch and Belgian governments are putting high pressure on both transport organizations. Both governments have asked the NS and NMBS for explanation and

clarification with regards to the Fyra by organizing a public hearing. (Telegraaf, 2013). A preliminary reaction by the two railway CEOs was presented on January 28, 2013 in the Benelux parliament in Brussels to a combined Belgian/Dutch special transportation committee of their respective Parliaments. Dutch and Belgian political parties are furious about the state of affairs. The governments have put pressure on the NS and NMBS to provide an alternative connection between the Netherlands and Belgium ultimately February 1, 2013.

Next to that, the Dutch public has put much pressure on Bert Meerstadt, Director NS, by having much critique and urging him to leave the organization. In the newspaper 'De Telegraaf' (January 31, 2013) a survey has been held among its readers; 75% of the readers want him to leave the NS organization, only 15% expect him to solve all the problems with the Fyra V250.

In sum, due to the Fyra V250 fiasco, the NS, the NMBS, as well as AnsaldoBreda face a difficult crisis to manage. Due to the fiasco, all three organizations are being pressured by different stakeholders: the governments, customers, public and last but not least the media. A crisis causes reputations of organizations to be at risk and "the loss of one's reputation affects the positioning, trust and loyalty of stakeholders, media relations and the legitimacy of operations or even the license to exist" (Aula, 2012: 44). Corporate images and reputations are highly vulnerable; incidents and crisis have large influences on organizations when they are portrayed negatively (Vecchio, Laubacher, Ndou, & Passiante, 2011) When a corporate reputation is violated, organizations often proceed into crisis communication in order to address the situation and to lessen the actual damages inflicted (Coombs, 2010). When an organization's image is at risk, it can adapt to strategies in order to restore and limit the damage after or during a crisis. Strategic actions as a response to a crisis can enhance the organization's reputation and legitimacy. This thesis examines the image restoration strategies employed by the NS, NMBS and AnsaldoBreda in the wake of the Fyra suspension. The following research question is designed for this thesis:

'What are the image restoration strategies employed by the NS, NMBS and AnsaldoBreda in the wake of the Fyra suspension?'

Academic and Societal Relevance

This topic and study has been chosen specifically due to several reasons. First, this crisis has affected me individually as a train passenger, since I planned to make use of it in the near future for different leisure purposes. Furthermore, I think the Fyra is an integral part of the societal developments within northern Europe with regards to tourism as well as the business sector. Since the Fyra is meant to function as a high speed connection between the airport Schiphol Amsterdam and the capital of Europe, Brussels. Lastly, I am very interested in how each organization; the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda, will act and go about this crisis situation with regards to their organizational reputations.

As for the social relevance of this proposed research, the Fyra case presented above is a very current case. This case is also socially relevant due to its impact on the Dutch, Belgian and maybe even the Italian society. Many different stakeholders are affected by the crisis. Rover and TreinTramBus, The Dutch and Belgian travelers' associations, represent the passengers in the Fyra debate. Travelers were dissatisfied with the Fyra since its introduction. The service was, in their opinion, too expensive (per ticket), the number of trains provided per day were too low, the tickets were inflexible (obligatory reservations were necessary), and alternative train services between the Netherlands and Belgium were too few (Rover, 2013). After the suspension of Fyra travelers were even more dissatisfied due to more difficulties with alternative train services provided, increased travel times up to four hours, and impossibility to rebook Fyra-tickets to Thalys (the high-speed service from Amsterdam to Paris). The main point of critique provided by Rover and TreinTramBus is that NS and NMBS did not provide the service that was in sync with travelers' needs (Rover, 2013).

The tourist sector is also affected by the Fyra debacle. Antwerp, for example, hosts many tourists who travel by train to the city, 30 percent of whom are Dutch. Impulsive visitors could no longer travel to Antwerp by train as a result of the obligatory reservations. With the entire cancellation of Fyra, the number of tourists quickly decreased. This could lead to big income losses to the Antwerp economy, since Dutch tourists spend over 84 million Euros a year (Nieuwsblad, 2013). This same problem is at hand for other Dutch and Belgian cities (Nieuwsblad, 2013). Additionally, many businessmen were affected by the suspension of the Fyra as well since no high speed connection was available as promised. For the Dutch and Belgian society, both governments have invested enormous amounts of money to construct this connection between Amsterdam and Brussels. The invested money was largely made up of taxes, which means that Dutch and Belgian citizens are also affected in terms of

their incomes as far as value for money is concerned. The additional costs that are incurred due to the additional problems of the Fyra should also be paid for. This means that the costs of the Fyra train will get higher and higher in the end.

In terms of scientific relevance, this study extends the scientific field of crisis communication and image restoration. This Fyra case does not have as much impact as, for example, the BP crisis (oil spill in the Gulf Coast), therefore, many of these smaller and localized crises go by unnoticed. But this localization makes it interesting since these crises can be of great impact in the local area. Furthermore, even though the proposed research examines a specific case, the Fyra, much can be learned from a particular case. Namely, readers can learn from an encounter with the case through the researcher's detailed description. The case results in a rich, holistic account of a phenomenon. The examination in the proposed research, with regards to the Fyra, offers insight and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. So what we learn from a case can be transferred to similar situations (Stake, 2005: 455).

Case outline

As mentioned in the introduction, the Fyra V250 is suspended since January 18, 2013. This train was the new high speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels. The V250 started operating since December 9, 2012. This connection only lasted for a month due to an accumulation of technical problems. Many trains were cancelled during the first month and the majority was delayed. The V250 experienced many problems with its door system, brakes, electronic motor, security system, and external communication system. In January, these problems were compounded by bad winter weather conditions. All these problems caused the suspension on January 18. The major players in this crisis case are the NS (Dutch railway organization), the NMBS (the Belgian railway organization), and AnsaldoBreda (the manufacturer of the Fyra V250). These three organization organizations are introduced first in the section below, before further description of the actual event.

The 'Nederlandse Spoorwegen' (NS)

The Dutch *Staatsspoorwegen* and *Hollandse Spoorweg Maatschappij* decided to cooperate in 1917 and merged in 1938, which meant the birth of the *Nederlandse Spoorwegen* (NS). 1993 marked another important year in the Dutch Railway history, the Dutch Parliament decided to

commercialize NS, which effectually meant the split of the company into: NS, responsible for travelers transportation, and Prorail, responsible for rail infrastructure and rail traffic control (NS, 2013). In short, NS wants more travelers to travel safely, comfortably and on time through attractive stations. The NS is always seeking for new and smarter ways to connect to other transport facilities of the travelers, like cars and bikes. The ambition of the organization is to be customer driven, to be a European and multimodal service driven organization (NS, 2013). The organization transports more than one million travelers per day and over 9 million of the Dutch are customer of the NS. The organization has 24.201 employees and exploits 397 stations for traveler transport. The total turnover per year amounts to 3.6 billion, of which 2.9 billion euro is purely based on traveler transport. The profit amounts to 211 million euro (Master Thesis UU, 2012). According to the Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf is the reputation of the NS at its lowest point. De Telegraaf mentioned that the Fyra fiasco is not the first incident, others are: too many delays due to some snowfall, poor service and continuing poor information services. But in contrast, the customer satisfaction research conducted by NS has very positive results; 76 percent is positive about the general services of the NS (NS, 2013).

The 'Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen' (NMBS)

The Belgian railway organization 'Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen' (NMBS) is a public limited liability company which exploits train services, on behalf of the Belgian government, in Belgium. The NMBS has been established in 1926 and has been fully privatized in 1927. After WWII, the Belgian took the authority back over. The organization exists of three elements; NMBS-holding (responsible for the personnel management, the train stations and the coordination of the three elements), Infrabel (responsible for the infrastructure), and the NMBS (responsible for the operation of the train services). Furthermore, the NMBS is offering her consumers a quality, reliable and market-oriented service and plays an essential role in the development of sustainable mobility. The vision of the organization is to create value for our national economy, society and the environment which is known as the three P's (Profit, People and Planet) (Belgianrail, 2013). In 2011, the NMBS transported 221.3 million travelers. Furthermore, the amount of international travelers is increasing with 7.8 million in 2011. The rail network exists of 3500 kilometers in total.

AnsaldoBreda

AnsaldoBreda is the Italian manufacturer of the V250 train, the Fyra. The company is a company specialized in the construction of technologically advanced rolling stock. It was founded in 2001 and was born due to a merger between Ansaldo Trasporti and Breda Costruzioni Ferroviarie, two companies in the field of rail vehicles. The merger enabled an integration of electrical expertise and mechanical, making the new organization able to build complete products independently (AnsaldoBreda, 2013).

The features of the AnsaldoBreda vehicles are innovation and versatility. The organization produces trams, driverless metros, regional trains and high-speed trains. Furthermore, the website of the organization describes that reliability and responsibility are the guidelines that allows the organization to conceive, design and produce vehicles that run on tracks in different parts of the world (AnsaldoBreda, 2013). Sustainability and safety are values that have high priority within the organization and are the values that motivate the employees in their daily work to meet customers' needs. In total, the organization offers approximately 2400 employees. According to the Dutch news media AnsaldoBreda has a very doubtful reputation.

The manufacturer is a world player; it delivered metros in Miami, automatic metros in Honolulu, and trains in Denmark and Norway, and trams in Los Angeles and Madrid. But after every delivery the organization received much critique; in Los Angeles the trains were of too much weight and a three year delay of delivery, Boston politicians talked about the worst purchase ever, and Danish journalists called the problems with AnsaldoBreda one of the largest transport scandals of recent history since they are already waiting for 13 years for their delivery of 23 trains (Volkskrant, 2013). Additionally, sobriquets for the manufacturer are: "The Aldi-train" and "The "big sick of Finmeccanica" (Volkskrant, 2013).

The development of the Fyra

Fyra is the brand name for the high speed train operating between Amsterdam and Brussels. This train has been launched in December 2009, but was restricted to a domestic Dutch connection between Amsterdam and Breda. The Fyra shares the high speed railway line (HSL) together with the Thalys, which operates the high speed connection to Paris and beyond. The Fyra was presented by NSHighspeed, which is a subsidiary of the High Speed Alliance (HSA), a joint company owned by NS and KLM airlines. The name "Fyra" is chosen since it is easy to pronounce internationally as well as easy to remember because it is a short

and catchy name. The name represents pride and confidence in Dutch and French words. Fyra also means 'four' in Swedish and is said to represent the four important cities which the new train serves: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Brussels.

Thoughts about a Dutch connection to the European high speed rail network already lived in the 1970s, when countries like Germany and France were already developing their first plans. In 1994, the Netherlands and Belgium discussed serious plans concerning the high speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels. The Dutch and Belgian governments decided in 1996 to construct the HSL between Amsterdam and Brussels (Governmental Publication, Parliamentary Document 29283 number 8, 2004).

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment was responsible for the construction of the HSL. The Ministry assigned Prorail to build the line's fundament. A company called Infrasppeed was assigned to build the electric system and wires, communication and security system, the rails, etc. (Algemene Rekenkamer, HSL Factsheet, 2010). The construction of the HSL started in 2000 and was finalized in 2006. The original budget consisted of 3.4 billion Euros, by December 2009 the budget increased to 5.3 billion Euros which is a budget increase of 55 percent, a huge deficit for the state.

HSA, owned by NS (90%) and KLM airlines (10%), bought the public transportation license of the HSL for 163 million Euros yearly. This is a lot more than other contenders were willing to pay to buy the license. The Belgian side of the line is exploited by the Belgian railway company NMBS. An official European procurement was published by the NS and NMBS in 2002 for the purchase of high speed trains. The NS and NMBS asked six different corporations for tenders for a total of 20 trains. Because of the large amount of money HSA has to pay yearly to exploit the HSL, they ran into financial problems. As a result, they, together with NMBS, decided to buy the cheapest possible train. HSA and NMBS picked AnsaldoBreda as the manufacturer of the new trains, simply because they were the cheapest and build trains that look like official high speed trains. When the Dutch government heard about the result of the procurement process they were dissatisfied, the government expected faster trains, so faster travel times could be accomplished. Then AnsaldoBreda offered them a faster train: the V250. This solves all their problems and all parties decided to sign contracts in 2004.

Accumulation of Problems

The delivery of the V250 trains by AnsaldoBreda was planned for testing in 2006 and eventual running in 2007 for the first time officially. This turned out to be a different story. In 2009, the first train was delivered to HSA. The three year delay was caused by many technical issues and hiccups of the manufacturer AnsaldoBreda. The testing phase started thereafter and many more issues were discovered, which caused even more delays (Algemene Rekenkamer, HSL Factsheet, 2010). Finally, in 2012, the trains were considered to be operationally ready. In December 2012, Fyra (and its V250 trains) replaced the Benelux train (the former regular intercity between Amsterdam and Brussels).

During the first month, December 2012, Fyra was troubled by many technical issues. Passengers dealt with extreme delays and were dissatisfied with the new service. Some trains did not run at all. Causes of the extreme delays were technical issues with the door system, the brakes, electronic motor problems, the security system, and the communication system (Derix & De Groot, 2013). Also, the low frequency of trains, high tariffs, the absence of subscriptions, and the compulsory reservation have led to an enormous amount of critique of different travelers (Boere & Hakkenberg, 2013).

January 2013 was more problematic for Fyra and its V250 trains. Half of the trains were cancelled due to many technical problems. This meant that many busses were used as the alternative transport between Breda and Antwerp. On the 17th of January, winter weather and the above mentioned technical problems caused a cancellation of 85 percent of the trains (Treinreiziger, 2013). The next day, the 18th of January is a black day in the short history of the Fyra; the Fyra V250 trains were suspended for an indefinite period. The metal sheets of several V250s broke due to snowy conditions. The security organizations of the NS and NMBS had decided to prohibit the Fyra on the Dutch and Belgian railway tracks from then on (Vossen, 2013). Also, the order of the 19 trains was postponed immediately. The train manufacturer has been held liable for all the problems concerning the V250.

The Consequences

A lot of critique followed after the suspension of the Fyra. On January 19, the next day, the front pages of newspapers were filled with enormous critique: 'Fyra falls through the ice', 'Fyra- Floptrain', 'Fyra worst purchase of the century', 'Fast Fyra requires a lot of patience', 'Fyra can't handle the snow'. Political parties in the Netherlands and Belgium organized a

joint parliamentary session on January 28 to question the NS and NMBS management. Public and political pressure increased on the NS and NMBS management. The Dutch government decided to ‘replace’ the Fyra directly under the NS management instead of keeping it the responsibility of the NS hispeed. The Dutch secretary Mansveld ordered NS to come up with an alternative as soon as possible. An alternative was necessary because the only alternative route to Belgium was a regional train between Roosendaal (Netherlands) and Antwerp, which stops 11 times along the way. Eventually, NS and NMBS started an alternative train service by February 18. The former Benelux connection between The Hague and Brussels is basically restored as a temporary alternative solution (Trouw, 2013). At this time, the future of the Fyra is hanging in the balance. Namely, whether the Fyra services will ever be pursued remains unknown and depends upon the results of the technical review by AnsaldoBreda during the upcoming months (Fyra, 2013).

Timeline of Events – Fyra

Date	Description
1994	Netherlands and Belgium discussed serious plans concerning the high speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels.
1996	The Dutch and Belgian governments decided to construct the HSL between Amsterdam and Brussels.
2000	Start construction of HSL.
2002	An official European procurement was published by the HSA and NMBS for the purchase of high speed trains.
2004	HSA and NMBS signed a contract with AnsaldoBreda and ordered 19 V250 trains, planned to be delivered in 2006.
2006	AnsaldoBreda failed to deliver and crossed deadline.
2009	First V250 delivered by AnsaldoBreda. Testing phase begins.

2012	After delays in the testing phase, Fyra was employed and replaced the Benelux train. The start of the new train service was problematic due to technical problems.
2013	
17 January	Winter weather caused a cancellation of 85 percent of the trains
18 January	A black day in the short history of the Fyra; the Fyra V250 trains were suspended for an indefinite period. The metal sheets of several V250s broke due to snowy conditions.
19 January	The front pages of newspapers were filled with enormous critique. The remaining order of the 19 trains has been postponed immediately. The train manufacturer has been held liable for all the problems concerning the V250.
20 January	Secretary Mansveld ordered an alternative
28 January	Joint parliamentary session with NS and NMBS management
18 February	Benelux train reintroduced as temporary alternative service

Literature Review

This literature review discusses key elements, concepts and previous studies in the field of crisis communication and image restoration. First, key concepts of crisis communication will be defined. Afterwards, the concepts reputation and legitimacy will be discussed as attributes that need to be preserved and protected against during a crisis. The following section discusses the framework of image restoration that will be used throughout this thesis to analyze the case. The last section reviews previous organizational crisis communication cases experienced by different organizations.

Defining Key Concepts

Over the past twenty years, there has been a massive increase in crisis communication research. But despite these many contributions, it is noticeable that there is no one universally accepted definition of crisis. Many definitions have contextual similarities, but are never the same (Coombs, 2010). According to Coombs and Holladay (2007), “a crisis is an incident that has the potential to disrupt organizational operations and potentially destroy the organization” (p.124). Ulmer (2001) defines crisis as “a specific, unexpected and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization’s high priority goals” (p. 591). The following definition will be used throughout this thesis since it is the most complete definition: “a crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization’s operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat” (Coombs, 2007: 164).

Basically, crises share a number of common elements: unambiguous situations where causes and effects are unknown, threat to stakeholder expectations, impact on organizational performance, dilemma in need for decision or judgment that result in change for better or worse, and potential for negative outcomes (Adkins, 2010). In contrast, also some scholars notice that crises can also have positive outcomes. For instance, Friedman (2002) discusses that a crisis does not necessarily has to be a negative thing; “it may be a radical change for good as well as for bad” (p. 18). Some extreme situations exist in which a crisis can save the organization. This means that an effective crisis management can result in stronger reputations.

The outcome of the crisis depends largely on organization’s management of the situation. Crisis management entails successfully handling a crisis by controlling the flow of information by developing and disseminating key messages to the media and organization’s stakeholders. Coombs (2007) defines crisis management as “a set of factors designed to combat crisis and to lessen the actual damages inflicted” (p.5). Furthermore, during crisis management, organizations aim to avoid or reduce negative effects and outcomes, and thus, also to protect the organizations, stakeholders and the particular industry from harm and damage. According to Pearson and Clair (1998) crisis management efforts are effective when operations are sustained or resumed, organizational and external stakeholder losses are minimized, and learning occurs so that lessons are transferred to future incidents.

Mara (1998) stressed that crisis communication is one of the most important elements in all almost all successful crisis management efforts. Since, the majority of the organizations

that communicate poorly during crisis often make negative situations worse. Organizations may take restorative approaches during a crisis as a form of crisis communication. When an organization is involved in a crisis it can adapt to several different strategies. Benoit (1997) has outlined several crisis response strategies that organizations in a crisis situation can use. The theory by Benoit (1997), the image repair discourse theory, is used to analyze the Fyra crisis because it provides a complete framework to analyze this case. This theory will be explained and elaborated later on in this literature review.

Reputation

In crisis situations, the damage to an organization's reputation is highly correlated with perceptions of responsibility for the crisis and specific characteristics of the crisis situation. A crisis threatens to damage reputations because crisis gives people reasons to think badly of the organization (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011: 21). "Reputations are widely recognized as a valuable, intangible asset. Reputational assets can attract customers, generate invest, improve financial performance, attract employee talent, increase the return on assets, create a competitive advantage and garner positive comments from financial analysts" (Coombs, 2007: 164).

Fombrun and Gardberg (2000) define reputation as "the net perception of an organization's ability to meet expectations of all stakeholders" (p.13). Fombrun and Gardberg (2000) found that people rate organizations on seven key dimensions: product and services, innovation, workplace, citizenship, governance, leadership, and financial performance. An organization's reputation is therefore built on the shared foundation based on these seven dimensions, which are known as the seven drivers of reputation.

So, when a crisis occurs, the reputation of that specific organization is at risk. A crisis can harm stakeholders physically, emotionally, and/or financially. In many organizational crises, many different stakeholders are affected; this is also the case for the Fyra stakeholders as discussed shortly in the introduction. The wide varieties of stakeholders that can get affected include: community members, employees, customers, suppliers and stakeholders.

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) posits that stakeholders have much influence on the initial responsibility of the crisis. Initial crisis responsibility holds how much stakeholders believe organizational actions caused the crisis. The reputational threat increases as stakeholders' attributions of crisis responsibility intensifies. The assessment is

based on the crisis type; the crisis type is how the crisis is being framed by the organization (Coombs: 2007). The way messages are framed shapes how people define problems, causes of attributions of responsibility and solutions to problems (Cooper, 2002). The SCCT research has identified three ways in which a crisis can be seen: the victim cluster, the accidental cluster, and the intentional cluster. In the victim cluster as well as in the accidental cluster stakeholders make the weakest attributions towards the responsibility of the crisis, and as for the intentional cluster the attributions are the strongest. This demonstrates how perceptions of responsibility for the crisis are related to the organization's reputation and how much influence stakeholders have on the reputation of an organization.

Next to the fact that perceptions of responsibility are highly correlated to organizational reputations and that stakeholders have much influence on the reputations of an organization, prior reputation can also influence the reputation of an organization during and after a crisis. "Prior reputation" is very relevant in terms of building social capital. A prior reputation is a buffer against the reputational capital lost during a crisis. Reputational capital can be defined as "an organization's stock of perceptual and social assets" (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004: 56). According to Dowling (2002) prior reputation is relevant in terms of protection of reputational assets and facilitates repair during and after a crisis. Crisis managers believe that a positive prior reputation will benefit during a crisis. Prior reputation can save organizations from applying very expensive image restoration strategies, since it builds resistance to negative reactions.

The SCCT posits that an unfavorable prior reputation and crisis history intensifies attributions of crisis responsibility, thereby indirectly affecting reputational threat. This means that prior reputation and crisis history have a large influence on altering the initial crisis reputation as discussed above. For example, an organization that experienced a similar threat previously attributed greater crisis responsibility and suffers more direct and indirect reputational damage than an organization with no crisis history. The prior relational reputation proposition states that an organization that treated stakeholders badly in the past is attributed greater crisis responsibility and suffers more reputational damage (Coombs, 2007: 169).

This means that reputation is an attribute that needs to be preserved and protected against during crisis discourses. So, it is important to choose and apply the right discourses in order to restore the image of the organization. The specific discourses chosen, frame how events must be perceived. Studying the image restoration strategies used by the NS, NMBS

and AnsaldoBreda on the Fyra shows how each organization is attempting to repair its reputation through different strategies and related discourses.

Legitimacy

As discussed above, reputations of organizations are damaged during a crisis. But also some crises can cause doubt whether organizations have the right to further exist and/or to conduct its operations (Veil, Sellnow, & Petrun., 2011). “Social acceptance resulting from adherence to regulative, normative, or cognitive norms that qualify an organization to exist” is known as organization legitimacy (Veil et al., 2011: 325). Like reputation, legitimacy is another attribute and/or quality of an organization that need to be preserved and protected during a crisis. When comparing reputation and legitimacy, a crisis affecting ones legitimacy is even worse than reputation damage. Namely, suffering from an imperfect situation is less dire than suffering from an organizational legitimacy crisis because being less well regarded does not threaten the organization’s continued existence (Deephouse & Carter, 2005).

So when a crisis occurs within an organization, action is needed to maintain legitimacy; this is known as actional legitimacy (Boyd, 2009; Deephouse & Carter, 2005). Actional legitimacy attempts to reduce the gap between public expectations and public perceptions through strategic actions. Taking actions illustrates the corporate responsiveness, which is the organization’s ability to provide authority for its actions. It is achieved when an action in the organization’s domain of authority will be performed appropriately, responsibly, and conscientiously; and will contribute to corporate goals and inspires public confidence (Boyd, 2009). In terms of a crisis, actional legitimacy is means to achieve or regain legitimacy in response to a threat through carefully deliberated actions. Organizations must acknowledge the problem, need to coherently speak about solving the problem, need to take observable actions and maintain commitment to issue resolution.

This is very relevant with regard to this thesis, since the three organizations (NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda) are all put under pressure to take action in order to solve the problem. The NS and NMBS are put under pressure by the Dutch and the Belgian governments to solve and/or substitute the train connection between Amsterdam and Brussels, and AnsaldoBreda is put under pressure by the NS and NMBS in order to solve the technical constraints of the trains themselves within 3 months.

The Theory of Image Restoration Discourse

When an organization is involved in a crisis, it has techniques and strategies it can adapt to in order to repair its image during and after the crisis. Strategic actions in response to crisis can enhance an organization's reputation and legitimacy. Benoit (1997) has been on the forefront of research regarding organizational responses to crisis. The key understanding of the image repair strategies is to consider the nature of attacks or complaints that prompt such responses or instigate a corporate crisis.

Threats to an image or corporate have two critical components: (1) the accused is held responsible for an act; (2) the act is portrayed as offensive. According to Benoit (1997) the goal of crisis communication discourse is to save the face and manage the reputation of an organization. The theory of image restoration focuses on message options. In other words, what can an organization communicate when saving its face?

Before focusing on the different strategies introduced by Benoit (1997), it is important to keep in mind that the position the audiences take in a crisis situation is essential for the strategy adopted by the organization or individual. A crisis should always be seen in the context of the audience, also when the organization is falsely accused. So, it is especially important during a crisis to tailor the response discourses to the audiences' thoughts and opinions.

The image restoration theory offers five broad categories of strategies. Each category has sub categories that explain the five broad categories. One approach to image repair is denial. In this strategy the organization denies that it had anything with the crisis. This strategy has two different variants: to either simply deny they played a role in the crisis or shift the blame to someone else, arguing that another person or organization is actually responsible for the offensive act.

Another strategy is the evasion of responsibility, which has four different variants. The first version is provocation. This means that the organization says that it was just responding to the act of someone else. So it is a reaction to an action someone else did. Defeasibility is another variant of evasion of responsibility. Defeasibility entails that an organization can state that it did not have the ability or information and could therefore not control the situation. Another could claim the offensive action occurred by accident. If an organization can convince its audience that the act in question happened accidentally, it could be held less accountable, and the damage to that organization's image should be reduced. The last variant of evasion of responsibility is that the organization can suggest that the offensive behavior

was performed with good intentions, and that the situation was not to turn out as an organizational crisis.

Reducing offensiveness is another image repair strategy that consists of six different variants. The first variant is bolstering. An organization can use bolstering to strengthen the audience's positive feelings by describing positive actions and behavior of the organization in the past in order to offset the negative feelings connected to the organizations' wrongful act. Second, an organization can try to minimize the negative feelings associated with the wrongful act. For example, an organization can state that there is less harm than is stated by officials. A third possibility is that the organization can employ differentiations. With differentiation, the crisis is contextualized by comparing it to other crises that were more offensive actions. For example, one could argue that the wrongful act was meant as a preventive maintenance, so its actions sound much less offensive when understood as preventive maintenance instead of as a fraud. One could also use transcendence, which attempts to place the act in a more favorable context. In this situation, the organization could agree the act was negative but it can outweigh the negative act by claiming the fact that it serves more important goals. Fifth, another strategy that can be used is attacking the accuser. Here, when the accuser is in the position of the wrong, the attacked may decide to attack in order to get positive effects on its organizational image. Compensation is the last form of reducing offensiveness. By providing compensation to the victim of the crisis, the image of the organization can be restored. Benoit (1997) provides the following example to explain this final form; "a group of disabled people were denied admittance to a movie theater. An official later apologized and offered them free passes to a future movie to help compensate for this offensive act" (p. 181).

Another general image restoration strategy is corrective action, which holds that the organization promises its stakeholders to correct the problem. Within this strategy two different forms can be employed. With the first form the state of affairs that existed before can be restored before that offensive action. The second form is to promise to prevent the recurrence of the offensive act. In other words, this strategy could focus on the prevention of future crisis, on the current crisis, or both.

The final strategy for image restoration is mortification, which is to confess and beg for forgiveness towards the stakeholders. "We apologize to all of you who were affected, directly or indirectly" is an example of how an organization can employ the mortification strategy.

Table 1. Image Restoration Strategies (Benoit, 1997).

Strategy/ Variant	Key Characteristic
Denial	
<i>Simple Denial</i>	Denying its role in the crisis
<i>Shift the blame</i>	Wrongful act is performed by another
Evasion of Responsibility	
<i>Provocation</i>	Responding to the act of someone else
<i>Defeasibility</i>	Lack of information and/or ability
<i>Accident</i>	Act in question happened accidentally
<i>Good Intentions</i>	Arguing the act had good intentions
Reducing Offensiveness of Event	
<i>Bolstering</i>	Strengthen stakeholders' positive feelings
<i>Minimization</i>	Describing act as less serious
<i>Differentiation</i>	Comparing act to more severe crisis
<i>Transcendence</i>	Placing act in more favorable context
<i>Attack Accuser</i>	Reducing credibility to accuser
<i>Compensation</i>	Providing compensation of the offensive act
Corrective Action	Planning to solve or preventing the problem
Mortification	Apologizing for act

With regards to utilizing these strategies, it is very important to prepare for a crisis and to create a plan so one can act very fast and knows where to go immediately after the event (Benoit, 1997). Before a crisis occurs, judicious planning may reduce the response time and possibly prevent missteps in an organization's initial response to a crisis. By having a fast response, the organization can react right by restoring its image right away. Especially with the fast technologies we have today, it is more important to have an organized plan at hand since opinions form quicker due to these technological developments. Veil et al. (2012) mentions that waiting too long with its response might make the situation even worse. Someone or group in the firm should be responsible for the crisis response, and anticipate to potential crises and prepare contingency plans. But although there are many different types of crises that could happen to an organization and each has different effects, some potential crises can be anticipated. For example, an oil platform at sea should anticipate the possibility of a leakage or an explosion; a car manufacturer for cases of technological errors.

Additionally, it is also important for organizations to review their contingency plans regularly as things change over time within an organization (Benoit, 1997).

When a crisis occurs is important to clearly understand the character and attributes of the crisis and its related stakeholders. This is important to know this of a crisis in order to respond appropriately and choose the correct strategic action(s). It is vital to identify the stakeholders, since this plays a key role when tailoring ones' message(s). This is important since different audiences have different needs, and are affected by different ways. To conclude, this theory provides a useful typology for systematic examination of the responses of the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda with regard to the suspension of the Fyra.

Previous Organizational Crises

In the history of crisis communication, many different scholars have studied different organizational crises. Different researchers in the past have studied different organizational crises to investigate the image restoration strategies used by the organizations.

An example is the oil-spill in the Gulf Coast in 2010 by BP due to an explosion of the Transocean's offshore oil-rig 'Deepwater Horizon'. This explosion killed eleven workers and triggered a mammoth oil-spill. Muradlihan, Dillistone, and Shin (2011) analyzed the organizational responses on BP's social media channels based on Benoit's image restoration theory. The findings suggest that the dominant image restoration strategy by BP on all four of their social media channels was corrective action. Furthermore the findings suggest that BP's delayed response to the crisis meant that the only logical strategy to use at that point was corrective action coupled with compensation and mortification. But regarding the corporate image, this study concluded that BP could only wait and see in the days after the crisis whether the oil-spill crisis would force BP to re-orient their image from being environmental friendly to a more responsible and safety-oriented company.

Maresh and Williams (2010) offer insights in their research regarding the crisis history of the company and the response to the explosion of the Transocean's offshore oil-rig 'Deepwater Horizon'. This research used Benoit's image restoration theory as well as the apologia theory in which the image restoration theory has its roots. This research concluded with three main findings. First, the research demonstrates the importance of reviewing one's own crisis history. Understanding previous crises and corresponding responses accentuate and complicate future crisis response efforts. Second, the dominant image restoration strategy

used is mortification. But BP lacked responding quickly in terms of responsibility, after days the organization took the responsibility for the accident. Third, findings suggest that BP was very consistent in its messages. Multiple spokespersons were consistent with each other in their statements.

Another example of a research studying the image restoration of a crisis is the study by Elmasry and Chaudhri (2010) that examine the South Korean response to the Virginia Tech events. This research analyzes the cultural crisis communication and the nature and form of this response. This research also draws upon Benoit's theory of image restoration and is extended with the cultural repair theory. Similar to this thesis, this research is analyzing news coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings in leading newspapers. A textual analysis is carried out on news articles in Korea and special attention is paid to the image restoration strategies. Findings show that news media is a perfect vehicle for image restoration. The main finding of this research is that multiple strategies have been used during different stages of the crisis.

The research by Efthimiou (2010) on the Jetblue Airways crisis is also analyzed in terms of the image restoration theory of Benoit. Jetblue Airways experienced an organizational crisis in 2007 on Valentine's Day. Under very bad weather circumstances, Jetblue customers were trapped on the runway at JFK Airport for many days. Also, the passengers' reservation system broke down when all passengers needed to rebook their flights at once. This research analyzed the image restoration strategies used by Jetblue in order to restore their relationships with key internal and external stakeholders. In this study, similar to this thesis, company documents as well as newspaper articles were selected for analysis. Many news stories registered that the US corporations used the terms "humiliated" and "mortified" when describing the company's business and service failures. Admitting the mistake and begging for forgiveness are the hallmarks for the image restoration strategy of mortification, this was the most dominant strategy used of the crisis responses.

Many crises differ in nature and affect each organization different as well. Some crises are more or less uncontrollable by organizations, like technical error crises, and others are committed by human (errors).

An example is the technical crisis of the car brand Audi. Audi experienced an organizational crisis when different Audi 5000s were prone to sudden acceleration, which resulted in injury and death to Audi owners and innocent bystanders (Hearit & Courtright, 2003). This study roots in the assumption that all perspectives of reality, from scientific discourse to crisis communication, are socially constructed through communication. More

specifically, this study provides a social constructionist approach to crisis management were the case of Audi is used as an exemplar. The purpose of the study is to explain and develop the communicative underpinnings of a social constructionist approach to study the crisis management of Audi. Findings of this research are relevant to this thesis. Namely, the article urges crisis researchers to be especially careful to avoid viewing crisis communication as a unitary rhetorical event, by only focusing on one organization's response. It is important to recognize the variety of multiple actors that have to be taken into account. This finding is important and relates to this thesis since this thesis will study the role of three different organizations in terms of the crisis responses.

Another study focusing on organizational and technical crises is the study by Hearit (1994). This study analyzes the corporate apologetic discourses of three cases: Chrysler, Toshiba, and Volvo, and examines the use of persuasive descriptions and strategic dissociations preferred by these corporate apologists. This study focused on the apologetic advertisements that seek to bypass the media gatekeepers and take the company's case directly to the people. The main finding of this research is that the three organizations label their wrongdoing in a way that displays sorrow but limit their accountability, and use dissociations to distance themselves from the wrongdoing.

According to Coombs and Holladay (2010) it is important to understand the difference between human- and technical errors. This understanding is important because crisis managers are then equipped to determine which strategies to use to respond to the crisis. Previous research suggests that crisis managers use more expensive crisis response for a human error rather than a technical error crisis. It is also suggested that stakeholders attribute much less crisis responsibility to an organization if the accident or product recall is related to a technical error rather than a human error. "A technical crisis involves a failure of psychology, while human errors involve people not executing or improperly executing a task" (Coombs & Holladay, 2010: 182).

The suspension of the Fyra is also regarded as a technical error. During the first month when the Fyra was introduced, December 2012, the train experienced many technical problems. First, different doors of the Fyra had troubles with the automatically opening and closing doors, afterwards they experienced problems with the brakes and the actuation. Finally, the winter weather in Belgium and the Netherlands caused damages on the bottom plates of the train. This last technical error caused the NS and NMBS to suspend the Fyra from then on. The technical problems are regarded as unacceptable by the transport

organizations and the trains are suspended until they can be regarded as fully safe and reliable.

Method

To answer the research question, qualitative research was conducted. Qualitative research can be defined as “the nonnumeric examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships” (Babbie, 2008: 415). Furthermore, qualitative research methods involve a continuing interplay between data collection and theory.

To be specific, qualitative content analysis was the method used to answer the research question. Qualitative content analysis can be defined as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to indentify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002: 453). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns, that may be manifest or latent in a particular text.

Qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them, in the data. Samples for content analysis in general consist of purposively selected texts which can inform the research questions being examined. Moreover, the qualitative approach usually produces descriptions or typologies, along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world. This means that the perspectives of the text can be better understood by the investigator as well as the readers of the findings of the study. Qualitative content analysis pays attention to the unique themes that illustrate the range of meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

As mentioned above, qualitative content uses inductive reasoning since it involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes, in this case the typologies, based on valid inference and interpretation. In other words, themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher’s accurate investigation and constant comparison (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). This thesis specifically used the direct content analysis, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Then

during the data analysis itself, themes and categories were emerged from the data where needed. The purpose of this process was to extend the framework and theory of Benoit (1997).

This method was chosen since qualitative research is particularly well suited to the study the interpretations of communications and was therefore the best method to answer the research questions (Babbie, 2008).

In line with this thesis' purpose– investigating the image restoration strategies employed by the three organizations with regard to the Fyra- different media documents were analyzed. Newspaper reports and company statements were used for analysis. These types of media sources have been selected since the media as well as the press releases entail company statements that were needed in order to answer the research question.

When an important event occurred, like a crisis, it is often the media being responsible for informing the audiences. Even though organization's crisis managers largely influence the outcome of the crisis by controlling and shaping the supply of information, the mass media also play a role in producing the messages. This means that the mass media plays a significant role in how events will be perceived by the readers.

Since the media is responsible for informing the public, media relations are very important for organizations during times of organizational crisis. During crises, crisis managers are under enormous pressure to communicate with the public and thus the media. Also, stakeholders have a need for information because of the uncertainty that comes along with a crisis. The most common source of information about a crisis is a news release. Eighty percent of organizations experiencing a crisis posted a news release on their websites (Caldeiro, Taylor, & Ungereanu, 2010). Here, it is important for organizations to express their organizational statements, where different analysts and spokespersons provide context to crisis and comments to help framing the story of the crisis (Caldeiro et al., 2010).

The different media reports selected for this specific research should meet several requirements. First, the specific media content was collected within the following timeframe: 10 January 2013 until 10 February 2013. This time period has been selected since the actual event is widely covered within this timeframe. The actual suspension of the Fyra took place on the 18th of January, but a week before the 18th of January, the Fyra already experienced many problems, so this selection also gives the opportunity to investigate whether any image restoration strategies were already used by then. Moreover, it took some time for the three organizations, to respond to the suspension, but it also took time for these and other related

organizations, such as the Dutch government, to research the problem and the causes of the event. Another reason to select data until 10 February 2013 was due to the fact that the Dutch government requested the NS to provide an alternative intercity before the 1st of February 2013, which was also an important issue within this case. Lastly, this timeframe also provided the opportunity to investigate whether certain patterns in terms of image restoration can be identified and analyzed. The second requirement was that any selected media report should contain one or more company statements of the key actors selected; NS, NMBS and AnsaldoBreda. The third requirement was quite obvious; each media report selected for analysis should cover the Fyra crisis. .

The search process was not as easy as expected. The initial plan was to collect media reports from Belgian and Dutch newspapers, since the actual Fyra fiasco is taking place in these two countries. Three different databases- LexisNexis, Factiva, and Proquest -were consulted, but no database had access to Belgian newspaper reports. The next plan was to collect and select Dutch and English language newspapers. LexisNexis and Factiva, both had access to these news reports, but when investigating whether further requirements could be met, only 6 articles were meeting the requirements. Since this amount of news reports was far from enough, more Dutch newspapers were selected. In other words, in this research only Dutch newspaper reports are analyzed.

The Lexis Nexis Database was used, via the VPN connection of Erasmus University, to retrieve the Dutch newspaper reports. This database provides customers' needs across the globe with billions of searchable documents and records from 45,000 news and business sources (LexisNexis, 2013). Different search terms were used to search for the relevant news reports, such as: 'Fyra', 'Fyra train', 'Fyra V250', 'Fyra suspension', and 'high speed train'. But, finally, the search term 'Fyra' was used to select all news articles written during timeframe presented previously because most search results were found via this search term. The press releases were retrieved from the official web sites of each organization. The press releases of AnsaldoBreda were offered and analyzed in English and the press releases of the NS and NMBS were offered and analyzed in Dutch, but partially translated in English when examples were needed in the thesis.

When selecting all Dutch newspapers within the database of Lexis Nexis thousands of articles appeared. Therefore, I decided to select the five most popular Dutch national newspapers in terms of circulation; De Telegraaf, Algemeen Dagblad, De Volkskrant, Trouw, and NRC Handelsblad (Nu, 2013). After the search process, a total of 157 articles were

selected. Then, each article was scanned through and checked whether all articles were meeting the requirements explained above. In the end, a total of 60 articles were selected which met all three requirements.

As for the companies' press releases, a total of 7 press releases were selected. The NS has devoted 3 different press releases to the Fyra crisis (published on 17, 19, and 22 January), the NMBS published 2 releases (published on 21 January and 1 February) and AnsaldoBreda also published 2 press releases (Published on 10 January and 19 January).

As mentioned previously, textual analysis was carried out on all news reports and companies' press releases in the final sample. The articles were read and reread with special attention to image restoration strategies. First the statements were divided according to the six different strategies. Then the statements were reread and categorized according to the appropriate image restoration typology by Benoit (1997), the theory discussed thoroughly in the literature review.

As mentioned above, when a specific typology seemed to be missing new categories will were created to fit the content. In this way, the analysis was not forced. This means if there was no category/ image restoration strategy fitting the media content, content was not forced to comply with the typologies (Elmasry & Chaudhri, 2010).

Findings

The following section analyzes and discusses the findings of the discourses used and strategies employed by the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda after the suspension of the Fyra. Each organization has mainly employed two to five strategies. Most useful newspaper articles were the ones from January 19, 2013 until February 2, 2013. The most important criterion was that the newspaper article should have contained a statement of at least one organization related to the suspension of the Fyra. Before diving deeply into the analysis of the different statements by each of the organizations, a short reminder of the purpose of the study: to investigate the image repair strategies employed by the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda.

The NS

The first section will discuss the strategies employed by the Dutch NS. The organization mainly used four different strategies: defeasibility, shifting the blame, bolstering, and mortification to some smaller extent. The subsequent section will deal with strategies

employed by the Belgian NMBS and the last section discusses the strategies utilized by the Italian manufacturer AnsaldoBreda

Defeasibility

One of the most discourse strategies employed by the NS was defeasibility; the NS evades responsibility through citing a lack of information about important elements of the situation. In the first Dutch newspaper articles published after the suspension, on January 18, a NS spokesperson mentioned that the organization cannot immediately identify the causes of the damages and inconsistencies. For instance, the NS spokesperson asserted that “we have been looking around and investigating the tracks for hours, but we have not found anything. We really have no idea what is going on” (Hakkenberg & Van der Aa, 2013). Similarly, the director of the NS, Bert Meerstadt, has insisted to be totally lost and does not know what to do with the Fyra (Hakkenberg, 2013).

The NS has also stressed the fact that the factors lay beyond their control. Especially winter weather conditions such as the shaping of ice and snowfall. “Even though, the trains V250 have been tested extensively in Vienna and Czech Republic in many different winter conditions, it seems to be impossible to test all combinations of all winter conditions” (Hakkenberg & Van der Aa, 2013). Furthermore, the NS asserted “we were fully surprised by the occurred problems of the Fyra during the winter conditions” (Algemeen Dagblad, 2013). This last statement was made by NS director, although the manufacturer was known for its bad reputation, especially with regard to winter conditions. Additionally, the strategy of defeasibility was employed when the NS director was asked if he knew when the Fyra train would be brought back into service again: “I do not dare to say when the V250 will back in service. At the moment we consider all scenarios at hand and we do hope it will get better” (Hakkenberg, 2013).

When the director was asked whether the Fyra V250 is the best suited train for the connection between Amsterdam and Brussels, again the organization evades responsibility by mentioning to have a lack of knowledge. “The V250 is especially designed for this high speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels. We have just been using it for 6 weeks; this period is too short to conclude whether this train is best suitable” (Hakkenberg, 2013). The company also evaded responsibility when it was asked whether this suspension also means the end of the Fyra V250. NS director Bert Meerstadt responded by: “I have no clue, it depends whether the Italian manufacturer is able to solve the problems. I hope so, if we need to order

other trains from another manufacturer, many years will go by again without a high speed connection” (Telegraaf, 2013).

In a newspaper article of the ‘Algemeen Dagblad’, on January 25, 2013, the NS director continues to employ the defeasibility strategy, by lacking knowledge about the repairing of the trains. Namely, the NS and NMBS have set 3 months for AnsaldoBreda to repair the trains of all its problems and defects, but the director does not know whether this time frame is enough: “Whether three months is enough to solve all the problems, we cannot say anything meaningful about that” (Hakkenberg, 2013). A week later, on February 2, 2013, Bert Meestadt again stresses to have a lack of knowledge with regards to the Fyra and its future: “I do keep mind that the temporary alternative service will remain in place throughout the rest of 2013. I simply do not know how long the current situation will last and when the problems will be solved” (Van der Aa & Hakkenberg, 2013).

To summarize, by using defeasibility the NS attempted to evade responsibility by citing a lack of information about the future of the Fyra service. But also by stressing the factors, especially winter weather conditions, lay beyond their control; such as that the V250s were tested extensively and that the problems seemed to be inevitable.

Shift the Blame

By using this strategy, the organization argues that another person or organization is actually responsible for the offensive act. Soon after the suspension of the Fyra, on the 19th January the NS shifted the blame towards the Italian manufacturer AnsaldoBreda via a press release issued on the NS website. The title of the press release immediately asserts the shift of blame: “NS holds the manufacturer of the Fyra liable for the problems”. Furthermore, in the press release the NS stressed that:

It held the manufacturer of the Fyra, AnsaldoBreda, responsible for the problems with the high speed train. The last couple of days proved that Fyra cannot handle harsh winter conditions. Due to damage to the V250 Fyra has coped with a variety of problems since its introduction. NS has stopped the delivery program immediately until AnsaldoBreda has solved the problems.

The director of the NS, Bert Meerstadt continues to shift the blame towards AnsaldoBreda, in the same press release, by stressing the fact that AnsaldoBreda did not meet the contractually agreed criteria:

The problems since the introduction of the Fyra and the security risk caused by winter conditions show that Fyra V250 does not meet the criteria agreed to by NS and the manufacturer. That is why we pointed AnsaldoBreda formally to the contractual guarantee agreements.

Another interview with Bert Meerstadt, published in the ‘De Telegraaf’ on the 21st of January, also demonstrates the shift of blame strategy used by the organization:

I am very angry with the Italian manufacturer. The problems with AnsaldoBreda already started soon after the official order of the trains. The last few weeks, after the introduction of the trains, were even worse. We have suffered from many technical problems: different doors of the Fyra had troubles with the automatically opening and closing, and problems were experienced with the brakes and the actuation. We had enough of it!

Other smaller newspaper articles also indicate the ‘shifting the blame’ strategy employed by the NS: “The NS has filed a claim to the producer of the high speed train Fyra. The exact details of the claim remains unknown and will not be published by the NS” (Baars, 2013). “The Fyra V250 is not meeting the criteria were the NS have agreed to together with AnsaldoBreda, the NS has been very surprised and disappointed with regard to the many problems of the V250s” (De Groot, 2013).

By shifting the blame towards AnsaldoBreda, the NS tried to repair its reputation. Doing so was especially critical for the NS since the organization has been blamed by government officials, the media and Dutch public of being the responsible one of the Fyra crisis. For example, a newspaper article asserts that:

NS is fully responsible for the problems with the Fyra. Different government officials, who were closely related to the procurement, have been suggesting this. The NS was just aiming for the cheapest train, it is a scandal; they wanted cheaper trains with the appearance of a high speed train. The NS has already paid over 100 million Euros and paid even more to help AnsaldoBreda produce the V250s in a shorter time (De Telegraaf, 2013).

Furthermore, the newspaper Trouw (2013) also devotes a news article to blaming the NS of being responsible for the problems with regard to the Fyra:

You can endlessly discuss about who is responsible for what mistake with regard to the Fyra drama, but in the end there is only one responsible for the connection between Amsterdam and Brussels: the NS. The NS could have set stricter requirements for purchasing trains, or even better: the NS could have avoided the purchase of a new fully new exemplar, by opting for a fast train that has proven to be a good service in the past.

A week after the suspension of the Fyra, the NS continues to shift the blame towards AnsaldoBreda. In a newspaper article published by the ‘Algemeen Dagblad’ on January 25, 2013, the director Bert Meerstadt is still very angry with the Italian manufacturer and seems to make up for a legal fight: “AnsaldoBreda should have reacted more adequately. There is really no room for underestimation. We demand their unconditional commitment and dedication in terms of this project”. In a newspaper article on January 25, 2013 of the ‘Trouw’ the director continues to shift the blame:

AnsaldoBreda told us yesterday that the V250 trains will resume its services within a few days. I do not trust that. The train manufacturer is not taking the problems with the Fyra very serious when he believes the trains will return back into our services within a few days (NRC Handelsblad, 2013).

Bolstering

The NS also used bolstering as an image restoration strategy throughout many of its company statements. Bolstering is a strategy that strengthens the stakeholder’s positive feelings by for example expressing concerns or admitting to feelings. In many of its company statements, the NS highly prioritizes and emphasizes the safety of its customers. For example, the NS begins

by indicating that “the trains are suspended due to precaution” (De Volkskrant, 2013). “The damages are not just a few scratches, because then we could continue our services. To prevent from worse situations, we have decided to temporarily suspend the Fyra” (Hakkenberg & Van der Aa, 2013). Also, the NS is bolstering when a spokesperson explains the resumption of the Fyra connection:

We want to resume the Fyra service only, when they are reliable again. Four out of nine Fyra V250 trains of the NS are damaged, probably due to the heavy ice blocks sticking to the trains. Bumping into the ice blocks on the tracks caused the cracks in the bottom plates of the trains. This could cause a life-threatening situation (Van Gelder & Lengton, 2013).

The NS director continues to bolster the situation and tries to reduce the offensiveness of the event by emphasizing on safety priorities: “we have decided, together with the NMBS, to suspend the Fyra’s. When safety becomes an issue, we immediately suspend the service” (Hakkenberg, 2013).

When the director of the NS Hi-Speed was asked to answer the question whether the Fyra V250 is the best suitable train, the director also used the bolstering strategy next to defeasibility:

Last week we have seen the results of the first month of the Fyra. The results were positively developing over time. Even though the results were not as good as we wanted, but they were better than the results of the first week only. We have sent our people to Italy. We have been working tremendously hard to get the trains running on time. We have suffered from many different problems. Now, when safety issues start to exist, we have had enough of the problems.

In this statement the NS Hi-Speed director attempted to strengthen the audience opinion of the organization and its service by characterizing the increasing positive results of the Fyra V250 service. Furthermore, in another interview, it is also stressed that much hard work has been carried out by the NS in order to get the Fyra trains running in December.

The earlier discussed press release published on the 19th of January 2013 by the NS also used, next to ‘shifting the blame’, the bolstering strategy to bolster its image. Again, the NS focuses on the safety of its customers and attempts to strengthen its stakeholders’ positive feelings by discussing its efforts of temporarily alternative connections between Amsterdam and Brussels:

The trains will temporarily be suspended due to precaution. The interest of the customer has the highest priority. Finding an alternative connection between the Netherlands and Belgium is our first concern.

After the first few days after the Fyra suspension, the employment of the bolstering strategy increases. The NS seems to be more focused on finding a temporary alternative connection between Amsterdam and Brussels as well as the organization increases to focus on the customers’ needs. For example on January 22, 2013, spokesperson of the NS, Eric Trinthamer, stresses that: “We are very happy that the Belgians will help us out with a temporary alternative. Furthermore, we will try to do everything we can in order to return the Fyra back into our service plan” (Hakkenberg, 2013). The Director, Bert Meerstadt, also asserts that the organization is very focused on a temporary alternative. “I will promise the alternative connection of the Fyra will remain for a longer period of time. The travelers will need a backup in the future anyways. We will investigate whether we can hire trains from the NMBS (Telegraaf, 2013).

In a newspaper article of ‘De Volkskrant’ the director also emphasizes that the organization prioritizes the needs of its customers: “In order to meet the needs of our international travelers, we, together with NMBS, are willing to set up a direct intercity connection between the two countries at short notice” (Heijne, 2013).

In an interview on January 25, 2013, Bert Meerstadt emphasizes safety, trustworthiness, reliability, and outlines specific steps that have been taken by the organization to ensure the safety standards:

The organization has set up a second opinion, where an independent organization will investigate whether the trains are safe and trustworthy. We will only resume the connection if everything is declared as safe and reliable. We do keep in mind that the investigators will find more problems when investigating the Fyra (Hakkenberg, 2013).

Soon after the suspension of the Fyra, the NS has been put under pressure by the Dutch government in order to provide a temporary alternative connection before 1 February 2013. As mentioned above a temporary intercity service has been set up between Amsterdam and Brussels. Again here, the director Bert Meerstadt tried to bolster its image by giving the organization itself a compliment for its achievement: “We have never, in our history, achieved to set up a temporary alternative connection in this short period of time” (Telegraaf, 2013). Additionally, the director stresses that organization works hard to restore a decent service: “We are working extremely hard, day and night, to find a decent solution” (NRC Handelsblad, 2013).

The director also explains that it is very hard to set up a temporary high speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels, but also that the organization is working hard finding a solution. He also continues to explain that it is impossible to find temporary alternative trains for the high speed track since only highly advanced ones have the ability to drive on the track. But the NS has questioned several European companies if they can deliver a few high speeds trains (Pels, 2013).

By bolstering, and thus reducing the offensiveness of the event, the NS attempted to repair its reputation and image from the negativity around the organization with regard to the Fyra.

Mortification

When the NS started to acknowledge the fact that the Fyra service had to be suspended for at least a few months, the organization apologized for its act in its press release and several interviews. Even though the organization shifted the blame towards the Italian manufacturer, they expressed their regrets to their customers in some of their company statements. In general, if the audience believes the apology is sincere, they may pardon the wrongful act (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997). The NS Hi-speed director, Marjon Kaper, mentioned: “I regret the fact that we cannot offer the service we promised to offer our customers”. Additionally, in the end of the same interview Marjon Kaper shows compassion towards the customers: “I find it very bothersome for our customers that we have not kept our promise” (Hakkenberg, 2013).

In a January 19 press release, the NS director, Bert Meerstadt, also mentioned: “To our regrets too many travelers have suffered from nuisance due to the many problems with the Fyra”. In an interview two days later, on the 21st of January, the NS director noted that: “Our reputational damage is very large. The Fyra is our best product. We were not able to keep our

promises. We are very sorry for that” (De Telegraaf, 2013). By expressing regrets and apologizing the NS seems to take responsibility of the crisis to some extent.

After the suspension of the Fyra, much pressure has been put on the NS director Bert Meerstadt. Namely, in the end of January pressure had increased for Bert Meerstadt to resign. But he did not want to deceive its customers and wants to take responsibility for its actions and the related consequences: “I do not run away for my responsibilities, I am the right person to cope and solve the miserable situation on the track between Amsterdam and Brussels”.

All in all, the NS uses four strategies to repair its image. Defeasibility was employed by stressing a lack of knowledge and expressing that factors lay beyond control. Shifting the blame to AnsaldoBreda was an attempt to deny the responsibility of the crisis. Expressing concern, prioritizing the safety of the customer, and describing the hard work of the organizations were attempts to bolster the image of the organization. Lastly, mortification was used to apologize for the suspension of the Fyra towards their customers and by regretting the fact they were not able to keep their promises.

NMBS

During the days right after the crisis, the NMBS has mainly used two strategies to save its reputation due to the Fyra crisis: shifting the blame and bolstering.

Shift the blame

The most dominant and noticeable strategy employed by the NMBS is shifting the blame. The organization immediately pointed at the Italian manufacturer for being responsible for the Fyra fiasco. This was a very obvious strategy for the NMBS to employ since the trains suffered of technical problems which were due to manufacturing mistakes instead of mistakes caused by the railway organization itself. Additionally, the Italian manufacturer already had bad reputation with regard to technical problems in other parts of the world.

The NMBS decided soon to suspend the Fyra V250 in its country where after it asked the Dutch NS to also suspend the services of the V250. In an interview described in a newspaper article of the ‘De Volkskrant’, the NMBS director, Marc Deescheemaeker, adopted an aggressive approach towards AnsaldoBreda:

I am totally sick of the Fyra. We as an organization are thinking about stopping our acquisition of the Fyra V250. Furthermore, we are ready to take serious measures towards the manufacturer. We might want to charge and accuse the Italian manufacturer AnsaldoBreda (Troost, 2013).

In another interview, Marc Deescheemaeker, stressed that: “We have stopped the order program of the three trains, we have ordered, immediately. Whether we will buy the V250s constructed by AnsaldoBreda in the future needs to be decided by thorough research” (Baars, 2013).

The NMBS also published a press release on the January 21, 2013 to inform its audience about the suspension of the Fyra and its consequences. In this press release the organization clearly shift the blame towards AnsaldoBreda by setting strict deadlines and threatening AnsaldoBreda with consequences. The NMBS mentioned that it will offer the manufacturer three months time to improve the V250s as both organizations agreed to in the contract. When AnsaldoBreda does not meet the requirements the NMBS will stop the order of the trains and will completely abolish the contract. The organization emphasized that they will be very strict with regards to the deadline as well as to the contract and that it always has the ability to terminate the contract and send the Fyras back to Italy. If the NMBS will do so, it means that the NMBS will not buy the three ordered trains. The strictness of the organization has been especially emphasized by stating that the NMBS is investigating further legal actions towards the manufacturer. The NMBS argues that it is obviously visible that the V250s demonstrate serious defects. The defects are very serious and unacceptable according to the NMBS. This has also been the reason to set strict deadlines towards the Italian manufacturer. The NMBS asserts that it puts AnsaldoBreda on default for several reasons; all technical problems with the Fyra V250s, for the extreme delivery of the trains, and the reputational damage the NMBS incurred with regard to NMBS’ customers.

Additionally, in a newspaper article by the ‘De Volkskrant’ the director Marc Descheemaeker stresses that the organization has lost its trust in the V250: “Due to the hallucinatory sequence of events, we have lost trust in the Fyra V250” (Volkskrant, 2013).

Moreover, the NMBS attempted to shift the blame towards AnsaldoBreda by asserting that they are not considered seriously. This quote also demonstrates how relevant threatening with judicial steps can be:

In a very early stage, we got the impression of not being considered seriously by the Italian manufacturer, because they did not make a lot of progress in the delivery of the V250. It only got better when we took judicial steps towards Ansaldo (Telegraaf, 2013).

Bolstering

Although shifting the blame is the most dominant strategy employed by NMBS, it simultaneously attempted to bolster its public image to a certain extent. These two strategies may work well in conjunction. While arguing that the organization is not responsible for the crisis but the Italian manufacturer is, the organization strengthens the positive feelings by the stakeholders. In other words, the bolstering strategy may reinforce the shift of blame strategy.

An example of bolstering or attempting to rebuild a positive image of the organization occurred when NMBS concerned the safety and reliability of the trains: “The NMBS will not resume the Fyra service before it can demonstrate a fully safe and reliable service” (Heijne, 2013). The NMBS attempts to bolster by discussing a substitute for the international service between Brussels and Amsterdam.

In a newspaper article published in Trouw (2013), the NMBS puts much emphasis on the travelers of the Fyra and how they have suffered from this fiasco: “Another connection between Belgium and the Netherlands should alleviate the suffering of the travelers because of the many cancellations of the Fyra train”. This safety issue as well as suffering issue is also emphasized in the press release published on the January 21, 2013. The NMBS prioritizes the demands of the travelers and soothes the tax payer:

NMBS places the interest of the traveler as well as the tax payer very high on the priority list of its organizational goals. This means an investment of 63 million Euros will be fixed and secured.

Additionally, this press release also tries to bolster the image by arguing how well the NMBS has organized its financial management:

The already completed payment, which is about 35 million Euros, is covered and secured with bank guarantees by parent company guarantees. This means that the payment can be fully recuperated in the case of contract cancellation. This possibility proves the perfect financial management of NMBS.

The last sentence of the quote is also a clear bolstering technique, since this statement attempts to strengthen the stakeholders' positive feelings by emphasizing how well their financial management has organized its finances with regard to the Fyra. In a following paragraph NMBS continues to bolster its organizational reputation in the press release since the Director, Marc Descheemaecker stresses that the organization is working very hard to set up alternative connections by cooperating closely with the NS and that an extra shuttle train as well as a direct connection will be inserted:

The priority of NMBS now is to set up an alternative, qualitative connection to the Netherlands. Especially for our customers, NMBS is cooperating closely with the NS for an extra train connection between Belgium and the Netherlands. Last weekend we already have inserted 14 extra direct connections between Antwerp and Roosendaal. During the coming week another extra shuttle train will be inserted between Essen and Roosendaal and other direct connections between Antwerp and Roosendaal.

The NMBS director continued to bolster its corporate image by mentioning the hard work of the organization, but simultaneously stressed that the organization is disappointed. By stressing the hard work of the organization conjointly with being disappointed by the many troubles is an attempt to make the organization look less responsible for all the problems with the Fyra. It demonstrates a sense of innocence:

I am totally disappointed by the troubles of the high-speed connection Amsterdam-Brussels. I am also disappointed about the fact that our technicians have been working very hard to solve all the existing problems with the Fyra, but all our hope to solve the problems has been swiped away (Telegraaf, 2013).

Marc Descheemaeckers seems to bolster the organization's reputation by being very straightforward and sharing his thoughts about a temporary alternative connection: "We are obliged to make sure that the bloody trains are qualitative, punctual and safe. We want to close the gap between Belgium and the Netherlands" (Hakkenberg, 2013).

In the end of January 2013, the NMBS director even starts to be cynical about the situation, but also values the hard work of the both the NS and NMBS:

This case has everything to make a movie of it. But I do hope that a good connection will be more likely than a Hollywood movie. We, together with the Dutch NS, have done everything to make this Fyra project work (Van der Aa, 2013).

Overall, in terms of bolstering, the NMBS attempts to improve its organizational image by putting emphasis on the safety of its travelers, by prioritizing the interest of the travelers, by discussing its perfect financial management, and by discussing and setting up alternative connections between Belgium and the Netherlands.

AnsaldoBreda

Like the NS and NMBS, AnsaldoBreda also employed different image repair strategies to improve its reputation due to the Fyra fiasco in January 2013. As we could see from the discussed strategies employed by NS and NMBS, the Italian manufacturer has been put highly under pressure by the NS and NMBS. Additionally, the NS and NMBS shifted the blame of the crisis towards the manufacturer. AnsaldoBreda employed mainly five different strategies when attempting to repair its image: simple denial, mortification, minimization, bolstering, and victimization.

The first day when the Fyra was suspended, January 18, 2013, different news media tried to get in contact with the manufacturer. Subsequently, different Dutch newspaper articles report that the Italian manufacturer did not want to react to the question related to the problems with the Fyra (Hakkenberg & Van der Aa, 2013). Thereafter, when the Dutch NS and Belgian NMBS decided to put the manufacturer on default, AnsaldoBreda responded to the media and also published press releases.

Simple Denial

The simple denial strategy is used by AnsaldoBreda, although not very extensive like the other four strategies. When the interviewer stressed that the NS and NMBS have submitted a claim, Alessio De Sio, Senior Vice President External and Institutional Relations denied this allegation. “We have received no communication yet, neither from the NMBS or the NS. We will react only when we will receive a message” (Leijendekker, 2013). When the interviewer

of the newspaper asked the spokespersons of the NS and NMBS, they both repeatedly mentioned to have submitted a claim.

Mortification

After the simple denial strategy, the first statements of AnsaldoBreda employed the mortification strategy. By using this strategy, the organization apologizes and attempts to confess and begs for forgiveness. On January 19, 2013, the 'Algemeen Dagblad' quotes the spokesperson of AnsaldoBreda, Senior Vice President Alessio De Sio: "We find it a dreadful situation for all stakeholders, and we did not expect this to happen". The 'NRC Handelsblad' also mentioned that: "AnsaldoBreda apologized for the unexpected problems with regard to the V250s. We emphasize that we have tested all trains in many different conditions" (De Groot, 2013).

Additionally, the mortification strategy is also employed in the press release of AnsaldoBreda published on the January 19, 2013. In this press release, AnsaldoBreda apologizes to the NS and NMBS and also to the customers of the two organizations:

We apologize to the Netherlands and Belgium for the Fyra problems. We are committed to the utmost to solve this unexpected situation. AnsaldoBreda apologizes for any inconvenience caused to the customer and to the passengers and ensures that is doing its best to solve the problem.

In the interview published in the 'NRC Handelsblad' on January 23, 2013, with Alessio De Sio, Senior Vice President External and Institutional Relations, started by attempting to confess and beg for forgiveness: "We find it extremely unpleasant what happened, both for the travelers who are duped as well as for our clients" (Leijendekker, 2013).

Minimization

The minimization strategy is employed by the company in its press release and during an interview with the employee of AnsaldoBreda. This strategy is employed to attempt to portray the wrongdoing as minor and unimportant, Alessio De Sio stressed that the setbacks of the Fyra V250 have never affected the safety and implicates that situation is not as worse as the NS and NMBS indicate:

The problems, occurred in the last days on the trains V250, were caused by unexpected problems that, after the first technical tests, seem to be related to an undue accumulation, under the vehicles, of a big quantity of snow, that turning into ice and detaching during the train running, damaged some parts of the under frame. However, these setbacks have never affected the safety of the trains or of its passengers

By emphasizing that the setbacks of the Fyra have never affected the safety, the company tried to minimize the seriousness of the Fyra crisis. In the interview with an employee of AnsaldoBreda, an employee, Alessandro Benedetti, attempted to minimize the act by indicating that all the critique on Ansaldo is overrated and arguing that the defects are only small:

Critique on our organization is overrated. These are lies; it is more like a hype. The problems related to the snowfall are just a few small defects. I believe the engineers in the Netherlands will solve the problems very soon, maybe already by next week (De Waal, 2013).

He continues to minimize the serious of the situation by stating that: “Once you start searching for further deficiencies, you will always find something” (De Waal, 2013). Additionally, Giuseppe Marino, Senior Vice President of AnsaldoBreda, seems to be very light-minded about the situation and stressed that the problems will be solved in a very short time frame:

The problems seem to be solved already. The problem will be solved within a few days. We have 40 technicians who are working on this case and we trust that this problem will be solved very soon, because it is not a mechanical or technical problem. This will not last weeks or months (Zeedijk, 2013).

Bolstering

Another dominant strategy in the attempts of image restoration by AnsaldoBreda is bolstering. The company tries to emphasize the good traits and beneficial past acts and tries to offset damage from the wrongful act at hand. For example, the company bolstered by declaring that: “We have been testing the Fyra trains extensively, also in winter conditions” (De Groot,

2013). The press release also contained many statements that attempted to bolster the reputation of the company by describing the positive acts they have done in the past:

The Fyra trains have been properly and duly tested and verified. They performed tests in the climatic chamber at the internationally Arsenal Institute of Vienna, as well as development and verification races on the test circuit in Velim in the Czech Republic and also on the Fyra line. In no way the problems outlined above occurred.

Other bolstering techniques were used in the press release to offset the damage by emphasizing the willingness to improve the situation by investigating the situation and also by finding solutions for the problems, and therefore also strengthening stakeholders' positive feelings towards the company:

AnsaldoBreda has immediately and adequately organized with his technicians in the Netherlands and in Italy a team of 40 people, which is conducting in-depth investigations to find the right solution to this problem, all that in close collaboration with the customer's technicians.

Additionally, other bolstering statements were stated directly after the mortification statements (mentioned above): "We are committed to the utmost to solve this unexpected situation" and "AnsaldoBreda ensures that is doing its best to resolve the problem".

In the interview on January 23, 2013 in the 'NRC Handelsblad' Alessio De Sio continues attempting to bolster the corporate image by discussing willingness to improve the situation and arguing that the organization is reliable due to their experience in this field: "While we talk, our engineers are in the Netherlands investigating what happened with the snow and ice and why this happened. But do not forget: we have more than 20 years of experience in this field" (Leijendekker, 2013). The Senior Vice President continued trying to bolster in the interview by drawing upon their experience in order to demonstrate their competency in this situation and also by highlighting the financial value of the deals with the Italian railway to show they are credible and a competent business partner:

Within a few months the Frecciarossa1000 will be released in our factory in Pistoia. This is super fast train that has the ability to reach 400 kilometers per hour. The Italian railway has ordered 50 of these trains for 30 million Euro per train (Leijendekker, 2013).

In an interview with Alessio De Sio, Senior Vice President External and Institutional Relations, bolstering was employed as well. When the interviewer stated that the Dutch state secretary that it could take months before the Fyra will be back in service, Alessio De Sio bolstered the situation and the image of the organization:

I do not think so. At the moment, many different investigations and tests are going on and we are verifying the results of previous tests. Our technicians believe that the trains will back in service within a few days (Leijendekker, 2013).

Subsequently, the interviewer mentioned that trust in the manufacturer is gone and that an image has been created that the trains of AnsaldoBreda are a disaster. Alessio De Sio commented:

It is not true that we have problems all over the world. Contrary, our client in Copenhagen was very satisfied about the metro we manufactured. This is also the case in Miami. Additionally, 2e have delivered trains to Trenord in the north of Italy. When snow fell recently in Trenord, our trains were the only ones in service (Leijendekker, 2013)

These statements by Alessio De Sio are in contrast with other previous interviews with the Danish and American clients of Ansaldo. In these interviews the clients were talking about their worst purchase of the century and were very negative about the products and services of Ansaldo.

All in all, Alessio De Sio tries to strengthen the stakeholder's positive feelings by stating the organization is doing well in terms of production and sales.

Victimization

By employing the victimization strategy the accused organization attempts to act as a victim of a crisis. When the organization is perceived as a victim and when this is also accepted by the audience, the audience is more likely to forgive the organization of its wrongdoing (Coombs, 2004).

In the earliest statements of AnsaldoBreda after the actual suspension of the Fyra, the organization asserted to be overtaken by all the problems with the Fyra. For example, Alessio De Sio mentioned on January 19, 2013 that: “We find it very unpleasant. This was totally not expected” (Hakkenberg, 2013). Subsequently, in the press release published on January 19, 2013, Alessio De Sio asserted that the problems with the V250s were all very unexpected: “The problems, occurred in the last days on the trains V250, were cause by unexpected problems, we did not expect this to happen at all. We are disappointed and negatively surprised. In the ‘NRC Handelsblad’ on January 21, 2013, a spokesperson of AnsaldoBreda apologized for the “unforeseen problems with the Fyra trains” (De Groot, 2013).

By mentioning that the situation was unforeseen and not expected as well as to be negatively surprised by the technical problems of the Fyra, AnsaldoBreda attempts to act as if it became a victim of the crisis and that the organizations could not have prevented the crisis since they did everything they could do and worked extremely hard to satisfy both transport organizations. But this victimization strategy seems a real act of the organization rather than the truth since different newspapers argue that the majority of the problems were due to manufacturing mistakes (Algemeen Dagblad, 2013; Heijne 2013).

To summarize, AnsaldoBreda has used five different strategies to repair its image. Simple denial was used to deny the fact they had not received the submitted claims of the NS and NMBS, even though both transporters repeatedly mentioned to have submitted a claim. The mortification strategy was used by apologizing and begging for forgiveness due to the inconvenience. By emphasizing the good traits and positive past acts of the organization, describing their willingness to improve the situation and their experience in this field of manufacturing, AnsaldoBreda tried to bolster the reputation of the organization. The minimization strategy attempted to portray the event as less serious; the employers of AnsaldoBreda seemed to be very light-minded about the situation and described that the situation did not have any setbacks in terms of safety for the travelers. The victimization strategy was used to act as a victim of the crisis by suggesting the Fyra fiasco was very

unexpected and unforeseen and that the organization was negatively surprised by all the deficiencies of the Fyra and could not have prevent the problems.

Discussion

The final question to consider is what we can learn about the image restoration attempts. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the image repair strategies employed by the NS, NMBS, and AnsaldoBreda. The theory of image restoration has implications for public relations. A crisis threatens to damage reputations because crisis gives people reasons to think badly of the organization (Schultz et al., 2011). So when crisis management efforts are effective when operations are sustained or summed, organizational and external stakeholder losses are minimized, and learning occurs so that lessons are transferred to future incidents. When an organization is involved in a crisis it can adapt to several different strategies. As analyzed, each organization; NS, NMBS and AnsaldoBreda have employed different strategies to repair their reputations after the Fyra fiasco. This research applied Benoit's Image Restoration Theory to analyze the rhetoric of the three organizations in the top five Dutch newspapers and company statements published after the suspension of the Fyra. Before the investigation of the implications of the strategy used, the section below summarizes the strategies employed by the three organizations first.

This study showed that the NS has used four different strategies throughout the time frame selected. The ones employed are: defeasibility, shifting the blame, bolstering and mortification. By using defeasibility the NS attempted to evade responsibility by citing a lack of information about the prospects of the Fyra service. But also by stressing that factors have lied beyond their control such as that trains have been tested extensively and that the problems, thus, seemed to be inevitable. The NS used the shifting the blame strategy by arguing that the Italian manufacturer, AnsaldoBreda, was the responsible organization for the breakdown of the Fyra. Bolstering is the third strategy used by the NS. This strategy is used by highly prioritizing and emphasizing the safety of its customers, but also by stressing how much work the NS has carried out to get the Fyra train running. Additionally, the NS also attempted to bolster its image by communicating about temporary alternative connections between Amsterdam and Brussels and by complimenting its own organization for its achievements so far. The fourth and last strategy employed was mortification. The organization apologized for the suspension of the Fyra and expressed their regrets towards their customers that they were not able to provide the service they promised.

The NMBS used two strategies to save its reputation; shift the blame and bolstering. The most dominant strategy employed by the NMBS was shift the blame. The organization immediately pointed the finger towards the Italian manufacturer for being responsible for the Fyra crisis. The NMBS had a fairly aggressive approach towards the manufacturer by summing up the consequences for AnsaldoBreda, by quoting that AnsaldoBreda is fully responsible for the technical problems and asserting that they were not taken seriously by AnsaldoBreda. The NMBS also tried to bolster its organizational reputation in several ways: by expressing concerns about the safety of its customers and reliability of the trains, by giving priority to the suffering of its travelers, by emphasizing how well their financial management was organized, by mentioning the hard work and effort of the organization, and by discussing the set up of an alternative connection between the Netherlands and Belgium.

AnsaldoBreda employed five strategies when they attempted to repair their image: simple denial, mortification, bolstering, minimization, and victimization. First, during the initial crisis response AnsaldoBreda did not comment. Simple denial was employed soon after by mentioning that they did not receive any submitted claim of the NS and NMBS. Mortification was the strategy used after a few days passed the actual suspension. The organization apologized and begged for forgiveness for the inconvenience. Bolstering was used to emphasize the good traits of the organization and beneficial past acts, and thus attempted to offset damage from the wrongful act. Furthermore, the organization emphasized the willingness to improve the situation, argued that their organization is reliable and trustworthy due to their experience in this field, and mentioned the organization is doing well in terms of production and sales. The minimization strategy was used to attempt to portray the wrongdoing as less serious: Ansaldo stressed that it did not have any setbacks in terms of safety and the employers were very light-minded about the situation. The fifth strategy used by AnsaldoBreda is victimization. This strategy is used to try to act as a victim of the crisis by stating that the organization did not expect this fiasco, by mentioning that the problems were unforeseen, and that the organization did everything they could and were totally shocked by all the deficiencies of the Fyra.

Implications of the Analysis

This study shows that multiple strategies can be used together during of image restoration discourse. All organizations have mainly used traditional news media (mainly newspapers) and their own corporate website to publish press releases in order to update their stakeholders.

The three organizations have all, generally, used one spokesperson. In the cases of NS and NMBS, the directors Bert Meerstadt and Marc Descheemaekers were the ones representing the company and as for AnsaldoBreda, the Senior Vice President of External and Internal Relations, Alessio De Sio was representing the Italian manufacturer. Using one spokesperson for your organization is a wise choice since this makes sure that the organizations convey consistent messages during the crisis. When having multiple people speak it is harder to control the corporate message that should be conveyed. Namely, when multiple people speak you have to keep sharing information, key message points, and keep people continuously informed about the progress of the crisis events (Coombs, 2007).

During the initial crisis response, the NS employed the defeasibility strategy. This strategy was especially employed by stressing to have lack of knowledge and information with regard to the suspension and prospects of the Fyra. According to Coombs (2007), it is important to provide information right away only when you are sure about the accurateness of the information. If not, there is a possibility to make situations worse. But on the other hand, when stressing a lack of knowledge, stakeholders are left in ignorance. In this case, it seems rather unprofessional to state, as a director, to be completely lost about the Fyra and its prospects. It merely comes across as if the director is not informed about the progress of the suspension of the Fyra.

Soon after the suspension, the NS shifted the blame towards the Italian manufacturer. In this situation, shifting the blame is a wise and smart choice. This strategy reduces the responsibility of the crisis for the NS. Stakeholders are less likely to assert that the NS shoulders the responsibility alone. This is also an intelligent strategy to employ in terms of the finances with regard to Fyra. The NS paid an enormous amount of money for the V250s, but by submitting a claim and thus shifting the blame, the NS has a high chance of receiving the refund and is also able to take judicial steps if necessary. This strategy is also wisely chosen due to the fact that NMBS also shifted the blame towards Ansaldo, this means that the NS and NMBS both have a “common enemy”. This results into the fact that both the NS and NMBS are in a strong position because it is two against one. Moreover, the early mortification of AnsaldoBreda lends strength and credibility to the NS and NMBS claims.

The bolstering strategy was used throughout many of its company statements. Safety and customer needs were of high concern. This strategy is well chosen since more and more crisis experts have recommended that crisis managers should express concern/ sympathy for victims or stakeholders of the crisis (Kellerman, 2006). Expressions of concern help to lessen

reputational damage and to reduce the financial losses. Moreover, Coombs and Holladay (1996) and Dean (2004) found that organizations did experience less reputational damage when an expression of concern is offered in contrast to a response that lacked an expression of concern.

Mortification was used as a strategy by the NS to apologize for the suspension and that the organization was not able to keep its promise in terms of the high-speed connection between the Netherlands and Belgium. Mortification is a way of taking responsibility. But using this strategy intertwiningly with the shift of blame strategy was a good combination. Namely, by shifting the blame the offensiveness towards the NS was reduced but simultaneously the NS was taking some responsibility at the same time since they are the ones responsible for providing the trains but not for the technical problems with the V250s as they say.

In general, the majority of the strategies of the NS were employed intertwiningly. But defeasibility was merely used in the beginning of the crisis communication response by stressing the lack of knowledge with regard to the prospects of the Fyra. Mortification was especially used in the press releases of the organization and not so much during interviews with newspapers. The shift of blame was employed after a few days of the suspension and was continually used throughout the majority of the discourses. The bolstering strategy was used simultaneously with shifting the blame strategy to show their willingness to improve the situations as well as to express statements of concern towards their stakeholders. The combination of the strategies employed did satisfy stakeholder groups to a certain extent. The shift of blame strategy satisfies stakeholders since this strategy reduces the responsibility of the NS in this case and, simultaneously, the bolstering strategy reduces the offensiveness of the event since the organization shows its stakeholders to be willing to improve the situation. But defeasibility in combination with the other strategies was weak because having a lack of knowledge and information brings frustrations towards stakeholders since they are eager to know about the prospects of the Fyra.

The NMBS used two strategies convey its image restoration discourse. The shift of blame strategy was employed immediately after the suspension of the Fyra. This strategy was used in a very direct and forward manner, maybe even an aggressive approach. This strategy has been well employed by the organization since the direct manner of conveying the message leaves stakeholders no doubts about who is responsible and who is not. In other words, this strategy makes the NMBS (almost) irresponsible for the Fyra fiasco.

Employing bolstering next to shifting the blame is perfect combination in this case. By using this strategy the organization tried to strengthen the audience's positive feelings toward the organization by stressing and describing the positive past acts and traits of the organization, and also by describing their concerns in terms of safety for their customers. So basically, the NMBS was trying to convey that they are not the ones responsible for the act and that are the ones doing everything right as far as they can and could. Additionally, as mentioned before, expressing concern offers a less reputational damage and thus can be stated that bolstering is wisely chosen strategy. The NMBS was, overall, very consistent and explicit in its discourse by using only two strategies. This was prudently chosen since many stakeholders will probably have no doubts in terms of who is responsible and who is not.

Overall, the NMBS used two strategies which were employed in an intertwined manner. This means that the response strategies did not shift over time but were used simultaneously from the beginning onwards. The combinations allowed to satisfy the stakeholders since the shift the blame strategy left no doubts for the responsibility of the act. Moreover, the bolstering strategy demonstrated that the NMBS has been, and still is, working hard to do everything as far as they could.

AnsaldoBreda employed many strategies in its crisis response. During the first few days, the manufacturer refused to comment on different questions from media agencies. This seems rather to be a weak choice. According to Coombs (2007) it is better to avoid the 'no comment' phrase because people think it means the organization is guilty and tries to hide something. Even though an early response might not have much 'new' information, the organization has time to position itself as a source and begins to introduce its side of the story. Camey and Jordan (1993) assert that a quick response is active and demonstrates the organization is in control. Silence let others control the story and suggests the organization has to gain control of the situation. Moreover, the study of Arpan and Rosko-Ewoldsen (2005) notes that an early response allows an organization to generate greater credibility than a slow response.

After a few days passed, the organization started its actual crisis response discourse. The mortification strategy was used to apologize towards the different stakeholders. Analysis showed that when one commits an offensive act, it is often best to employ mortification. Confession may not only be good for the soul, but also for one's reputation (Benoit, 1997). The organization demonstrated compassion. This strategy was intelligently intertwined with the victimization strategy, bolstering and the minimization strategy. Namely, while

apologizing and begging for forgiveness, the organizations stresses to be overwhelmed, overtaken by the problems since the problems were unexpected and unforeseen. This means that the organization wisely attempted to position itself as a victim of the crisis. Additionally, victim-oriented strategies appear to demonstrate that the organization has learned its lesson and will work to prevent a repeat of the crisis (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). Afterwards, the manufacturer emphasizes the good traits and beneficial past acts. Especially, by stating how much work they yielded in order to get the trains running, by describing their great experience in the field of manufacturing trains and metros and by stressing their positive results in terms of sales and production. The minimization strategy was used to attempt to present the misconduct as a minor incident. “Effective use of this strategy requires rhetoric to reframe the attack as less serious than it originally appeared (Brinson & Benoit, 1996: 38). The combination of the four strategies is an intelligent choice since it makes the situation seem to be less wretched than it actually is.

AnsaldoBreda also employed the simple denial strategy by simply denying that the organizations had problems in other parts of the world. The manufacturer also denied that the reparation will take a long period of time and instead stressed that it will only take few days. Lastly, the organization denied to have received a claim from the NS and NMBS. The use of simple denial is rather a delicate choice in this case, since many people knew about the actual situation and therefore knew the organization is not as trustworthy, reliable and promising as it is describing itself. According to Benoit & Brinson (1994), it is very risky for a company who is at fault to deny their culpability. If the truth comes out, the accused compounds the offense. It is redundant; not only performing an offensive act, but also lying about it. You also see that some strategies work well together. But others do not; combining apologizing and stating “there is not much wrong with our organization”, “we do not have problems or whatsoever” are not the most persuasive combinations (Blaney et al., 2002). The response strategies of AnsaldoBreda contained a clear shift over time. The organization started its initial response with “no comment” phrases and continued with simple denial strategies. As soon as the organization received a claim from NMBS and NS they started using mortification first to apologize and used the minimization to minimize the seriousness of the event, bolstering to demonstrate their willingness to improve the situation, and victimization to act as a victim of the crisis to show their innocence. The last mentioned strategies (mortification, minimization, bolstering and victimization) were employed intertwiningly in press releases as well as in interviews with newspapers. The strategy of

simple denial was not an intelligent choice and did not satisfy many of its stakeholders since everyone knew that technical problems were the cause of the suspension and not due to any other cause such as the bad weather conditions only. The mortification strategy was right in place, at this stage the organization took responsibility for the crisis. The minimization, bolstering and victimization were satisfying for stakeholders since it reduced the offensiveness of the event.

Due to the suspension of the Fyra V250 on the January 18, 2013, the Dutch and Belgian railway organizations NS and NMBS, as well as the Italian manufacturer faced and still face a difficult crisis to manage. The fiasco caused much pressure on the three organizations due to many critiques of different stakeholders, such as the governments, customers, public and the media. This crisis demonstrated that it causes reputations to be at risk. Aula (2012) stresses that “the loss of one’s reputations affects the positioning, trust and loyalty of stakeholders, media relations and the legitimacy of operations even the license to exist” (p. 44). Organizational incidents and crises have large influences on the reputations of the organizations as well as on the legitimacy when portrayed negatively (Vecchio et al., 2012). Often, when a corporate reputation is violated, organizations often proceed into crisis communication in order to address the situation and attempt to reduce the damage created. When an organization is at risk, it can adapt to strategies and try to restore and limit the damage after or during a crisis. As discussed in the literature review, strategic actions have the ability to enhance the organizations reputations as well as the legitimacies.

This research demonstrates that all three organizations have suffered and still suffer from either reputational damage or damage to the organizational legitimacy or from both. Reputation is defined as “the net perception of an organization’s ability to meet expectations of all stakeholders” (Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000). In this case all three organizations do not meet the expectations of all stakeholders which means that all organization suffer from a reputational damage. As for the NS and NMBS, their stakeholders (especially their customers) expected to have the opportunity to use the high speed connection between Amsterdam and Brussels from December 2012 onwards after an enormous delay of more than 7 years. AnsaldoBreda disappointed their stakeholders (NS and NMBS as buyers/customers of the Fyra) already when it did not meet the agreement of delivering the trains in a few years ago and it got even worse the Fyra V250 did not meet the requirements agreed to in the contract.

Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review, when crisis occurs within organizations, actions are needed to maintain legitimacy in order to reduce the gap between public expectations and public perceptions (Boyd 2009; Deephouse & Carter, 2005). In the case of the Fyra, all organizations took action to improve the situation. The NS and NMBS have been working hard to find an alternative connection between Belgium and the Netherlands and to investigate the situation and the reliability of the Fyra V250 by hiring an independent organization. AnsaldoBreda has sent many technicians over to the Netherlands to investigate the problems and find solutions to the problems. These acts by each of the organization are known as actional legitimacy and illustrate the corporations' responsiveness. This is also a means the organizations were attempting to achieve or regain legitimacy in response to a threat through carefully deliberated actions (Boyd, 2009).

Limitations and Future directions

There are several limitations to the study. The first one being that only two mediums, corporate press releases and newspaper articles, were used for the study. The research did not take into account other mediums; like the internet, in particular social media, or broadcast media to get a broader perspective. Also, only the top 5 (in terms of circulation) Dutch newspapers were taken in consideration for the content analysis and not Belgian, Italian or other relevant international publications. However, these newspapers included a great amount of statements of all three organizations to analyze the strategies employed. Another limitation observed is that the theory is primarily descriptive; it is a tool for identifying which strategies were employed in a given situation. This means that assumptions about success of the strategies become arguable. Moreover, the company statements and crisis responses have only been analyzed and interpreted by one researcher. Even though the researcher has put much effort in studying the signification and connotation of the different strategies, some strategies might be interpreted as one, but might actually be another (fairly similar) strategy. Another limitation to this study is that the nature of the sources only contains managerial/organizational perspectives and not audience perspectives, such as sources from social media and consumer forums. Lastly, in terms of the time frame, selecting newspaper articles prior to the suspension turned out to be superfluous since no crisis strategy was applied yet.

This research could be expanded in the future through incorporating relevant international media publications such as newspaper articles from Belgium and Italy.

Obviously, access to databases of Belgian and Italian newspapers is a necessity. As far as Italian newspapers are concerned, researchers could encounter a language barrier. Additionally, when incorporating these international newspapers, the cultural repair theory could be applied in order to investigate if the countries attempt to repair the reputation of country and its organization.

Another option to expand the research is to interview relevant stakeholders in this case. This provides a broader perspective to the research.

This might be an open door, but obviously future research could encompass social media and broadcast media.

Next to an expansion of this research, future research could also be directed at the effects of the employed strategies by the three organizations. In particular, how these strategies have persuaded the stakeholders of each organization. The results of this particular research perspective could also offer an insight in the successes and failures of the employed strategies. A survey could be a decent method to retrieve these results.

Another interesting research could involve applying the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) on the Fyra case. In contrast to this theory, the Image Restoration Theory offers no conceptual links between the crisis response strategies and elements of the crisis situation (Coombs, 2007). But the issue here is related to the nature of the sources. This research is focusing on the managerial and organizational perspectives and not on the audience perspectives which are needed when applying this theory on the Fyra case. The application of SCCT could potentially result into a very holistic and extensive analysis of the case but an audience perspective is needed.

Therefore, another suggestion for future research in general is to study the audience perspectives by analyzing social media or customer forums to, for example, study the effects of crisis communication discourses on different stakeholders or as mentioned above to have the ability to apply the SCCT theory.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the restoration strategies employed by the NS, NMBS and AnsaldoBreda after the suspension of the Fyra. This study demonstrated that multiple strategies can be employed together in terms of image restoration discourse. Commonalities between the organizations are that each used traditional news media (mainly newspapers) and

press releases to update their stakeholders and each organization has mainly used one spokesperson for your organization to assure the consistency of the message.

The NS used four different strategies during the time period selected: defeasibility, shifting the blame, bolstering, and mortification. By citing a lack of knowledge and thus using defeasibility as a strategy, the director of the NS, Bert Meerstadt, seemed rather unprofessional. Namely, to state to be completely lost, comes across as if the director is not informed about the progress of the Fyra. In other words, the choice of defeasibility as a strategy in this case was weak. The other strategies were a smarter choice. Shifting the blame to AnsaldoBreda reduced the responsibility of the crisis and asserts that the NS does not shoulder the responsibility alone. Moreover, bolstering the image, by expressing concerns and sympathy for the travelers, is a perfect chosen strategy since expressions of concern help to lessen the reputational damage (Kellerman, 2006). Using mortification in sync with shifting the blame was a good combination, since by shifting the blame the offensiveness towards the NS is reduced but simultaneously the NS is taking some responsibility at the same time since they are the ones responsible for the train and not for the technical problems of the V250.

The Belgian railway company, NMBS, conveyed its discourse in a very straightforward and direct manner. The NMBS used two strategies: shift the blame and bolstering. Shifting the blame has been well employed by the organization since it was in a very direct manner and this manner leaves stakeholders no doubts about who is responsible and who is not. Employing bolstering next to shifting the blame is a successful strategy. By using bolstering the organizations tried to strengthen the positive feelings towards the organization by describing positive past acts and traits of the organizations stressing the concerns with regards to the travelers. In other words, the NMBS tried to convey that they are not the ones responsible and are the ones doing everything as far as they can and could. Overall, the NMBS was very consistent and explicit in its discourse by only using two strategies.

Choosing refusing to comment during the first few days was not a very wise idea of AnsaldoBreda. This leaves people to think the organization is guilty and tries to hide something. A quick response might not have much new information but it demonstrates the organization is in control (Coombs, 2007). After a few days, the actual crisis discourse started, AnsaldoBreda decided to employ five different strategies: mortification, bolstering, simple denial, minimization, and victimization. This study showed that intertwining mortification with victimization, bolstering and minimization was a good choice in the

circumstances of AnsaldoBreda. While apologizing and begging for forgiveness, the organization stressed to be overwhelmed and overtaken by the problems due to the unexpectedness. This means that the organization tried to position itself as victim of the crisis. Next to that, the organization bolsters its image by stating the good past acts and traits, by stating how much work they conducted to get the trains running, and by describing their great experience in this field of manufacturing. Moreover, the minimization strategy attempted to present the crisis as a minor incident and thus the combination of the four strategies seem to make the situation less wretched than it actually is. The use of simple denial was weak and delicate choice; many people knew about the problems the organization had, that the problems were not going to be solved within a few days, and that the organization was simply denying that a submission of claims by the NS and NMBS was not received even though they did. The discourse by AnsaldoBreda showed that some strategies work very well together and that others weaken the strategy.

As mentioned previously throughout this thesis, mistakes in crisis communication can be very costly. This demonstrates the importance of research in the field of crisis communication. Overall, this research extends and builds on existing scholarship in crisis communication in general and image restoration in particular. The Fyra case specifically, and this research overall, provide different insights for crisis communication. First, this study demonstrates the necessity of having a crisis communication plan or at least having thought about a method and design to encounter a crisis in a quick, accurate, and consistent manner. Second, in terms of consistency, this research determines the importance of keeping spokespersons and other internal and external communication managers informed about the latest developments with regards to the progress of the crisis or keep managers part of your crisis meetings. Third, this research extends the field of crisis communication by adding a research with a recent as well as a new case. Moreover, this case demonstrates the importance of keeping stakeholders informed about the prospects after the crisis and consequences of the crisis since many stakeholders are dependent on different outcomes. If not, stakeholders will get frustrated which will do no good to the reputation of the organization. This case teaches how different organizations go about the responsibility of one similar crisis. Sixth, this research also illustrates which image restoration strategies can be more effective when they are intertwined and also which strategies seem to rather reinforce each other.

Seventh, this research reveals that the Image Restoration Theory of Benoit (1997) is not as complete as it promises to be. Even though most company statements and discourse

were covered by this theory, a new typology was created for AnsaldoBreda to fit the media content. The typology created here is the victimization strategy. By using this strategy accused organizations attempt to act as a victim of the crisis. This means that the minor extension of the Image Restoration Theory assures that all media content complies with the typologies. Besides that, this research can teach other students about how persuasive communication works. It can also help instructors to provide a case in their classrooms of persuasive communication (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997). Lastly, this research provides a detailed insight in the case of the Fyra and how the crisis influences and influenced the relationships between the three different organizations.

As far as future research is concerned, clearly more research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of the strategies employed per organization. Future research could also attempt to apply theories such as SCCT and Culture Repair Theory on the case in order to retrieve new insights of the Fyra case. Additionally, future studies could also attempt to investigate sources from an audience perspective to, for example, research the effect of crisis communication on different stakeholders. Lastly, other media, such as social media and broadcast media, can be investigated to get a broader perspective of the strategies used per organization.

References

Aa, van der, E. 29 January 2013. Voor Fyra geldt: niet goed, trein terug. Algemeen Dagblad: 18.

Adkins, G. L. (2010). Organizational networks in disaster response: An examination of the US Government network's efforts in hurricane Katrina. In Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S.J. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication* (pp. 94-114). Singapore: Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd.

Algemene Rekenkamer. (June, 2010). HSL Factsheet, Retrieved on 15 April 2013, from http://www.rekenkamer.nl/zoekresultaten?sortreversed=true&sortfield=searchdate&free_text=hsl+zuid&zoek-submit=

Ansaldobreda. (2013). The Company Profile. Retrieved on 15 April 2013, from http://www.ansaldobreda.it/en-gb/aziendaengb/azienda_profiloengb.aspx

Ansaldobreda. (2013). We apologize to the Netherlands and Belgium for the Fyra problems. We are committed to the utmost to solve this unexpected situation. Press Release. Retrieved on 6 March, 2013, from <http://www.ansaldobreda.it/en-gb/pressandmediadetailengb/detcomunicatiengb.aspx?id=1736>

Arpan, L. M. & Roskos-Ewoldson, D. R. (2005). Stealing thunder: An analysis of the effects of proactive disclosure of crisis information. *Public Relations Review*, 31, 425-433.

Aula, P. (2010). Social Media, reputation risk & ambient publicity management. *Strategy & Leadership*, 38, 43-49.

Baars, R. 21 January 2013. NS verhaalt schade Fyra. Algemeen Dagblad: 1.

Babbie, E. (2008). *The Basics of Social Research*. Fourth Edition. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.

- Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image Repair Discourse and Crisis Communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23, 177-186.
- Benoit, W. L. (1994). AT&T: “Apologies are not Enough”. *Communication Quarterly*, 42, 75-88.
- Benoit, W. L. & Czerwinski, A. (1997). A Critical Analysis Of USAir’s Image Repair Discourse. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 60, 38-57.
- Belgianrailway. (2013). Onderneming: De Spoorwegen in Belgie. Retrieved on 16 April 2013, from <http://www.belgianrail.be/nl/corporate/onderneming.aspx>
- Belgianrailway. (2013). NMBS schort afname Fyra-stellen op en stelt AnsaldoBreda in gebreke. Press Release. Retrieved on 7 March, 2013, from http://www.belgianrail.be/nl/corporate/Presse/Presse-releases/2013/21_01_2013.aspx
- Blaney, J. R., Benoit, W. L., Brazeal, L. M. (2002). Blowout!: Firestone’s image restoration campaign. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 379-392.
- Boere, R. & Hakkenberg, D. January 2013. Trein reed dit keer beter dan auto. *Algemeen Dagblad*, pp. 152.
- Boyd, J. (2009). Actional Legitimation: No Crisis Necessary. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12, 341-353.
- Brinson, S. L. & Benoit, W. (1996). Dow Corning’s Image Repair Strategies in the Breast Implant Crisis. *Communication Quarterly*, 44, 29-41.
- Caldiero, C., Taylor, M. & Ungureanu, M. (2010). Organizational and media use of technology during fraud crisis. In W.T. Coombs and S.J. Holladay, *The handbook of crisis communication*. (pp. 396- 409) Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, United Kingdom.

Carney, A. & Jordan, A. (1993). Prepare for business-related crisis. *Public Relations Journal*, 49, 34-45.

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

Coombs, W. T. (2010). Parameters for Crisis Communication. In Coombs, T. & Holladay, S.J. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication* (pp. 17-53). Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, United Kingdom.

Coombs, W. T. & Holladay, S. J. (2007). The negative communication dynamic: Exploring the impact of stakeholder affect on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Communication Management*, 11, 300-312.

Coombs, W. T. & Holladay, S. J. (1996). Communication and attributions in a crisis: An experimental study of crisis communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 8, 279-295.

Coombs, W. T. & Schmidt, L. (2002). An Empirical Analysis of Image Restoration: Texaco's Racism Crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12, 163-178.

Cooper, A.H. (2002). Media framing and social movement mobilization: German peace protest against INF missiles, the Gulf War, and NATO peace enforcement in Bosnia. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41, 37-80.

Dean, D. H. (2004). Consumer reaction to negative publicity: Effects of corporate reputation, response, and responsibility for a crisis event. *Journal of Business Communication*, 41, 192-211.

- Deephouse, D. L. & Carter, S. M. (2005). An examination of differences between organization legitimacy and organizational reputation. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42, 329-360.
- Derix, S. & De Groot, D. January 2013. Liever goedkope en dan snelle treinen. *NRC Handelsblad*: 11.
- Dowling, G. (2002). *Creating Corporate Reputation and Competitiveness*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Efthimiou, G. G. (2010). Regaining Altitude: A Case Analysis of the Jetblue Airways Valentine's Day 2007 Crisis. In Coombs, T. & Holladay, S.J. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication* (pp. 115-140). Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, United Kingdom.
- Elmasry, M.H. & Chaudhri, V. (2010). The press as agent of cultural repair: a textual analysis of news coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings. In Coombs, T. & Holladay, S.J. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication* (pp. 141-158). Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, United Kingdom.
- Entman, R. (1993). Framing towards clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 51-58.
- Fombrun, C. J. & Gardberg, N. (2000). Who's Tops in Corporate Reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 3, 13-17.
- Fombrun, C. J. & Van Riel, C. B. M. (2004). *Fame & Fortune: How Successful Companies Build Winning Reputations*, Prentice-Hall Financial Times, New York.
- Galder, van, H. & Lengton, I. 19 January 2013. Beneluxtrein weer van stal; Fyra-fiasco alsmat groter. *De Telegraaf*.
- Groot, De, D. 21 January 2013. De Italianen: goedkoper en aan alle eisen werd voldaan; De snelle trein tussen Amsterdam en Brussel staat nu op een rangeerterrein, na een

opeenstapeling van mankementen; de problemen zullen nog maanden duren. NRC Handelsblad.

Governmental Publication (2004). Parliamentary Document 29283 number 8. Retrieved on 14 April 2013, from <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29283-8.html>

Hakkenberg, D. & Aa, van der, E. 2 February 2013. Oplossing falende Fyra geen stap dichterbij. Algemeen Dagblad: 12.

Hakkenberg, D. 19 January 2013. Directeur weet zich geen raad met de Fyra. Algemeen Dagblad: 3.

Hakkenberg, D. 2013, January 19. Belgen weren Fyra, NS zoekt alternatief. Algemeen Dagblad:1.

Hakkenberg, D. 19 January 2013. België schiet ons te hulp na Fyra-debacle. Algemeen Dagblad: 5.

Hakkenberg, D. 25 January 2013. Fyra is nu al een miljoenenstrop. Algemeen Dagblad: 13.

Hearit, K. M. (1994). Apologies and Public Relations Crisis at Chrysler, Toshiba, and Volvo. *Public Relations Review*, 20, 113-125.

Hearit, K. M. & Courtright, J. L. (2003). A social constructionist approach to crisis management: Allegations of sudden acceleration in the Audi 5000. *Communication Studies*, 54, 79-95. Retrieved on 30 January 2013, from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10510970309363267>

Heijne, S. 19 January 2013. De Fyra mag België niet in. De Volkskrant.

Heijne, S. 25 January 2013. NS: belofte maker dat Fyra snel weer rijdt onzinnig. De Volkskrant: 6.

- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 1277-1288.
- Kellerman, B. (2006). When should a leader apologize and when not? *Harvard Business Review*, 84, 73-81.
- Kitzinger, J. (2007). Framing and Framing Analysis. In Devereux, E. (Ed.), *Key Issues & Debates: Media Studies* (pp. 134-161). London: Sage Publications.
- LexisNexis (2013). LexisNexis, About Us, Overview. Retrieved on 1 February 2013, from <http://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/about-us/about-us.page>
- Maresh, M. & Williams, D. E. (2010). The Oil Industry Crisis Communication. In Coombs, T. & Holladay, S.J. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication* (pp. 285-300). Singapore: Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd.
- Muralidharan, S. Dillistone, K. & Shin, J. (2011). The Gulf Coast Oil Spill: Extending the theory of image restoration discourse in the realm of social media and beyond petroleum. *Public Relations Review*, 37, 226-232.
- Nieuwsblad (2013). Burgemeester gelooft niet dat Fyra ooit goed zal werken. Bart de Wever wil Benelux-trein terug. Retrieved on 18 April, 2013, from http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.aspx?articleid=DMF20130205_00457757
- NRC Handelsblad. 23 January 2013. "Over enkele dagen rijdt de Fyra weer"; Interview Alessio De Sio van fabrikant AnsaldoBreda".
- NRC Handelsblad. 28 January 2013. Belgen weigerden twee keer levering van Fyra.
- NRC Handelsblad. 24 January 2013. Topman NS haalt uit naar bouwer van Fyra, p.1.
- NS. (2013). Wat doen wij. NS in een oogopslag. Retrieved on 15 April 2013, from <http://www.ns.nl/over-ns/wat-doen-wij/ontdek-ns/ns-in-een-oogopslag.html>

- NS. (2013) Wie zijn wij. Koers & Visie. Retrieved on 15 April 2013, from <http://www.ns.nl/over-ns/wie-zijn-wij/koers/visie>
- NS Hispeed. (2013). NS stelt fabrikant Fyra aansprakelijk voor problemen. Press release, 19 January 2013. Retrieved on 5 March, 2013, from <http://www.nshispeed.nl/nl/pers/persberichten>
- NShispeed. (2013). Algemeen NS HiSpeed, Bouwwerken HSL Zuid. Retrieved on 18 April, 2013, from <http://www.nshispeed.nl/nl/algemeen-ns-hispeed/bouwwerken-hsl-zuid>
- Nu (2012). Oplage landelijke dagbladen daalt 4 procent. Retrieved on 1 February 2013, from <http://www.nu.nl/media/2844414/oplage-landelijke-dagbladen-daalt-4-procent.html>
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pearson, C. M. & Clair, J. A. (1998). Reframing Crisis Management. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23, 59-76.
- Rover (2013). Gemeenschappelijk standpunt TreinTramBus en Rover over treinverbinding met Nederland en België. Retrieved on 18 April, 2013, from http://www.rover.nl/images/gemeenschappelijk_standpunt_ttb-rover_treinverbinding_nl-be-def.pdf
- Schultz, F., Utz, S. & Göritz, A. (2011). Is the Medium the Message? Perceptions of and reactions to crisis communication via Twitter, blogs, and traditional media. *Public Relations Review*, 37, 20-27.
- Stake, R.E. (2005). Quantitative case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Telegraaf, De (2013). Hoorzitting over Fyra-fiasco begonnen. Retrieved on 30 January, 2013, from http://www.telegraaf.nl/feed/21250882/_Hoorzitting_over_Fyra_.html

Telegraaf, De. 21 January 2013.). DE MAAT IS VOL: NS-topman Meerstadt over spoorshandaal.

Telegraaf, De. 22 January 2013. Treindebacle schuld van NS.

Telegraaf, De. 25 January 2013. Ellende met Fyra gigantische kostenpost; Spoorwegen op zoek naar België treinen.

Telegraaf, De. 1 January 2013. Schamel alternatief voor falende Fyra; tweemaal per dag intercity Den Haag HS- Brussel:3.

Telegraaf, De. 29 January 2013. Directeur NS weigert vertrek; Meerstad: Ik loop niet weg van verantwoordelijkheden: 23.

Treinreiziger (2013). Geen Fyra tussen Amsterdam en Brussel door Winterweer. Retrieved on 13 April, 2013, from http://www.treinreiziger.nl/actueel/geen_fyra_tussen_amsterdam_en_brussel_door_winterweer-144911

Trouw. January 2013. Staatssecretaris eist oplossing van NS voor probleem Fyra. *Trouw*: 8.

Troost, N. 21 January 2013. Fyra hangt Belgen de keel uit. *De Volkskrant*.

Ulmer, R. R. (2001). Effective Crisis Management Through Established Stakeholder Relationships. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 14(2), 590-615.

Vecchio, P., Laubacher, R., Ndou, V., Passiante, G. (2011). Managing Corporate Reputation in the Blogosphere: The Case of Dell Computer. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 14, 133-144

Veil, S. R., Sellnow, T. L. & Petrum, E. L. (2012). Hoax and the Paradoxical Challenges of Restoring Legitimacy: Dominos' Response to its YouTube Crisis. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 26, 322-345.

Volkskrant (2012). Fyra is hogesnelheidstrein van de Aldi. Retrieved on 12 April 2013., from <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/3362240/2012/12/12/Fyra-is-hogesnelheidstrein-van-de-Aldi.dhtml>

Volkskrant, De. 22 January 2013. . België eist oplossing; Fyra.

Volkskrant, De. 22 January 2013. België stelt bouwer van Fyra's ultimatum; Spoorfiasco Technisch onheil hogesnelheidstrein: 2.

Waal, De. 26 January 2013. Wie zoekt, vindt altijd wel een foutje. NRC Handelsblad.

Zeedijk, H. 23 January 2013. Relaxte bouwer: Probleem zo opgelost. NRC Handelsblad: 9.

Zhang, Y. & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative Analysis of Content. University of Texas. Retrieved on 15 April, 2013, from http://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:RC5LTIfF7AcJ:scholar.google.com/+qualitative+analysis+of+content+by+yan+zhang+and+barbara+m.+wildemuth&hl=nl&as_sdt=0,5&as_vis=1