

“THE FOOD IS SO GOOD”: WHY CONSUMERS POSITIVELY
COPE WITH PRODUCT-HARM CRISIS

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WITH PRODUCT-HARM CRISIS**

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A candidate for the degree of

Master of Arts

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dedicated to everyone who has ever supported me and encouraged me.

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ABSTRACT

Using Chipotle E. coli outbreak as context for product-harm crisis, this study examines the nuanced nature of consumer thinking and why consumers adopt coping behaviors or perceptions toward the crisis. The lack of analysis of product-harm crisis communication from the consumer's perspective in existing research is the motivation of this study. Study results highlight the effectiveness of using social media to gain insights into consumer thinking and suggests that public relations practitioners need to consider not just the organization's perspective, but also the consumer's perspective, in developing crisis response strategies. Theoretically, the study contributes to motivations of consumers' coping behaviors or perceptions in product-harm crisis communication. The purpose of referring to a specific case is not a detailed application to "test" or "apply" any theory; rather, the goal is the conceptual identification of unexamined opportunities and challenges involved in existing research and potentially refining the related theory.

Keywords: Product-harm crisis; Foodborne illness crisis; Coping strategies; Crisis Communication; Consumer thinking; e-WOM

INTRODUCTION

1. Product-Harm Crisis Communication

1.1 Product-Harm Crises

Product-harm crises have been defined as discrete, well-publicized instances of defective or dangerous products (Simokos & Kurzbard, 1994). Contaminated Coca-Cola cans in Europe, General Motors' recall of defective cars in the U.S., melamine milk in China, and the 2011 Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia coli in Europe are examples of product-harm crises. Dawar and Pillutla (2000) point out that firms often institute expensive voluntary product recalls to minimize damage to their brands from product-harm crises. Rather than the monetary loss, the crucial part of the loss of the market capitalization is the damage to intangibles such as consumers' perceptions of the brand. Thus, product-harm crises can imperil long-standing favorable customer impressions about the brand (p. 205). They also suggest that the seriousness and frequency of product-harm crises contrast with the relative paucity of research in this area.

Food crises are a major issue of public concern. Symptoms that caused by eating food that contains undesirable bacteria, viruses, or parasites are referred as foodborne illness, or food poisoning (Henze & Pacheco, 2017). Foodborne illness crisis in this study is classified as a subcategory under the product-harm crisis because of its severe impacts on consumer's health and, often the time, a group of consumers may be involved in the crisis. Along with other health-related crises, foodborne illness crisis, as a subcategory of product-harm crisis, can be characterized by a combination of unexpectedness, high levels of threat, an aroused or stressed population, and media looking for breaking news stories (Gaspar et al., 2014).

Product-harm crisis management, as well as foodborne illness crisis management, have been studied by the scholars in the field of crisis communication. When examining the impact of corporate actions on brand equity, Dawar and Pillutla (2000) state that firm actions alone are unlikely to be sufficient to predict the effects of product-harm crises on brand equity and consumers' prior expectations are a key moderator. Siomkos and Kurzbard (1994) examine company's reputation, external effects (such as media coverage), and company's response to the product-harm crisis as three imperatives that lead to significant negative consequences. Companies should not underestimate the importance of properly handling product harm crises, as they have been documented to have negative effects on market share, sales of recalled products, stock prices, purchase intentions, and sales of other company products (Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994). Coombs and Laufer (2006) suggest that product harm crises and product recalls might threaten a company's reputation and product-harm crises present particular challenges in this age of mass media.

However, Gaspar et al (2014) suggest that assessing how people perceive threats and the context in which they occur is not enough to fully understand the processes that take place during a product-harm crisis; instead, they call for understandings of public's responses to the events they are presented with and their way of coping with them.

1.2 Lack of Analysis from Consumer's Perspective

As the potential for crises increases, so does the potential for adverse consequences. Organizations confront threats to its reputations so they must continue to improve their crisis management processes. Crisis management acts as a hedge against unfavorable outcomes of crisis.

To articulate the significance of effective crisis management, Coombs (2015) found the following:

Effective crisis management can protect lives, health, and the environment; reduce the time it takes to complete the crisis life cycle; prevent loss of sales; limit reputation damage; preclude the development of public policy issues (i.e. laws and regulations); and save money (p.16).

Crisis management has emerged as a hot topic in public relations literature. Although crisis management has been extensively studied over the past decades, most of the current studies focus on analyzing the effectiveness of organizations' crisis communication efforts. Public relations scholars and practitioners have been using organizational theories of crisis communication to study the effectiveness of organization's crisis communication strategies. Well-developed theories, such as the Contingency Theory of Accommodation, Situational Crisis Communication Theory, and Image Repair Theory, have been applied by many scholars to study organizations' crisis response strategies and image repair strategies. For example, existing case studies have identified crisis types, crisis response strategies, and how these two match with each other through the lens of Situational Crisis Communication Theory developed by Coombs (Ki & Nekmat, 2014; Fussell Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2010; Richards, Wilson, Boyle, & Mower, 2017).

A consumer is recognized as a critical stakeholder in crisis management. Consumer thinking and their perceptions toward crises have huge impacts on organizations' crisis communication strategies. The effectiveness of crisis communications strategies could be diminished if public relations practitioners fail to capture the essential problem that consumers concern about. For instance,

organizations tend to overapologize when consumers view redundant apologies as a form of self-denial (Norton & Warnick, 2006). The strategies could be a waste of time as a result of the neglecting analysis of consumer thinking. Specifically looking at the product-harm crisis, according to Dawar and Pillutla (2000), consumers have tendencies to interpret information in the context of prior expectations; consumers' prior expectations about the firm have substantial impacts on brand equity, and firm response alone is insufficient to predict the effects on brand equity in a product. Therefore, analyzing consumer thinking is critical to crisis management.

Some scholars shed lights on the consumer's perspective in crises, but most of them emphasized on analyzing consumer's emotions in crises. Instead of being organization-centered and situation-based, Jin designed a 2 x 2 between subjects experiment, which called for a cognitive appraisal approach from the publics' perspective to advance the theoretical framework of appraisal theories in public relations (2010). Also using quantitative research method, Kim and Cameron (2011) designed a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subject experiment to study people's emotional responses to a corporate crisis, particularly examining the anger and sadness that were elicited by the news. However, little research, especially qualitative research, has been done on analyzing consumer thinking, consumer perceptions in crises, and the rationales and motivations behind consumer perceptions in crises.

2. Chipotle E. Coli Outbreak

2.1 Triumph Upon Triumph – Chipotle as a Perfect Marketing Example

Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc. is an American restaurant chain that specializes in burritos and tacos. The company grew from a single storefront in Denver in 1993 to around 2,000 locations (Carr, 2016). The restaurant chain is known for its healthy

food, freshness, and non-genetically modified ingredients. The company's mission statement is "Food with Integrity," highlighting its efforts in using organic ingredients, its respects for the animals, the environment, and the farmers, and its commitment to cultivating a better world. Chipotle was named in 2008 to Sustainable Business' list of 20 World Top Sustainable Stocks (Rosenthal, 2008).

Besides the clear mission statement, Chipotle's integrated marketing efforts also contribute to the successfulness of Chipotle. For example, in 2013, Chipotle launched a campaign with the iconic "Scarecrow" character to symbolize food protection and to deliver the message of natural, organic, and non-GMOs ingredients. It showed supports to sustainable farming and fought against corporate food production. The campaign included an animated short film and a mobile game app. The campaign recorded 614 million PR impressions and generated 18.4 million conversations across 17 social platforms in its first month, alone (Allagui, & Breslow, 2016). The audience was impressed by the Scarecrow story and the consistent message that Chipotle sent out through various platforms from its official website, to Facebook, to Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and YouTube. After the launch of this campaign, Chipotle was ahead of Taco Bell at the top of the Social Brand Index for the first time (Allagui, & Breslow, 2016).

With a delicious product, a strong mission statement, and integrated marketing efforts, many customers saw Chipotle as a healthy alternative to greasy burgers and fries (Lewis, 2016). Chipotle has become one of the most successful restaurant chains in the U.S., attracting a cult following and receiving critical acclaim for its marketing, strategic communication, and corporate social responsibility efforts (Rosenthal, 2008; Wilford, 2016).

2.2 Chipotle E. Coli Outbreak

The story of Chipotle was one of triumph upon triumph until October 19, 2015. Chipotle has been plagued by E. coli O26 outbreaks that crushed its “healthy food” brand image and “food with integrity” brand reputation. As an outstanding example of restaurants with high-quality food and a great vision, Chipotle E. Coli outbreak was a remarkable case of foodborne illness and product-harm crisis because of its severity and pervasiveness.

On October 19, 2015, Jared Hines, a 21-year-old college senior, went to a Chipotle restaurant near downtown Seattle for dinner. He ordered a chicken burrito with white cilantro-lime rice, black and pinto beans, picode gallo, corn salsa, cheese, and lettuce (Carr, 2016). The delicious and fresh food knocked his 6-foot-3, 160-pound body down. He was vomiting and having a 101-degree fever. E. coli, known as O26, was found as the harmful toxin in his body, and Chipotle had been identified as the origin of it. Chipotle executives learned of the first E. coli cases from health authorities on October 30. Soon, dozens of people showing symptoms of E. coli poisoning were linked to eight restaurants in Washington and Oregon (Carr, 2016).

According to FDA (2016), as of January 27, 2016, the CDC reports a total of 55 people infected with the outbreak strain of STEC (Shiga toxin producing E. coli) O26 from a total of 11 states in the larger outbreak: California (3), Delaware (1), Illinois (1), Kentucky (1), Maryland (1), Minnesota (2), New York (1), Ohio (3), Oregon (13), Pennsylvania (2), and Washington (27). According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the illnesses started on dates ranging from October 19, 2015, to December 1, 2015 (2016). The majority of these cases were reported from Oregon and Washington during October 2015. CDC reported that ill people ranged in age from 1 year to 94, with a median age of 21. There have been 21

reported hospitalizations. Fifty-seven percent of sick people were female (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). There were no reports of the hemolytic uremic syndrome and no deaths.

In response to this product-harm crisis, Chipotle closed 43 restaurants in Washington and Oregon in early November 2015. During the week of December 7, 2015, an unrelated incident involving norovirus was reported at a Chipotle restaurant in Brighton, Massachusetts, which worsened the adverse financial and operating impacts of the earlier E. coli incident (2015 ANNUAL REPORT AND PROXY STATEMENT, 2016).

A second, smaller outbreak happened in December 2015, which infected five people from each state as follows: Kansas (1), North Dakota (1), and Oklahoma (3). Ill people aged from 6 to 25 years old. On February 1, 2016, the CDC announced that the outbreak appears to be over.

As a result of the E. coli outbreak, comparable restaurant sales of Chipotle declined 14.6% for the fourth quarter of 2015, including a decline of 30% for December, and the downturn worsened to over 36% in January 2016 (2015 ANNUAL REPORT AND PROXY STATEMENT, 2016). The outbreak not only shattered Chipotle's brand reputation and brand image and hurt its sales as well as its stock price, but also left a pertinacious image in consumer's mind that Chipotle had food poisoning crisis history. A poll in January 2016 showed that 15 percent of customers did not plan to eat at Chipotle anytime soon (Lewis, 2016).

However, not everyone was impacted by Chipotle's crisis or decided to take actions against it. Chipotle's overall sales for 2015 were up 9.6%, and its earnings-per-share increased 6.9% to \$15.10. By exploring the Chipotle E. coli crisis, the researcher found out many consumers showing supportive attitudes and behaviors

toward Chipotle during and after its E. coli crisis. The consumers were coping with the crisis.

The lack of analysis of product-harm crisis communication, even crisis communication in general, from the consumer's perspective in existing research is the motivation of this study. The study is hoping to find out the nuanced nature of consumer thinking. Unlike existing organizational-centered research that is studying on the effectiveness of organizations' crisis management strategies, this study provides a unique approach to exploring consumer thinking to illustrate the importance of developing crisis response strategies not only from the organization's perspective but also from the consumer's perspective.

Using Chipotle E. coli outbreak as context for product-harm crisis, this study examines the nuanced nature of consumer thinking and why consumers adopt coping behaviors or perceptions toward the crisis. This study highlights the effectiveness of using social media to gain insights into consumer thinking and suggests that public relation practitioners need to consider not just the organization's perspective, but also the consumer's perspective, in developing crisis response strategies. Theoretically, this study intends to contribute to understandings of the motivations of coping behaviors or perceptions in product-harm crisis communication. The purpose of referring to a specific case is not a detailed application to "test" or "apply" any theory; rather, the goal is the conceptual identification of unexamined opportunities and challenges involved in existing research and potentially refining the related theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Pertinacious Image

The rich literature in strategic communication and crisis communication field emphasizes the significance of having a positive brand image and a favorable brand reputation. Prior studies indicate that favorable brand reputation protects the firm during the crisis by creating a buffer or shield (Hess, 2008). Nevertheless, crisis happens. In some cases, the brand reputation is restorable by adopting appropriate crisis strategies and image repair strategies. But in some cases, the crisis would leave a pertinacious image of the brand in consumer's mind, which is extremely difficult to be repaired.

Many existing studies have argued that brand images are dynamic ever-changing processes and not static end-states (Martínez & Chernatony, 2004; Rindell & Strandvik, 2010). However, Horn (2010) believes that an image is not static and it exists on multiple communicative levels so he argues that a pertinacious image may exist (p.7). Horn defines the pertinacious image by using the definition from the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, which describes pertinacious image as an image that is perversely persistent is grounded in the quality of being “turned around from what is right or good” or “obstinate in opposing what is right, reasonable or accepted.” Horn (2010) states that pertinacious image does not necessarily supersede or replace a desirable image, but some sense of it does prevail. Horn also points out that a pertinacious image is not desired by those who hold and/or leverage the desirable image, yet it appears over and over again in various forms of public discourse (p.6). Horn (2010) uses celebrities, such as Kobe Bryant, as examples to illustrate that when one is saddled with a “pertinacious image” it means that he or she

is essentially “stuck” with some semblance of that negative image forever – even if the individual makes his or her best efforts to overcome that negative image through future good deeds (p.173).

With this said, Chipotle’s E. coli outbreak left a pertinacious image in consumer’s minds forever regardless whether their brand image could be fully repaired in the future. With such a pertinacious image as a context, it was interesting to find out that some consumers decided to cope with the crisis.

2. Coping Strategy as Consumer’s Crisis Response

When encountering into crises, the public does not passively receive information from the organization and react to the crisis response strategies that provided by the organizations. Instead, they innately enact their own set of strategies in coping with negative feelings stimulated by crises as the counterpart of organizational crisis response strategies. They also actively engage in a variety of coping strategies to help themselves make sense of the crisis, emotionally comfort themselves, or adjust their way of thinking to reduce the stress (Jin, 2009).

Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. In this Chipotle E. coli outbreak, the adopting of coping strategies is the efforts that consumers to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize the effects of the crisis on them. Consumers’ coping strategies could be expressed as supportive behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle in the forms of trusting Chipotle as an authentic brand, buying and eating at Chipotle, and any positive comments toward to Chipotle during the crisis.

A typical model of coping set forth by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggests that coping choices are dependent on both the appraisal of the threat (primary appraisal) and the appraisal of one's resources to address the threat (secondary appraisal). Two general coping strategies have been distinguished: problem-solving strategies are efforts to actively alleviate stress by manipulating stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984).

Coping strategies have been studied by some scholars in the crisis communication field to help public relations practitioners to understand better how to develop appropriate strategies in response to crises. Jin, Pang, and Cameron (2007) argue that an alternative emotion-based perspective should be integrated into the Coomb's Situational Crisis Communication Theory, which is an audience-centered approach. The integration would help public relation practitioners to understand how stakeholders are likely to experience, feel, and evaluate crisis situations as well as help them make optimal communicative choices. Jin (2010) calls for a cognitive appraisal approach from the publics' perspective. While examining the emotion-focused coping strategies, she argues that the public in crisis also have their appraisal process, which is related but different from how practitioners appraise the crisis from the organization's perspective (p.547).

In the crisis communication field, Jin, Pang, and Cameron (2007, 2008) applied the coping strategy framework, positing that publics appraise a crisis differently and enact different strategies for coping with the crisis-stimulated stress. They proposed two types of crisis coping strategies used by the public in crisis: cognitive coping, which is used to obtain information and make sense of the crisis

situation, and conative coping, which focuses on taking actions to deal with the crisis situation. They proposed an Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model, mapping out four primary negative emotions elicited by the public in crisis along two continua, the organization's high/low engagement in the crisis and primary public's cognitive/conative coping strategies.

These studies emphasized on the emotion-focused coping strategies that used by the public in crisis communication and also called for public relations practitioners to realize the importance of effective use of both emotional and rational approaches to convey the most appropriate organizational messages to the publics, which would help them better understand “the emotionally-segmented publics in crises and tailor their crisis responses to facilitate publics’ effective crisis coping” (Jin, 2009).

A study in 2013 has identified the ways of coping expressed during the 2011 European EHEC outbreak by conducting a quantitative content analysis of 11, 411 tweets (Gaspar et al., 2014). They suggested that individuals implemented coping strategies aiming at adaptation to threats in food crises and viewed microblogging channels, such as Twitter, as a valuable resource to access individual's expressions of coping.

Gaspar et al.'s study has very similar research context with this study. Both examining individual's coping strategies with a product-harm crisis/food crisis as the context, but using different research methods and with different objectives. In their study, Gaspar et al. “aimed at identifying (1) the ways of coping expressed during the crisis; and (2) how uncertainty about the contaminated product, expressed through hazard notifications, influenced the former” (p. 239). Using a qualitative research method, this study aimed at exploring the rationales and motivations of the coping behaviors or perceptions.

As coping strategies have been extensively studied by scholars, many psychologists have contributed in grouping coping mechanisms or strategies according to their manifestations and purposes. Current crisis communication scholars have examined the emotion-focused coping strategies and its functions in crisis communication. Unlike existing studies that focus on what coping strategies the consumers used and the ways of coping expressed, this research aimed at exploring why consumers decide to adopt coping behaviors or perceptions and the rationales and motivations of their coping behaviors or perceptions.

RQ: What, if any, are the dominant themes in consumer thinking that motivate their coping behaviors/perceptions toward Chipotle's E. coli crisis?

3. Behind Consumers' Coping Behaviors/Perceptions

3.1 Consumer-based Brand equity

Stephen King, the non-executive director at WPP Group London, said that a product is something that is made in a factory and a brand is something that is bought by a customer; a product can be copied by a competitor, but a brand is unique. Marketing scholars use the brand equity to measure the value of a brand, which is often conceptualized as a measure of consumers' behavior, or a measure of consumers' beliefs (Asker, 1991). Dawar and Pillutla (2000) suggest that brand equity is fragile because it is founded in consumers' beliefs and can be prone to large and sudden shifts outside of management's control because of consumers' exposure to new information, among other factors. A crisis may cause damages to the brand equity.

However, the brand equity may be perceived differently by the consumers and the corporations. Keller (1993) presents a conceptual model of brand equity from the

perspective of the individual consumer, which defines consumer-based brand equity as “the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (p. 45). In this study, I will focus on consumer-based brand equity. Keller (1993) suggests that customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory. Positive consumer-based brand equity could be traced by evaluating consumers’ expressed supportive attitudes, their likings, their pleasant experiences that are associated with the brand, and their perceived values of the brand.

Also, different consumers may perceive brand equity differently based on their experience. Dawar and Pillutla (2000) found that an identical response from different companies can have dramatically different effects on brand equity, depending on consumer’s prior expectations. For example, loyal customers may react differently to a product-harm crisis and may attend to different types of information in a product-harm crisis compared to potential customers.

By focusing on the intangible assets of a brand, Aaker (1991) developed a model of managing brand equity, which articulated that the brand equity is associated with variables such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations (trust, liking, experiences, etc.). Therefore, the consumer-based brand equity, in this case, will be the consumer’s perceptions of the brand that associate with his or her brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations.

Helm and Tolsdorf (2013), however, suggest that the occurrence of a crisis decreases consumer-based brand equity, such as consumer’s brand loyalty. They point out the joint effect of crises and perceived reputation on loyalty based on Dissonance

Theory, which exists when two cognitions are relevant, but the opposite of the one cognition follows from the other. They argue that negative impressions of a firm paired with prior loyalty to the firm may cause cognitive dissonance in customers (p. 146).

Therefore, the study is intended to find out how consumer-based brand equity plays a role in a product-harm crisis and if consumer-based brand equity is related to their coping behaviors or perceptions. Would a consumer be more likely to cope with the product-harm crisis because of their perceived brand equity? Or would a consumer be more likely to weaken his or her loyalty because of the occurrence of the crisis?

RQ1: How is consumer-based brand equity related to consumers' coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle's E. coli crisis?

3.2 Risk Perceptions

3.2.1 Perceived risk

The ability to sense and avoid harmful environmental conditions is essential for human beings, so human beings employ risk assessment to evaluate hazards. Slovic (1987) suggested that the majority of citizens rely on intuitive risk judgments, typically called "risk perceptions" and behave based on the perceived risk, which is "a subjective estimate of danger commonly used in studies of natural, environmental, and health risks."

Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) cited in Slovic (1987) assert that people, acting within social groups, downplay specific risks and emphasize others as a means of maintaining and controlling the group. Zhang et al. (2012) projected that perceived

risk is a crucial factor that affects the consumers' purchasing behavior and classified the risks into eight dimensions, such as health risk, social risk, privacy risk, after-sales service risk, economic risk, delivery risk and time risk.

Product-harm crisis is strongly associated with consumer's perceived risk, especially perceived health risk, which would consequently influence their purchasing behaviors. In a product-harm crisis, consumers tend to believe that inherent dangers of using products may impact negatively on their welfare (Simokos & Kurzbard, 1994). Simokos and Kurzbard also articulate that in a product-harm crisis which involves a high-reputation and well-known company, consumers will perceive the degree of danger associated with the defect as relatively small and future purchases of the company's other products will be the least negatively influenced (p.36).

Research on risk perception looks at how individuals assess the risky situations they encounter. For example, Mbaye and Kouabenan (2013) suggest that individuals exhibit a tendency to perceive events that are likely to affect a large number of people as being more severe than events affecting only a few people. In addition, Slovic (1997) found that coping strategies are influenced by two central determinants of risk judgments: certainty and situational controllability. Thus, risk perceptions are critical to consumers' coping behaviors.

3.2.2 Invulnerability

Elkind (1967) has proposed a widely cited theoretical basis for the feeling of invulnerability, which argues that particular groups of individuals, especially adolescents, come to feel a sense of "indestructibility" and construct a fable of immortality that predisposes them to think that harmful outcomes are more likely for others than themselves. Invulnerability has been identified as a risk factor that

exposes adolescents to greater hazards insofar as it impairs decision making in critical situations (Hill, Duggan, & Lapsley, 2012). Hill, Duggan, and Lapsley also found that psychological invulnerability might lead to a more adaptive psychological profile, which is positively related to both superior adjustment and mastery and coping.

However, invulnerability is not a “universal” feeling. For example, while exploring how a crisis impacts a campus community and how the community functions and manifests in crises, Xu (2017) found that all participants in his study expressed a feeling of vulnerability when campus crises happen. Therefore, the presence of invulnerability has impacts on risk perceptions and its resulted decisions related to whether to cope with the crisis.

RQ2: How are consumers’ risk perceptions related to their coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle’s E. coli crisis?

3.3 Demographic Characteristics

3.3.1 Gender and Geographical Proximity

The rich literature has suggested that men and women differ in the way they engage and cope with stressors (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2017). Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002) wrote in their study: “stereotypes of male coping behavior typically revolve around two sets of behaviors: men are believed to more likely to confront a problem head-on and also are assumed to be more likely to deny a problem exists.” On the other hand, they found women tend to exhibit a more emotional response to problems and concerns more about problems (p. 2).

Besides, gender has also been identified as a significant variable in crisis communication. In the Contingency Theory of Accommodation, Cameron, Pang, and

Jin (2007) include gender as an individual characteristic variable that affects an organization's response to the crisis. Laufer and Gillespie (2004) found that, after reading about the product-harm crisis, women felt more vulnerable to harm than men; in other words, women were more concerned that a similar accident could occur to them. This, in turn, caused women, more than men, to perceive the product-harm crisis to be more severe.

Geographic locale, as a demographic characteristic, has been considered in health-related and crisis-related studies. Rodgers and Chen identified geographics (city, state, county) as one of their coding categories. They used geographic locales to identify consumer profile and suggested that women who used the online discussion board were from not only diverse demographic backgrounds but also various geographic locales (2005). Additionally, Individuals tend to take crisis proximity into consideration when encountering crises. In the product-harm crisis, they would specifically access the geographical proximity of the crisis and evaluate how relevance and risky they are. Nohrstedt and Weible (2010) suggested that crises could be categorized based on its geographic proximity associated with the individual. The geographic proximity could be close or distant.

Therefore, it will be interesting to see how gender differences and geographical proximity related to consumers' coping behaviors/perceptions in the product-harm crisis.

RQ3: How are consumers' demographic characteristics, such as gender and geographical proximity, related to their coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle's E. coli crisis?

METHODOLOGY

According to McKee, textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. (McKee, 2003). This study conducted a textual analysis of selected Facebook comments about Chipotle E. coli outbreak. The method allows researchers to interpret texts and make sense of them under a specific context. Thus, the researcher conducted a textual analysis to find dominant themes of the motivations behind consumers' coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle's E. coli crisis.

1. E-WOM

Consumers sharing information about brands and expressing attitudes towards them is referred to as Word of mouth (WOM). WOM is regarded as having high trustworthiness because of the independence of the source of information. Effective WOM will lead to behavior or attitude changes.

As a specific type of WOM, e-WOM is characterized as “any positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Wang & Rodgers, 2011). Wang and Rodgers (2011) classified e-WOM into two categories based on its platforms. The first type of e-WOM is often generated in online feedback systems and consumer review websites. The second type of e-WOM occurs on electronic discussion boards, online communities, and online social networking sites. These online platforms facilitate communications among consumers with shared interests and experiences, and social networking sites are designed for

particular segments of the population to maintain and expand interpersonal relationships with friends and relatives (Wang & Rodgers, 2011, p.215).

DiStaso and McCorkindale (2012, p. 76) suggest: "The importance of social media to the field of public relations cannot be underscored, and is essential for the operations of many organizations." As one of the most prominent social networking sites, Facebook has more than two billion active users who can openly express their attitudes toward products to their friends, either by casually clicking a like or deliberately writing a comment on advertisements (Wu, Wang & Hsu, 2014).

Facebook comments can be viewed as a means of e-WOM, which is perceived as more reliable and trustworthy by the audience, especially those who are active social media users. More than a self-identification and self-expression tool, Facebook might be the ideal channel for spreading e-WOM since it enables a combination of WOM's and e-WOM's main benefits; reaching a larger audience while maintaining the trustworthiness of the social circle (Svensson, 2011).

By conducting a content analysis of tweets, Park, Rodgers, and Stemmler (2013) found that e-WOM from social networking site include concise and meaningful information that helps users to stay informed on health issues. However, King et al. (2014) argue "e-WOM takes place in a more complex computer-mediated context, whereas traditional WOM typically happens in a face-to-face/one-on-one context" (p.169). Therefore, the researcher has to acknowledge that using e-WOM from social networking site for consumer insights into health issues is complex and nuanced.

2. Data Collection

By using Facebook as a sampling frame, the researcher analyzed Facebook comments by searching keywords in Facebook, such as “Chipotle E. Coli,” “Chipotle E. Coli Outbreak,” “Chipotle Crisis,” and “Chipotle foodborne illness.” The outcome of using such keywords would be the mix of supportive and opposed comments. However, only comments showing consumers’ supportive coping behaviors or perceptions are subject matters. The researcher would manually select comments by choosing those Facebook comments that showing consumers’ coping behaviors or supportive attitudes toward Chipotle E. coli crisis. Their coping behaviors or supportive attitudes could be expressed as continuing eating at Chipotle, believing Chipotle is irresponsible for the E. coli crisis or showing positive attitudes toward Chipotle’s brand reputation during the break, etc.

The selected comments are made from the start of the E. coli outbreak that happened on October 19, 2015, to February 1, 2016, the end of the E. coli outbreak that announced by Centers for Disease Controls and Prevention. While selecting the data, the researcher did not limit the source of the data. The comments could be any comments that show consumers’ coping attitudes or behaviors toward Chipotle’s E. coli outbreak. They could be comments to Chipotle’s Facebook Page, comments to news articles that cover the E. coli outbreak or others. The diversity of sources would diminish the effects of news framing and the influence of news tones on Facebook commenters. The selected comments are not only limited to individual comments. Rather, the researcher might include the comprehensive dialog of a selected comment, which included others people’s comments to the selected comments, its likes, its reposts, etc. The reason for doing so is because one single comment may not make

sense when we view it by itself, but it will be surprisingly informative if we analyze it with its context.

The initial data extraction included all Facebook comments occurred during the time that show consumers' coping behaviors or supportive attitudes toward Chipotle E. coli crisis. There was no limited number of how many Facebook comments the researcher would collect. The initial data collection stopped when the researcher could see repetitive themes keeping occur.

In addition, the researcher organized and archived selected Facebook comments in sequential and chronological order because the content on social networking site changes constantly. A shift in consumer thinking may be identified. In order to increase the validity of the data, the researcher manually evaluated the accounts of those selected comments to ensure the comments are not sent by robots, frauds, or competitors by using four guidelines posted by Żmigrodzki (2016). He suggests to carefully evaluate the names, profile pictures, shared content, and mutual friends of certain Facebook account to lower the possibility of selecting data from fake accounts.

During the data collection process, the researcher collected not only Facebook comments themselves but also gender and geographical location data from users. This information might help the researcher identify any related details that fall under "demographic characteristics" theme. The gender and geographical location data would be gathered by accessing to users' Facebook profile pages. If the data is not accessible, the researcher will send out a request for the information directly to the user. If the user refuses to provide the information, the location of commenter section would be marked as "N/A."

3. Coding Process

Coding is by far the most common initial procedure in qualitative data analysis, representing the researcher's thoughts about how data might be interpreted, given a particular set of concerns (Seale, 2007, p.154). The thematic conceptual matrix that includes the fundamental concepts from the literature will be used to arrange data visually and sort ideas conceptually (Miles et al., 2014).

The constructed codebook in the appendix is the guideline that the researcher uses to explore the themes of rationales and motivations of consumers' coping behaviors or perceptions, which are clustered, aligned, and ordered to decipher patterns in order to find out themes. The researcher uses a deductive coding approach. In the deductive coding approach, coding of discussions is theory-driven, with coders judging the degree to which discussion topics or process fits with the theoretical framework proposed a priori (Ayala & Elder, 2011). By reviewing existing literature, this study identifies concepts and theories, including consumer-based brand equity, risk perceptions, and consumers' demographic characteristics, that are potentially related to why consumers positively cope with Chipotle's E. coli crisis. Therefore, the main themes that identified in the current codebook reflect these concepts and theories in the literature review.

The initial work for the coding process started by an attentive, careful, and thorough reading of any Facebook comments that generated by searching the keywords, without the guidance of the codebook. During the initial coding process, the current codebook has been updated because other main themes are identified. The updated codebook can be found in the appendix.

The first step of coding process is coding all of selected Facebook comments using the main themes. Then, the researcher read through and interpret all of the texts

assigned to each of the main themes and code them by using the themes and subthemes. The subthemes are explorative, which means that the researcher would use the subthemes in the constructed codebook but more subthemes might be added if they could be derived from the texts. Memos are written to describe the process of analysis.

The selected Facebook comments are collected and organized in an Excel file. For each selected comment, the research recorded its verbatim content, commenter's name, posted date, source, and likes. Gender and geographical location of each commenter have also been collected. All data is archived in sequential and chronological order.

4. Validity

The study's validity has been improved through the use of low inference descriptors. Low inference descriptors are defined as the use of description phrased very close to the participants' accounts and researchers' field notes. Verbatims are the commonly used type of low inference descriptors (Johnson, 1997). The researcher provides direct quotes from the Facebook comments while conducting the textual analysis. The direct quotes reflect consumer's thinking in a verbatim account rather than researchers' reconstructions of the general sense of what Facebook users said. The researcher's perspective to influence the data interpretation will be minimized by using low-inference descriptors.

5. Self-reflexivity

Reflexivity is an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the

research process. There is an assumption among researchers that bias or skewness in a research study is undesirable. As Malterud (2001) writes: "Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them" (p. 484). The researcher acknowledged the importance of self-reflexivity and the existence of bias in this study. The researcher is a graduate student who is studying strategic communication and emphasized in public relations.

As McKee said, there is no single correct interpretation of any text, and there isn't an infinite number of reasonable interpretations of any given text at a given time in a given place (McKee, 2003, p. 80). The researcher anticipates that there will be some challenges of conducting this study and analyzing the data. The researcher also acknowledges that there are other ways to interpret the texts, but the interpretations in this study are generated by the researcher under her best of understandings under the situated context.

FINDINGS

The researcher conducted a textual analysis of 103 Facebook comments, which show coping behaviors/perceptions toward Chipotle's E.coli crisis. Majority of these 103 Facebook comments are comments under 15 published Facebook posts by mainstream media. But some other comments are dialogues that one user responds to the other one commenting on this crisis. From the initial data extraction to the final coding stage, the researcher has found out that these Facebook comments fell under four dominant themes: consumer-based brand equity, risk perceptions, geographical proximity, and evasion of responsibility. These themes give us insights on why consumers positively cope with Chipotle's E. coli crisis.

RQ1: How is consumer-based brand equity related to consumers' coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle's E. coli crisis?

As mentioned in the literature review, the consumer-based brand equity refers to the consumer's perceptions of the brand that associate with his or her brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations. Positive consumer-based brand equity could be traced by evaluating consumers' expressed supportive attitudes, their likings, their favorable experiences that are associated with the brand, and their perceived values of the brand. In this case, consumer-based brand equity is one of the most obvious themes that motivate consumers to cope with Chipotle E. coli crisis supportively.

Text 1(a) Subtheme: perceived quality

I love Chipotle and will stand by them no matter what. Their business practices are amazing and what they stand for is amazing. Not all the food for restaurants like this is in their care, custody and control...

Written by Lynn Donovan, this text is a comment to NBCS news' coverage (Fox, 2015) on Chipotle E. coli outbreak that posted on October 31, 2015. In text 1(a), the commenter clearly shows supportive perceptions toward the crisis by highlighting her personal affection toward Chipotle as a brand. She also pointed out Chipotle's amazing business practices as the reason why she decided to cope with the crisis.

Text 1(b): Subtheme: perceived quality

I love this place. I think the only reason this is happening is because they are #1 because its the best healthy food you eat...Chipotle is my favorite place.

John Timothy Duggan commented this text to Good Morning America's (Shapiro, 2-15) Chipotle E. coli outbreak that posted on January 6, 2016. In text 1(b), Duggan suggests that the healthy food Chipotle provides is the reason why he love supports the brand.

In text 1(a) and (b), "business practices are amazing" refers to the good quality of service and "the best healthy food" refers to the excellent quality of food. These two texts infer that the perceived quality, one component of consumer-based brand equity, is the motivation of their coping perceptions.

Text 1 (c) (d) Subtheme: brand associations

I eat chipotle all the time. No issues at all.

Ate there today for the second time this week. I fully support

Chipotle!!!!

Text 1(c) is commented by Jim Jockenhoefer to NowThis' coverage (2015) on Chipotle E. coli outbreak that posted on November 2, 2015. This comment received 80 likes, which shows that many Facebook users have the same thoughts as the commenter. Written by Greg Lin, Text 1(d) is clear statement to support Chipotle in response to BuzzFeed News' coverage (2015) on the outbreak. Both texts present positive consumer's brand experience, which is one of the brand associations, to show why consumers cope with the crisis.

Text 1(e)(f)(g): Subtheme: perceived brand loyalty

I love chipotle, chipotle's my life!

I will never stop eating Chipotle. Never. Ever. #chipotleismylove

I supported and will continue to support Chipotle...

Text 1(e)(f)(g) demonstrate commenters love to Chipotle. The hashtag #chipotleismylove has been used by several users to create a topic or trend that invite more people to share their love to the brand. Comments fell under this subtheme suggests consumers' brand loyalty as the motivation of their coping behaviors and perceptions to the crisis.

There are two other proposed subthemes under this main theme: perceived brand awareness and perceived brand reputation. After conducting the textual analysis, not much content has been found out to be related to perceived brand awareness, which is the likelihood that consumers recognize the existence and availability of a company's product or service (2006). Regarding perceived brand reputation, limited content has found out to be directly related to it. Also, brand reputation refers to how a particular brand is viewed by others and a favorable brand reputation means consumers trust your company, and feel good about purchasing your

goods or services (2012). Because of the overlapping among perceived brand reputation, brand loyalty, and brand trust, the researcher decided to combine “perceived brand reputation” subtheme with “brand associations” subtheme.

According to the textual analysis, the researcher suggests that positive consumer-based brand equity, including perceived brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations, would motivate consumers to cope with Chipotle E. coli crisis supportively.

RQ2: How are consumers’ risk perceptions related to their coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle’s E. coli crisis?

Text 2(a)(b)(c)(d): Subtheme: perceived risk

Smoking leads to lung cancer. Drinking leads to liver failed yet people still do it. So..... I'm Gonna continue to eat Chipotle.

E.coli can happen literally anywhere you eat. Big deal. Shut up and move on everyone.

Who cares. Anybody remember the E. coli outbreak with jack in a box in the 90's? Nothing will come of this and they will move on.

Jack in the box once had a huge breakout and I have eaten there constantly still...even ate there when it was happening..you can pick up Listeria or E. Coli from produce at the local grocery store..everything has its risks when dealing with food.

According to Slovic (1987), the majority of citizens rely on intuitive risk judgments, typically called “risk perceptions” and behave based on the perceived risk, which is “a subjective estimate of danger commonly used in studies of natural, environmental, and health risks.” In text 2(a), similar to smoking and drinking, E. coli

also has a perceived risk of the unwilling outcome, so the commenter decided to support Chipotle and cope with the crisis. In text 2(b), commenters claim that E. coli are not something we should be afraid of.

Both text 2(c) and 2(d) use E. coli outbreak with Jack in the Box as a similar case to suggest why they cope with the crisis. The 1993 Jack in the Box E. coli outbreak occurred when 732 people were infected with the Escherichia coli O157: H7 bacterium originating from contaminated beef patties (2017). From the consumer's perspective, these two cases have some similarities: both are the top fast-food chain, and a considerable amount of people has been affected by outbreaks. Therefore, it is reasonable for commenters to apply their experience in Jack in the Box case to this case. Based on his experience and understanding of the other case, Steven Fleming, who wrote text 2 (c), and Kyle Reavis, who wrote text 2 (d), perceived a rather low risk in the Chipotle's E. coli outbreak, which motivated them to cope with the crisis.

Text 2 (e)(f)(g): Subtheme: Invulnerability

Not gonna live my life in fear I'm still gonna eat chipotle.

Still eating Chipotle. I too like to live dangerously.

Yeah, it's like Russian roulette now. It makes it more exciting cause there is a risk. No downsides either way.

Invulnerability argues that certain group of individuals, especially adolescents, come to feel a sense of “indestructibility” and construct a fable of immortality that predisposes them to think that harmful outcomes are more likely for others than themselves (Elkind, 1967). Unlike commenters under the “perceived risk” theme who cope with the crisis because of the low perceived risk, commenters in text 2 (e), (f), and (g) have been aware of the risk of crisis when they said “fear” and “live

dangerously.” They, however, refused to take that perceived risks. They believed the risk might be a challenge for them and their inherent invulnerability would be able to help them overcome such challenge. Therefore, the researcher suggests that invulnerability would motivate consumers to cope with Chipotle E. coli crisis supportively.

RQ3: How are consumers’ demographic characteristics, such as gender and geographical proximity, related to their coping behaviors or perceptions toward Chipotle’s E. coli crisis?

According to the literature review, the rich literature has suggested that men and women differ in the way they engage and cope with stressors. Gender has also been identified as an essential variable in crisis communication. Thus, the researcher collected the gender information of 103 commenters by access to their Facebook profile page. Among them, 56 commenters are female and 47 are male, which is likely to infer that more women decided to cope with the crisis in this case.

However, previous research has found women felt more vulnerable to harm than men after reading about the product-harm crisis and perceive the product-harm crisis to be more severe (Laufer and Gillespie, 2004). Because of the uniqueness of Chipotle’s E. coli outbreak case, the researcher is not going to generally say that the previous finding is wrong and men will feel more vulnerable to harm than women in product-harm crisis. Nevertheless, this case suggests that gender is a rather complicated factor that is worth to explore in future research. The researcher would opt it out in this study because it needs further exploration to validate the statement that men will feel more vulnerable to harm than women in product-harm crisis.

Text 3 (a)(b)(c)(d): Subtheme: geographical proximity

Melissa Lane McLaughlin (California): I'm in San Diego & have never gotten sick from eating there. One of my favorite places.

Melissa Wolf (Arizona): Well, not this apparently. Knowing this, I'd still go. I'm in northern Arizona... I'm in love with Chipotle!

Hyūga Morgan (Florida): Your experiences are not universal... You don't even live in the affected area...

Ben St. George (Arizona): People need to know we get our food products locally, which means we get them within 350 miles away.

Their area, where their farms are, could be the ones affected, so people shouldn't worry too much about their Chipotle becoming screwed up with e. coli.

Geographic locale, as a demographic characteristic, has been considered in health-related and crisis-related studies. In the product-harm crisis, the geographical proximity of the crisis is a critical variable that the public uses to evaluate how relevance and risky they are. In text 3(a) and (b), the commenter explicitly identified their geographical locations to persuade that the crisis has effects only in the specific area. They were not worried about it because of the geographic proximity of the crisis.

In text 3(c) and (d), both commenters did not identify their locations explicitly, but they pointed out why they positively cope with the outbreak. Morgan pointed out that one may not live in the affected area, so there is no need to worry about it. George provided a more comprehensive explanation of why geographical proximity is a critical factor in this case by illustrating that Chipotle use local products that were produced within 350 miles area.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that geographical proximity is a significant factor in this case. If consumers consider themselves located in a geographic locale with less relevance to the crisis, they would like to positively cope with Chipotle E. coli crisis and support the brand.

Other Themes

As mentioned in the methodology section, the researcher used a deductive coding approach. In the deductive coding approach, coding of discussions is theory-driven. While conducting the initial data extraction, the researcher identified many comments that could not be coded with existing code schemes. And similar comments have appeared for many times. Therefore, the researcher updated the codebook to reflect this newly-occurred themes.

1. “Not their fault”

Text 4.1 (a)(b)(c)

Possibly the ground beef which is known to contain fecal material but not the fault of Chipotle, rather the processing plant.

The problem isn't with Chipotle anyways, it's with their meat source distributors.

It was obviously a supplier from another company NOT chipotle itself...

The researcher recognized that many commenters who chose to support Chipotle and cope with the crisis claiming that the outbreak is not Chipotle's fault. For example, in text 4.1(a)(b)(c), commenters speculated that Chipotle's food suppliers should take responsibility for this crisis. Other commenters, however, argue

that Chipotle did not monitor the quality of their food, so they are responsible for the crisis even though the food is from suppliers.

No matter if Chipotle should take full responsibility, the researcher found that those commenters who believed it is “not their fault” would positively cope with the crisis and support the brand.

2. *Corporate/Industry Sabotage*

While collecting data, the researcher found some interesting comments that many commenters considered the outbreak as a corporate or industry sabotage that competitors intentionally did to Chipotle. The broad definition of industrial sabotage is rule-breaking activities that take the form of conscious action or inaction directed towards the mutilation or destruction of the work environment, which includes the machinery of production and the commodity itself (Taylor, L. and Walton, P., 1971).

Text 4.2(a)(b)(c)(d)

Corporation greed. Corporations are jealous because this company is doing so well and have been for a long time they feed people good food good wholesome food. Corporations that have millions of dollars can sabotage another company or other companies to make them go out of business... it's all about the money if you have the money you can sabotage anybody.

Sounds to me like someone in the restaurant business is trying to sabotage them. They use organic produce and healthy food. That is a fast food chain's nightmare!

Are they investigating Dole now? Since someone got poisoned and died eating their bagged salad? Or do we just investigate the companies who refuse to serve GMOs?

Perhaps McDonald's has sabotaged the chain....

In text 4.2(a)(b)(c)(d), commenters take a stance on Chipotle's side, arguing that other corporations are jealous. They might sabotage Chipotle intentionally to damage its reputation and make it go out of business eventually. Even though there is no evidence at all, a few commenters suggest that fast food restaurants, such as McDonald's and Taco Bell, are manipulators of this crisis.

Other than corporate sabotage, industrial sabotage is another possibility that pointed out by the commenters arguing that the outbreak is designed as industrial sabotage to attack Chipotle's decision to serve non-GMOs.

Neither the collected data nor this research itself provides evidence to support their arguments. This theme represents some commenters' thoughts on Chipotle's E. coli crisis. Because they have doubts about if the crisis has behind-scene manipulators and if Chipotle is responsibility for the outbreak, commenters decide to cope with the crisis positively.

3. Inappropriate Media Coverage

Text 4.3 (a)(b)

But McDonalds doesn't thrust themselves into the media spotlight when there is an ecoli outbreak...I wonder why chipotle did that.

Have you seen how many Chipotle restaurants are going down recently? E- coli, norovirus, etc. Just that one restaurant chain has been in the news a lot lately.

Some comments believe that Chipotle's E. coli outbreak has received an inappropriate amount of media coverage, which draws considerable attention from the public. Attention, or increased mental effort, has long been recognized as an important variable in the processing of mass communication messages (Chaffee, S. H. and Schleuder, J., 1986). In addition, according to Reiger and Anders (2016), media coverage and attention paid to food scandals can play a vital role in the disclosure of an event and subsequently in affecting consumers' behavioral response that often can lead to severe economic losses in the marketplace.

Therefore, because of the significant influence that media coverage has on the product-harm crisis, it is reasonable that commenters believed the amount of media coverage that Chipotle's E. coli outbreak received deteriorated the situation, which motivates them to cope with the crisis positively.

The researcher has found three new types of comments that would motivate consumers to cope with Chipotle's E. coli crisis: "not their fault," corporate/industrial sabotage, and the inappropriate media coverage. These three types of comments all have one similar goal, which is suggesting that Chipotle should not take the full responsibility for this crisis.

According to Image Repair Theory (2014), Benoit argues that image repair strategies are organized into five broad categories: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. In this case, the above three types of comments could be categorized under the theme "evasion of responsibility," which means that those who are unable to deny performing the act in question may be able to evade or reduce their apparent responsibility for it. Commenters spontaneously behave from a public relations standpoint to protect or

repair the Chipotle's reputation. Their comments can be viewed as a means of e-WOMs that potentially lead to others' behavior or attitude changes. Here again, rather than deny that the offensive act occurred, commenters attempt to provide information that may decrease Chipotle's apparent responsibility for the offensive act, in this case, the crisis.

RQ: What, if any, are the dominant themes in consumer thinking that motivate their coping behaviors/perceptions toward Chipotle's E. coli crisis?

In conclusion, the research question asked about why consumers adopt coping behaviors or perceptions toward the crisis. Through the analysis of consumer thinking, the researcher found out that there are repetitive contents among the selected Facebook comments. Thus, the code schemes are used to group these repetitive contents and therefore find out the dominant themes in consumer thinking. So, the answer to this research to this research question is YES. The researcher has found out that these Facebook comments fell under four dominant themes: consumer-based brand equity, risk perceptions, geographical proximity, and evasion of responsibility. These themes give us insights on why consumers cope with Chipotle's E. coli crisis positively.

Data 1-1

Name	Comment	Date	Soul	Likes	Location	Gender	Theme
Mike T O'Hanian	Still a lot better than taco hell I eat at Chipotle at least once a week and I've never been sick... I know Chipotle support local produce... Maybe that is the source??	31-Oct-15	NBC News	58	Washington	M	4
Michelle Arant		31-Oct-15	NBC News	38	N/A	F	1
Melissa Lane McLaughlin	I'm in San Diego & have never gotten sick from eating there. One of my favorite places.	31-Oct-15	NBC News	20	California	F	3
Joni Anderson	Been eating at Chipotle for years. Love it and have never gotten sick.	31-Oct-15	NBC News	6	N/A	F	1
Teresa Muller	love Chipotle. It's our favorite eating place; reasonable, great taste and good healthy food choices...E Coli has happened to other places to eat as well..it's related to something that happened to the food brought in that has nothing to do with organic, gmo's or other natural practices.	31-Oct-15	NBC News	0	California	F	1
Peter H. Lapchak	possibly the ground beef which is known to contain fecal material but not the fault of Chipotle, rather the processing plant.	31-Oct-15	NBC News	14	Massachusetts	M	4
Lynn Donovan	I love Chipotle and will stand by them no matter what. Their business practices are amazing and what they stand for is amazing. Not all the food for restaurants like this is in their care, custody and control...	31-Oct-15	NBC News	3	N/A	F	1
Cathy Geibel	My mind goes to sabotage.... think about it.... Monsanto et al are in a war to control our food and here is an in their face restaurant chain that is non GMO....	31-Oct-15	NBC News	7	Oregon	F	4
Samuel Kenyatta	Sounds like some anti Chipotle propoganda from the McDonald's camp.	31-Oct-15	NBC News	4	N/A	M	4
Lexi Whittemore	Don't care, still getting a \$3 burrito today.	31-Oct-15	Fox 12 Oregon	33	Oregon	F	2
Tony Cerritos	I will still eat there. All restaurants have issues now and again.	31-Oct-15	Fox 12 Oregon	7	Oregon	M	2
Lori Brawner-Ilund	This has to come from their supplier with so many restaurants effected	31-Oct-15	Fox 12 Oregon	8	Oregon	F	4
Jenni Simonis	I've heard from multiple places it was contaminated lettuce, so yup it would be the supplier if that's the case.	31-Oct-15	Fox 12 Oregon	1	Oregon	F	4
Cheyly Lynn Silvestre	Probably not even their fault. It sounds like their products they got were contaminated.	31-Oct-15	Fox 12 Oregon	6	Oregon	F	4

Data 1-2

Name	Comment	Date	Soul	Likes	Locatit	Genre	Theme
Aaron Redus	Actually, only 6 stores have reported a possible link to E.Coli... Not 43. Chipotle is closing all 43 regional stores in an over abundance of caution. This is something to be applauded, not twisted into slander.	1-Nov-15	Uproxx	15	Virginia	M	4
Jai Garnett	It was found in a few locations - the other stores closed voluntarily. - the other locations are supporting the location(s) where it was found.	1-Nov-15	Uproxx	40	N/A	F	4
Coco Bear	As long as the ecoli is gluten free I'm ok with it!	1-Nov-15	Uproxx	237	Texas	F	1
Johnny Jenkins	They took a stand against GMO and suddenly.....E.coli.....corporate sabotage?	1-Nov-15	Uproxx	28	Florida	M	4
William Maxim	Every restaurant has had an issue like this at least once I personally love Chipotle so I hope this doesn't hurt them too bad	1-Nov-15	Uproxx	6	Massachusetts	M	1&2
Brandon Maldonado	All this talk about chipotle is making me crave chipotle.	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	45	Oregon	M	2
Paige Liller	I had the same thought lol. My lunch tomorrow.	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	0	Pennsylvania	F	2
Meghan Klady	I love chipotle, chipotle's my life!	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	3	N/A	F	1
Tersa Aguirre-Rivera	Nothing. Chipotle is life	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	1	Texas	F	1
Amy Finn	yeah, nothing, nothing could stop me from eating atchipotle.	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	2	New Mexico	F	1
Jordan Benjamin	I will never stop eating Chipotle. Never. Ever. #chipotleismylove	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	3	N/A	M	1
Greg Lin	Ate there today for the second time this week. I fully support Chipotle!!!!	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	9	Guam	M	1
Melissa Wolf	Well, not this apparently. Knowing this, I'd still go. I'm in northern Arizona... I'm in love with Chipotle!	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	2	Arizona	F	1&3
Nicole Songe	I had lunch at Chipotle today...was delicious. Probably have it again later this week too. I love that stuff!	2-Nov-15	BuzzFeed News	23	N/A	F	1
Jonanthan Gotay	Chipotle could give me E.coli, and I'd still eat there so shut the **** up	2-Nov-15	NowThis	1.1K	Florida	M	1
Katherine Camacho	The problem isn't with Chipotle anyways, it's with their meat source distributors. lol	2-Nov-15	NowThis	4	N/A	F	4
Jim Jockenhofer	I eat chipotle all the time. No issues at all.	2-Nov-15	NowThis	80	N/A	M	1
Jim Jockenhofer	I would eat chipotle rather than risk eating at McDonalds...	2-Nov-15	NowThis	5	N/A	M	4
Hyuga Morgan	Your experiences are not universal...You don't even live in the affected area...	2-Nov-15	NowThis	2	Florida	F	3

Data 1-3

Name	Comment	Date	Soul	Likes	Locati	Gen	Theme
Sun Cheon	This WON'T stop me from going to chipotle.	2-Nov-15	NowThis	182	Texas	M	1
VZ Arlene	#chipotleismylife	2-Nov-15	NowThis	4	Florida	F	1
Angelo Catarroja	Yeah, it's like Russian roulette now. It makes it more exciting cause there is a risk. No downsides either way. People need to know we get our food products locally, which means we get them within 350 miles away. Their area, where their farms are, could be the ones affected, so people shouldn't worry too much about their Chipotle becoming screwed up with e. coli	2-Nov-15	NowThis	4	N/A	M	2
Ben St. George	Yes. My chipotle is in Indiana. I eat it everyday I work. I'm even there when I'm not working. You all will be fine.	2-Nov-15	NowThis	61	Arizona	M	3
Jordan Null	Chipotle is lifeeeee	2-Nov-15	NowThis	3	Indiana	F	3
Momoh KamaraThe E-Coli probably came from a food distributor...	2-Nov-15	NowThis	11	New York	M	1
Arthur Whitten	E. Coli is still better than McDonalds..	2-Nov-15	NowThis	6	Florida	M	4
Rami Tannus	What's funny about E. Coli is that we all have E. Coliin our system every day!	2-Nov-15	NowThis	8	Kentucky	F	4
Chris Burk	Chipotle will figure out the source of the contaminated meat and cut ties, nothing to fear! It still tastes delicious lol!	2-Nov-15	NowThis	12	N/A	M	4
Katelyn T Arzon	Isn't there a giant recall on beef right now due to E coli? Maybe that's the source? Not necessarily Chipotleitself.	2-Nov-15	NowThis	2	Ohio	F	1&2
Amanda Crawford	we have to go to the nearest chipotle and get some food now before they close down	2-Nov-15	NowThis	2	New York	F	4
Kimberly Thi Le	Idc e.coli ain't stopping me. Lmfao need one last burrito bowl. Lmfao	2-Nov-15	NowThis	1	N/A	F	2
Kimberly Thi Le	E. coli won't stop me from eating there	2-Nov-15	NowThis	0	N/A	F	2
Kate Faherty	Smoking leads to lung cancer. Drinking leads to liver failed yet people still do it. So..... I'm Gonna continue to eat Chipotle	2-Nov-15	NowThis	1	N/A	F	1
Joseph Geovanni Ochoa	So these assholes found a way to shut down a perfectly good place to eat .. Damn McDonald's must be doing bad if they resort to this shit.	2-Nov-15	NowThis	75	Minnesota	M	2
Gieladin Dollci		2-Nov-15	NowThis	56	N/A	M	1&4

Data 1-4

Name	Comment	Date	Soul	Likes	Locatit	Genre	Theme
John Sanders	Just had a burrito for dinner, I'll take my chances.	2-Nov-15	NowThis	2	New Jersey	M	2
Fernando Mez	My Unconditional love for Chipotle it's beyond bad meat in few restaurants. Can't be any worse than soda or artificial sugars ,cigarettes or alcohol . Chipotle offers the best quality meats, with absolutely 0 hormones and no antibiotics, yes, it's extremely unfortunate this had to happen but it's much better than that horrible non organic stuff they're selling you in the super markets	2-Nov-15	NowThis	3	Pennsylvania	M	1&2
Jaime Gastelum	Reading this, while I'm in line at Chipotle... Still don't care...	2-Nov-15	NowThis	2	Neveda	M	1
Jennifer McGlone Reed	I just had a chicken bowl.. Delish! I may be in the bathroom for the rest of the day, but its worth it.	3-Nov-15	NBC News	1	Minnesota	F	1
jer-matthen	Chipotle is life.	20-Nov-15	CNN	2	N/A	M	1
Devin Harrington	I love Chipotle... very healthy meal. I don't believe they are responsible for the outbreak. I will remain a customer...Chipotle took customers away from fast food chains. I can see this being sabotaged by a jealous competitor, not neglect on the part of Chipotle	20-Nov-15	CNN	7	N/A	M	2
Rosa Evangelista	I'll eat there everyday for breakfast lunch and dinner even e. Coli can't stop me.	20-Nov-15	CNN	8	pennsylvania	F	1&4
Russell Burns	Still a safer place to eat than Chic-fil-A,...	20-Nov-15	CNN	224	N/A	m	1
Jerome Hendon	I'd still eat there regardless	20-Nov-15	Reuters	1	Michigan	M	4
Ken Murray	As long as the e. Coli is organic	20-Nov-15	Reuters	0	N/A	M	1
Thaddius Joshua	And GMO free	20-Nov-15	CNN	177	Utah	M	1&4
Donald Paul Vincent	Sounds like sabotage to me	20-Nov-15	CNN	6	Wyoming	M	1&4
Victor Hugo Russo	Who cares. Anybody remember the E. coli outbreak with jack in a box in the 90's? Nothing will come of this and they will move on.	20-Nov-15	CNN	30	California	M	4
Steven Fleming	CONSPIRACY against Chipotle and their use of non GMOs.	20-Nov-15	CNN	6	N/A	M	2
Aléjandro Colón	Still would eat at Chipotle before I ate at McDonalds or jack in the box or any of those ones.. I don't eat fast food	20-Nov-15	CNN	0	New York	M	4
Michelle Lauer		20-Nov-15	CBS	19	Washington	F	4

Data 1-5

Name	Comment	Date	Soul	Likes	Locati	Genre	Theme
Eddie Redice	didnt happen until after the restrurant said they werent using gmos in their food anymore	20-Nov-15	CBS	6	Italy	M	4
Anthony Angel	Not gonna live my life in fear I'm still gonna eat chipotle	21-Nov-15	Seventeen	0	California	M	2
Christina McVey	I've eaten there twice since they re opened in WA state and I'm fine. Maybe the other states should check their suppliers, it's not all chipotles fault. Relax people.	21-Nov-15	Seventeen	1	Washington	F	3
Mya Hawkins	it was obviously a supplier from another company NOT chipotle itself...	21-Nov-15	Seventeen	0	California	F	4
Mario Barahona	Don't care, is worth the risk	21-Nov-15	Seventeen	33	N/A	M	2
Christine Soper	Are at chipotle yesterday and am fine!	8-Dec-15	IBC Nightly News	3	Maryland	F	1
Carole Trifero	...chipotle owner is a standup guy, trying to give people healthy fresh food.	8-Dec-15	IBC Nightly News	1	N/A	F	1
Shannon Hannah	Chipotle is being sabotaged.	8-Dec-15	IBC Nightly News	15	N/A	M	4
Janice Hopp Raziano	Love this place. Never had a problem in Georgia	8-Dec-15	IBC Nightly News	1	Georgia	F	1&3
Angela Alfred	Perhaps McDonald's has sabotaged the chain....	9-Dec-15	Fortune	6	Texas	F	4
MT MT	A sabotage by the GMO industry for being a trend-setter in going natural with their products	9-Dec-15	Fortune	2	N/A	N/A	4
Jackie Rivera	It would seem that someone is doing this on purpose.	22-Dec-15	ABC News	96	New Mexico	M	4
Wanda Cummings Karl	I have had that feeling all along, like someone is sabotaging the business.	22-Dec-15	ABC News	21	N/A	F	4
LeAnna Conradt	I think this is a deliberate sabotage of a wonderful company. Corporate terrorism.	22-Dec-15	ABC News	83	N/A	F	4
Jenny Macaluso	Corporation greed. Corporations are jealous because this company is doing so well and have been for a long time they feed people good food wholesome food.						
Judy Benoit Natividad	Corporations that have millions of dollars can sabotage another company or other companies to make them go out of business. That being said if you have been eating at this restaurant for years and years and have never been sick I would suggest keep eating there and don't believe the hype. You cannot believe everything that you read on the news most everything is b***** to begin with it's all about the money if you have the money you can sabotage anybody	22-Dec-15	ABC News	14	N/A	F	4
	This sounds like sabotage, there's probably more to this than bad food handling practices.	6-Jan-16	Morning America	64	Texas	F	4

Data 1-6

Name	Comment	Date	Soul	Likes	Locati	Gen	Theme
Melanie Collins Pennock	Sounds to me like someone in the restaurant business is trying to sabotage them. They use organic produce and healthy food. That is a fast food chain's nightmare!	6-Jan-16	Morning America	37	California	F	4
John Timothy Duggan	I love this place. I think the only reason this is happening is because they are #1 because its the best healthy food you eat...Chipotle is my favorite place. Have you seen how many Chipotle restaurants are going down recently? E- coli, norovirus, etc. Just that one restaurant chain has been in the news a lot lately.	6-Jan-16	Morning America	1	Maryland	M	1
Renee Hatchew	I've been there several times since this whole "break out" and guess what...nothing has happened I think it's all a hoax against Chipotle	6-Jan-16	Morning America	0	N/A	F	4
Kelsey Foster	I think since Chipotle went gmo free someone is trying to sabatoge them. I love my local Chipotle	15-Jan-16	AboveAverage	68	N/A	M	4
Christine G Conover	Jack in the box once had a huge breakout and I have eaten there constantly still...even ate there when it was happening..you can pick up Listeria or E. Coli from produce at the local grocery store..everything has it's risks when dealing with food.	15-Jan-16	AboveAverage	15	Texas	F	4
Chris Barton	Still eating Chipotle. I too like to live dangerously.	16-Jan-16	AboveAverage	4	Washington	M	2
Mike Trovillo	Are they investigating Dole now? Since someone got poisoned and died eating their bagged salad? Or do we just investigate the companies who refuse to serve GMOs?	17-Jan-16	AboveAverage	23	N/A	M	2
Karen Kapnick	Yeah and it didn't stop me from eating there. Not at all, not even once. Can't hold me back from my Barbacoa Bowls. Go Chipotle!	1-Feb-16	CNBC	994	New York	F	4
Catherine Wilson-Corey	This is a first I think...C DC couldn't identify the source? I still feel it was sabotage. Ate there Saturday. ..loved it. I trust Chipotle. Their food is probably the safest around.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	555	Minnesota	F	1
Stacey Romero	I've personally known more people to get violently ill from McDonald's and picnics than Chipotle!!	1-Feb-16	CNBC	223	N/A	F	4
Laura Garcia Lounders	They make a fantastic product!!	1-Feb-16	CNBC	68	N/A	F	1&4

Data 1-7

Name	Comment	Date	Sou	Likes	Locati	Gen	Theme
Genette Johnson	I applaud Chipotle for taking the steps to correct any issues. Do you know how many issues are happening at other fast food chains yet their line is wrapped around a building and not in the news. If they really cared about your health McDonald's and taco Hell and many others will be in the news all day every day. I will eat Chipotle Mexican Grill any day and take my chances vs. Moe's or any other fast food.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	44	N/A	F	1
Rebecca JB	Did anyone see that article that the e.coli was a conspiracy and that the GMO supporters contaminated Chipotle's food supply because they vowed to not use GMO food? Not sure if it has any validity but it's definitely a scary thought!	1-Feb-16	CNBC	25	N/A	F	4
Brittany Hooper	i continued to go despite my risk of receiving e. coli.....	1-Feb-16	CNBC	2	New Jersey	F	2
Philomel Woodsley	I've eaten there once a week for a couple years! Never been sick.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	2	N/A	F	1
Sulesky Sareha	But McDonalds doesn't thrust themselves into the media spotlight when there is an ecoli outbreak...i wonder why chipotle did that.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	0	Oregon	F	4
Kyle Reavis	e.Coli can happen literally anywhere you eat. Big deal. Shut up and move on everyone.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	3	Florida	M	2
Charlie Snuffy	"outbreak". I've been eating there this whole time. Chances of getting E.coli from chipotle are pretty slim. People just have irrational fears.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	0	Ohio	M	1&2
Kerry Rush	I eat there about once a week...no problems.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	20	N/A	F	1
Jayne Bear	I have worked at chipotle and have been working in restaurants for 27 years. Never have I found a company that is so clean and has the highest quality food and safe food practices. Very surprised but glad everyone is still going to Chipotle.	1-Feb-16	CNBC	35	Georgia	M	1
Claudia Rugamas	I supported and will continue to support Chipotle...	1-Feb-16	CNBC	202	California	F	1
Amber Wycuff	Chipotle is love. Chipotle is life!	1-Feb-16	CNBC	2	California	F	

DISCUSSION

Using Chipotle E. coli outbreak as context for product-harm crisis, this study examines the nuanced nature of consumer thinking and why consumers adopt coping behaviors or perceptions toward the crisis. To do so, a textual analysis of 103 Facebook comments has been conducted. The researcher has found out that the selected Facebook comments could be categorized into four dominant themes: consumer-based brand equity, risk perceptions, geographical proximity, and evasion of responsibility. These themes give us insights on why consumers cope with Chipotle's E. coli crisis positively.

This study has several points of uniqueness. First of all, majority crisis management research and case studies that focus on analyzing the effectiveness of organizations' crisis communication efforts. For example, Xuan's case study (2016) examines the crisis communication of Chipotle E. coli outbreak to evaluate how Chipotle utilize discourse of renewal in crisis communication during its recovering process. Both Xuan's case study and this study examines Chipotle's E. coli outbreak. However, the Xuan's case study used some crisis communication theories, such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory by Coombs, to study the effectiveness of organization's crisis communication strategies. This study focuses on consumer's perspective, analyzing consumer thinking, consumer perceptions in crises, and the rationales and motivations behind their perceptions in crises.

Because traditional approaches to crisis communication are organizational-centered, public relation professionals tend to view a threat to the organization. Thus, the discourse of the crisis is usually about fault, guilt, blame, culpability, legal liability, victims and image repair (Xuan, 2016). However, while treating the crisis as

a threat, the organization is placed in a relatively passive and defensive position, which prolonged the lifecycle of the crisis because of “the damaging effects on organizational morale and the inability to learn from the experience” (Barone, 2014, p. 25).

On one hand, by analyzing the crisis from consumer’s perspective, every crisis is an opportunity. Chipotle may take advantages of understanding the four themes of consumer thinking, which reveals the motivations of why many consumers positively cope with crisis and support the brand. Crisis response strategies may be developed based on the four themes. For example, Chipotle could highlight their brand value and design a campaign asking consumers to recall their pleasant brand experience. Chipotle may invoke investigations on whether this outbreak is sabotage or at least using this as an opportunity to divert the public’s attention.

On the other hand, this study shed lights on how organizations may handle a crisis with a pertinacious image as its context. It is unlikely to fully repair the organization’s brand image and brand reputation if a severe crisis happens. The prior brand image is destroyed and the crisis may root in consumers’ minds. Therefore, this study pointed out four themes of consumer thinking, which suggests that rather than attempting to fully repair the favorable brand image, the organization may embrace the crisis to build it a brand-new image.

This study also contributes to understanding the motivations of coping behaviors or perceptions in product-harm crisis communication. Unlike existing studies that focus on what coping strategies the consumers used and the ways of coping expressed, the study aimed at exploring why consumers decide to adopt coping behaviors or perceptions and the rationales and motivations of their coping behaviors or perceptions.

Theoretically, this study sheds lights on existing theories in the crisis communication field. Salient crisis communication theories, such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory and Image Repair Theory, emphasize developing strategies to respond to the crisis and repair brand images from the organizations perspective. This study suggests developing these two theories by taking consumers' thoughts into consideration. Rather than passively responding to a crisis, strategies should be designed with a thorough understanding of consumer thinking.

Another leading theory, Contingency Theory of Accommodation is a rather comprehensive theory. It has listed out 87 variables that professionals must take into account before choosing their stances in managing the crisis. Situational factors include the characteristics of the external public, perceived urgency and threat, and the feasibility of accommodation. This study gives some ideas of more specific factors that may influence the characteristics of the external public. Therefore, the theory may be improved with detailed variables. The researcher suggests that some variables, such as consumer-based brand equity and the geographical proximity of target audience, should be taken into consideration.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study. One of the primary limitations is social media, can only represent a small part of consumer thinking even though it is an indispensable part of the media landscape. In addition, the researcher proposed to select data from various sources, including comments to Chipotle's Facebook Page, comments to news articles that cover the E. coli outbreak, etc. As mentioned, the purpose of the diversified sources of comments is to diminish the effects of news framing and the influence of news tones on Facebook commenters. However, the

comments that are available on Facebook by using the keywords are restricted to comments to news articles posted by mainstream media. Even though there are some individual comments and dialogic comments included, the results and findings are mainly explored based on comments to news articles.

Famous theories, such as framing theory and agenda-setting theory, pointed out the significant and controversial role that media plays. Many existing studies have identified the media effects on public opinions. For example, DE VREESE and BOOMGAARDEN (2006) suggest that media coverage matters to change in public opinion and the effects of the news media are conditional upon the visibility and consistency in the tone of the news. Therefore, news framing and news tone may have effects on how consumers respond to the article. Future research may use other quantitative or qualitative research method to validate the findings. For example, focus groups will be helpful to give all participants the same background information of Chipotle's E. coli crisis so there might be less media effect on the findings.

The researcher chose Chipotle E. coli outbreak because it was a remarkable case of foodborne illness and product-harm crisis. Its severity and pervasiveness received significant attention from the public and the media. A case study is an in-depth study of specific people, organizations, events, or processes. This approach is used to analyze one or more specific cases with rich context and can provide a detailed and holistic understanding of the case under study (Yin, 2009). One prominent limitation of this approach is the findings are not able to be generalized to other cases or contexts. However, the researcher believes the four themes this study found are not only applied to this case. Public relations practitioners are recommended to use the four identified themes in analyzing their crisis management cases, which may increase the possibility to generalize the result and even develop it

into a theory. Despite the limitations of a case study, this research provides an in-depth analysis of consumers' nuanced thinking. Future research may conduct quantitative research, such as survey or laboratory experiments, in order to find out results that may be applicable to general cases.

Conclusion

Chipotle's E. coli outbreak left a pertinacious image in consumer's minds forever regardless whether their brand image could be fully repaired in the future. With such a pertinacious image as a context, the researcher observed that many consumers decided to cope with the crisis. By conducting the textual analysis of selected Facebook comments, this study explored why consumers decide to adopt coping behaviors or perceptions and the rationales and motivations of their coping behaviors or perceptions. The study highlights the effectiveness of using social media to gain insights into consumer thinking. Stop work but think! By understanding the nuanced nature of consumer thinking, public relation practitioners would be able to develop crisis response strategies based on not only organization's perspective but also consumer's perspective. Rather than treating the crisis purely as a threat, every crisis is an opportunity.

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Appendix

Initial Textual Analysis Codebook:

Themes	Subthemes	Examples
Consumer-based brand equity	Perceived brand loyalty Perceived brand awareness Perceived quality Brand associations Perceived brand reputation (Brand trust Brand liking Brand experience)	“I love Chipotle.” “Chipotle’s food is so good.” “The food is healthy.” “The food is organic.” “I will remain a consumer.”
Risk perceptions	Perceived risk Invulnerability	“I don’t care.” “E. coli can’t stop me.”
Demographic characteristics	Gender Geographical proximity	Personal information of selected Facebook commenters will be analyzed by accessing to their profile pages.
Other themes (4)	(explorative)	(explorative)

Updated Textual Analysis Codebook:

Code #	Themes	Subthemes	Examples
1	Consumer-based brand equity	Perceived brand loyalty Perceived brand awareness Perceived quality Brand associations: (brand trust; brand liking; brand experience) Perceived brand reputation	“I love Chipotle.” “Chipotle’s food is so good.” “The food is healthy.” “The food is organic.” “I will remain a consumer.”
2	Risk perceptions	Perceived risk Invulnerability	“I don’t care.” “E. coli can’t stop me.”
3	Demographic characteristics	Gender Geographical proximity	Personal information of selected Facebook commenters will be analyzed by accessing to their profile pages.
4	Other themes Evasion of responsibility	“Not their fault” Sabotage Media coverage	“This sounds like sabotage.” “Someone is doing this on purpose.”