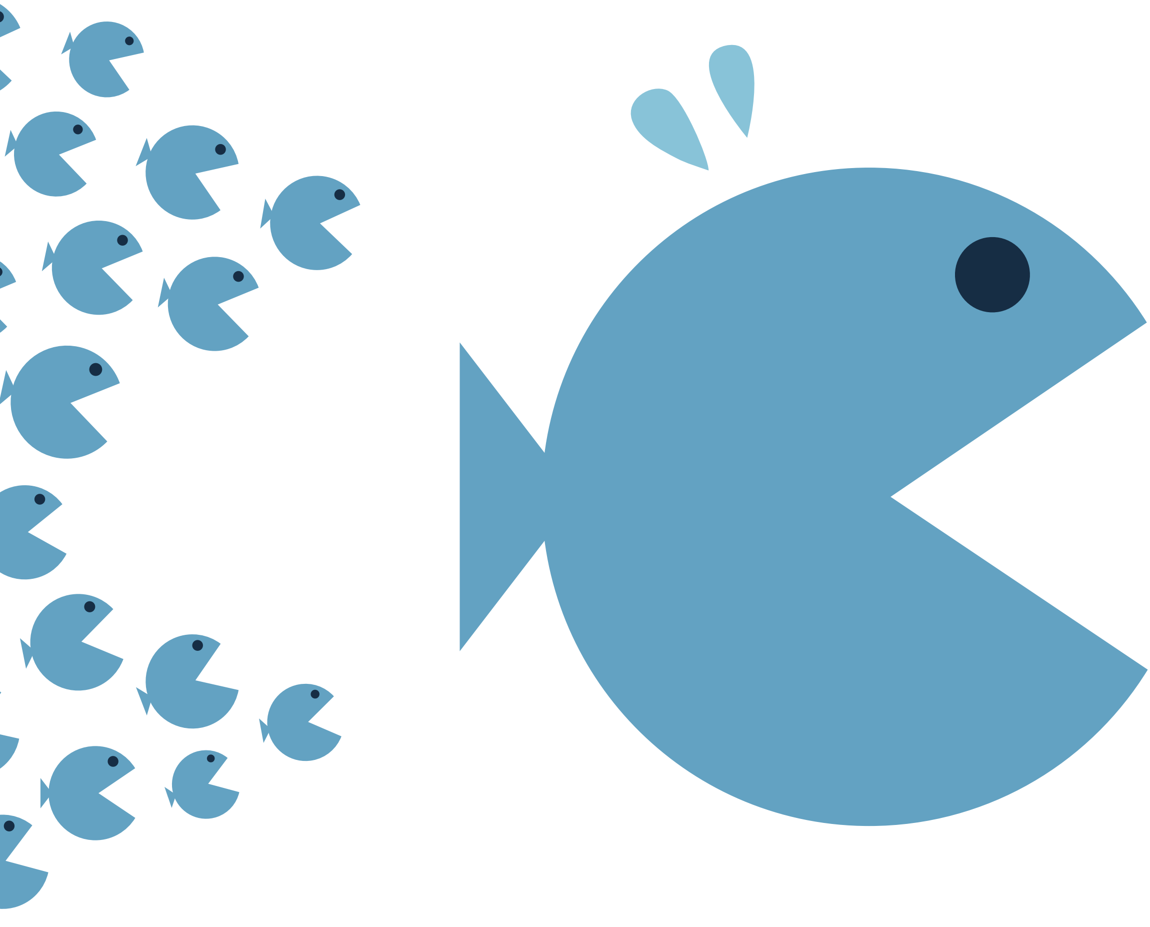
When Slacktivism Matters

On the Organization and Outcomes of Online Protests Targeting Firms



Tijs van den Broek

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Tijs A. van den Broek

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WHEN SLACKTIVISM MATTERS

ON THE ORGANIZATION AND OUTCOMES OF ONLINE PROTESTS TARGETING FIRMS

Dissertation

To obtain
the degree of doctor at the University of Twente,
on the authority of the rector magnificus
Prof.dr. H. Brinksma
on account of the decision of the graduation committee,
to be publicly defended
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by

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born January 28, 1984
in Tilburg, the Netherlands

This dissertation has been approved by:

Promotor	Prof.dr. A.J. Groen
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To my parents.

Acknowledgements

When I was a little child, I knew for sure that I would become a ‘weetmeneer’, literally translated as ‘man of knowledge’. Although I did not know the words for researcher or scientist, I was fascinated by facts about the world around me. Now, almost 25 years later, I became a trained weetmeneer and realize that writing a dissertation is not about knowing everything. In contrast to the popular opinion that writing a dissertation is a solitary task, I learned that decent research is often team work. Apart from the intellectual challenge, I truly enjoyed working together with all people that were involved in my dissertation: my (co)promotors, fellow researchers, practitioners, conference attendees, respondents, co-workers, friends and family members, my paranimphs and Annemiek. Combining my dissertation with a job as research scientist at TNO was a great source of inspiration and frustration at the same time. Mostly it was a source of inspiration, because the combination allowed me to put research into practice, and practice into research. I really enjoyed that I substantiated the phenomenon of ‘slacktivism’ with my dissertation and were able to advise NGOs, firms, and policy-makers. However, my dissertation was also a source of frustration when I had to be very efficient with my time and had to say no to many exciting plans, social events or interesting projects. But here it is…and I am very grateful for all the support and patience from all persons that were involved during the past 5 years!

First of all, I would like to thank my promotor Aard and copromotors David and Michel. Aard, thanks for all the support during my PhD thesis. You trusted the supervision team from the start and provided me with all the resources I could wish for. At NIKOS, I always felt to be part of the team, as if I were a fulltime PhD student. For example, thanks to your support I was able to attend the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in San Antonio (Texas) in 2011. This conference was a great motivator in the early stage of my dissertation, as I was able to discuss my research proposal with top scholars such as Brayden King, Huggy Rao and Ann Langley. Despite your busy agenda, I value your input during key moments of my thesis, which gave often a fresh perspective on my work. David…where do I start? I am so glad that you advised me during my PhD thesis. First, you perfectly balanced constructive feedback with a critical, ‘do-not-be-content-too-soon’ attitude that challenged me to raise the bar. Second, you inspired me to use quantitative methods for my research, which is valuable baggage for the rest of my career. Third, you were a great companion that loves a good laughter and even better a beer. I enjoyed our conversations at the Pintelier in Groningen or pub crawls in Oxford and Vancouver. It was a privilege to be your first PhD student, and I am looking forward to work together on new, exciting projects and perhaps to co-supervise a PhD student in the coming years. Michel, we are working together now for more than 10 years. You, in the first place, made me enthusiastic about doing research. It started with the weird pizza sessions with colleague Daniel Moody and continued with my master thesis in Finland. Thanks for your advice in the past 5 years! Your advise was very valuable for me for many reasons (but I cannot elaborate too long). First, you often came with surprising conceptual insights, from Rao's market rebels to Goffman's concept of . Second, you showed me how important networking and investing in relationships is in academia. Last, you truly were a daily supervisor to me: I could always enter your office to discuss issues or just enjoy Nespresso and a good chat about minions. I hope our collaboration will continue for many years!

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I should not forget where my PhD project started: the SISI project at TNO. Bas Kotterink (thanks Bas!) brought David and me together in 2010 for a new project at TNO. My knowledge and experience of online communities were combined with David's fascination for disruptive innovation in markets. This resulted in the start of the SISI project and the first ideas about the 'slacktivism' concept. I enjoyed working with the slacktivist team: David, Anita, Gijs, Wolfje, amongst others. Who thought we would win TNO's idea contest with the SISI spin-off Dakje Dekje? Those were awesome times!! And of course, I would like thank our unofficial German team member Tobi, who is co-author on the sixth chapter of this thesis! Tobi, it was always fun to work with you!

Special thanks to the organizations and their members that (financially) supported this PhD thesis. First of all, I would like to thank all TNO managers, Jeroen, Filipe, Arlette, Frank, Jean-Louis, Suzanne, Erik and Mark, that supported my part-time PhD project during the entire time period, despite all changes at TNO. This stability was very important to the success of my dissertation. Second, I would like to thank all organizations and respondents that provided me with data. Looking back, I met so many inspiring persons from all sides of online protest campaigns. Most of all, I enjoyed my time when I followed a large, online campaign at a Dutch NGO. Although I am not going to mention names due to confidentiality reasons, I would like to thank all campaigners, lobbyists, project managers and communication managers for sharing their thoughts on online campaigning. It was not easy to give feedback on the campaign process, but I am sure we formulated valuable lessons.

I shared my daily low and highlights with my room mates at TNO and the university. Thanks for listening and the inspiring conversations, Noor, Linda, Anne Fleur, Arjan, Ellen, Sivlia, Marlies, Tamara, and Andres. Also thanks to all part-time PhD students at TNO for sharing their experiences and asking very critical questions about my own motivation. It helped me to set-up all necessary conditions for my dissertation. More recently, I would like to thank my #DataGrant team to work on such a great spin-off from my dissertation. Anna, Dong, Djoerd, Ariana, Michel and Han, you made me even more motivated to collaborate with multiple disciplines. Let's keep up the good work together!

I had the privilege to attend many international conferences and summer schools during my dissertation. The Academy of Management Annual Meeting was often the academic highlight of the year. Besides having a good time with colleagues such as Michel, Bjorn, David, Desiree, Erwin, Raymond, I met many experienced scholars and ambitious peers that made me feel to be part of a community. A special thanks to Edward, Panikos, Erik, Marc, Emilio and all members of the Oikos summer school.

Apart from all work related contacts, I would like to thank my family members and friends. First, I would like to thank everybody who supported me in the second half of 2013. It was a tough time period which made all work on my dissertation look so unimportant. I am fortunate to have such good friends that are there in bad times, especially the Voorburg / The Hague group, XIX, Bert, Tim…thanks a lot for your support!! A special thanks to my direct family members, Ma, Pa, Edo, Amy, Hans, Sonja, Marjolein and René, thanks for your endless listening to slacktivism and informing about the status of my dissertation. My parents, in particular, always encouraged me in my hunger for knowledge (since I wanted to become a 'weetmeneer') and were very involved during my dissertation. I even suspect my dad to have a LinkedIN profile only to follow all updates of Edo and me. Last, I would like to thank my wife Miek. Darling, thanks for being there for me in the last 5 years! Your patience with all moments I had to write or travel, keen eye for details, 'Westfriese nuchterheid', absurd humor and unconditional love …I love you and look forward to our post-dissertation life!

Best wishes to you all and see you soon!

Tijs van den Broek
December 2015
Voorburg

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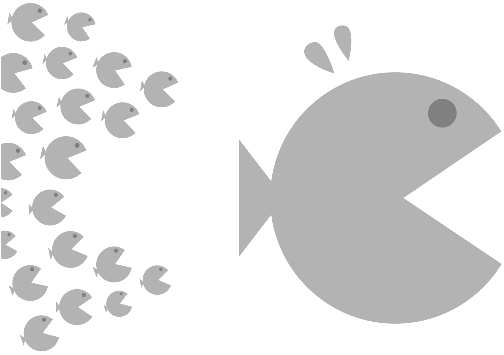

Chapter 1

Introduction

> *"The same information and communication technologies that enable the management of global supply chains also allow global movement activities [...] As forms of coordinated social action, movements and organizations are ships riding the same waves."*
>
> Gerald Davis, Calvin Morrill, Hayagreeva Rao, and Sarah Soule (2008)
> in Administrative Science Quarterly

> *"I honk at protesters to show my support, and also to tell them to get out of my way."*
>
> The comedian Jarod Kintz

1.1 | Preface

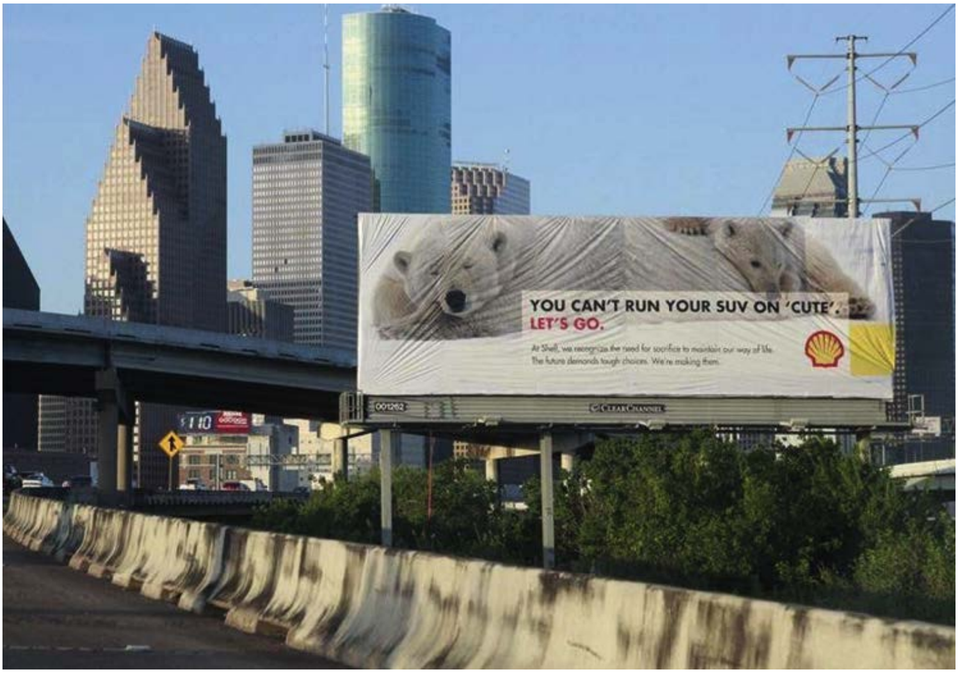
YOU CAN'T RUN YOUR SUV ON 'CUTE'.
LET'S GO.
At Shell, we recognize the need for sacrifice to maintain our way of life.
The future demands tough choices. We're making them.
001262
CLEAR CHANNEL

Figure 1.1 | A Spoof advertisement with the slogan "You can't run your SUV on cute" near Shell's headquarters in Houston (US) (Source: Greenpeace.org)

In June 2012, an exact copy of Shell's corporate website appeared on www.arcticready.com[1]. The activist groups Greenpeace and The Yes Men actually launched this website to criticize Shell's plans to drill for oil in the Arctic sea near Alaska. Besides providing information on the related environmental risks, the protest website invited consumers to participate in a spoof advertisement contest. The website visitors created fake advertisements in style of Shell's global 'Let's go!' marketing campaign. Each advertisement included an appealing picture of the arctic scenery, such as a spectacular barren landscape, or an endearing polar bear, and a slogan mocking Shell's plans, such as *"Our money is worth more than any animals that used to live here"* or *"You can't run your SUV on cute"* (Davis, Glantz, & Novak, 2014). Within one week of the campaign launch, the www.arcticready.com website attracted nearly 2 million unique website visitors and almost 6000 different user-created advertisements spread over the internet, grabbing the attention of weblogs, social media, and, eventually, traditional media.[2] Visitors of the www.arcticready.com website voted for the most original advertisement, which was printed as a large billboard and mounted near Shell's headquarters in Houston (Texas) on July 19, 2012 (see Figure 1.1).

---

[1] See the website www.arcticready.com for figures, accessed on June 10, 2015

Despite the protest hijacking and mocking Shell's brand in the media, the firm did not pay much public attention to the protest. The only public response was a press release on Shell's website acknowledging the protest, but clarifying that the organization was in no way related to the spoof website.[3] However, Shell did ask their public relations agency to send an- email with the following warning to critical weblogs: *"The (activist) groups released a stream of social media content, with the defamatory hashtag #shellfail, which deliberately misrepresents the safety of Shell's drill rigs heading to the Arctic, and extensively violated Shell's intellectual property rights. Shell is monitoring the spread of potentially defamatory material on the internet and reporters are advised to avoid publishing such material."*[4] Although this message could have been created as an imitation of a Shell response strategy (also called a false flag tactic), this example shows that activist groups and firms use private and public media tactically to influence public opinion of a controversial issue. On September 28, 2015, Shell decided to stop its controversial oil drilling activities in Alaska.[5] The key motivations for this decision were low oil prices, pressure from its shareholders, and disappointing results of its oil exploration. However, the controversy of Shell's arctic endeavor weakened its political power to influence the societal debate on climate change. The extent to which Greenpeace's protest, including the arcticready.com case, contributed to Shell's decision remains unclear. In my view, the Arctic Ready case is not an expression of anti-consumerism that opposes any kind of neo-liberal capitalism, but a deliberate attempt to stop Shell's exploration for oil in the Arctic sea. This protest is part of a history of protest events that use digital media, such as social media and campaign websites, to publicly defy Shell's behavior. This dissertation studies the organization and outcomes of protests organized by means of digital media and targeted at firms, which I call 'online protests targeting firms'. The scope of this dissertation includes the internal organization of activist groups and their online dialogue with firms and their stakeholders.

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[2] See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/18/shell-arctic-ready-hoax-greenpeace_n_1684222.html, accessed on June 25, 2015

[3] See http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/social-media-fail-greenpeace-shell-arctic, accessed on June 25, 2015

[4] See e.g. http://boingboing.net/2012/06/07/shell-sends-legal-intimidation.html, accessed on June 25, 2015

[5] See http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/sep/28/shell-ceases-alaska-arctic-drilling-exploratory-well-oil-gas-disappoints, accessed on September 30, 2015

The central thesis of this dissertation is that digital media enable the organization of persuasive protest that requires little effort from consumers[6] to participate, for example, the creation and sharing of a picture as in the Arctic Ready case. Based on Martin and Kracher (2008), I define online protests targeting firms as the organization and public display of consumers' collective disapproval of firm behavior by means of digital media. Critical scholars and opinion-makers increasingly refer to this type of protest as 'slacktivism' (Gladwell, 2010; Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014; Morozov, 2009). Slacktivism is a combination of the words slacker and activism, referring to a lazy kind of activism. They accuse low-effort protest of being a worthless substitute for more strenuous offline tactics, such as protest rallies or sit-ins. As a response to their critical stance, we propose that online protests requiring little effort can nevertheless be a powerful force to pressure firms to behave socially responsible, as well as be an important instrument for activist groups to instigate social change in markets. Activist groups, firms, and their stakeholders should take online protests seriously for the following reasons: First, insights into the organization of online protest targeted at firms are important for activist groups to increase the effectiveness of their influence tactics. Second, understanding the impact of online protests could help firms develop appropriate response strategies to prevent any reputational or financial damage. Third, firms increasingly organize online campaigns to advocate their sustainable policies and practices. Similar to activist groups, insights from this dissertation may help managers develop more effective advocacy campaigns. Last, online protests requiring little effort may extend societal discussion on norms in markets by enabling more consumers to express their opinion. Hence, I think practitioners need to understand the organization and impact of online protests targeting firms.

The research described in this dissertation is based on three methodological premises. First, the perspective of engaged scholarship inspires my approach (Van de Ven, 2007). As an engaged scholar, the real-life problems of activist groups and firms were the prime motivation for starting the research project and not theory as such. In this way, I want to contribute to the call for organizational research that has more practical relevance. However, I do make strong contributions to theoretical discussions. Second, the study of online protests targeting firms requires a multi-disciplinary approach drawing from social movement theory (protest), marketing theory (consumer activism), business ethics (corporate social responsibility), and communication theory (digital media). Third, I consider digital media as political instruments that have a configuration of unique communication characteristics. For example, digital media may vary in their degree of interactivity or public visibility of the content exchanged. These unique configurations may influence the organization and communication of protest. Hence, I see digital media as more than a public sphere or arena in which activist groups and firms contest each other's interests (Whelan, Moon, & Grant, 2013).

---

[6] Individuals who join protests targeting firms can be called either protesters, citizens, or consumers. We use the term consumers to emphasize that this dissertation addresses protests that target firms instead of government organizations. We are aware that some social movement scholars may find that the term consumer has a capitalist connotation (see e.g. Gamson, 2004).

This introduction proceeds with the practical motivation for undertaking this PhD dissertation (1.2), my contributions to the disciplines related to online protests targeting firms (1.3), the formulation of the research problem (1.4), an outline of the five research projects and chapters that answer the research questions (1.5), and a reflection of the overall scientific approach (1.6).

1.2 | **Motivation**

Since the 1980s, activist groups have increasingly targeted firms in order to challenge norms in markets (Soule, 2009). For example, an analysis of all protest events reported in the newspaper New York Times between 1960 and 1990 revealed that nearly 40% were directed at private organizations, such as firms (Walker, Martin, & McCarthy, 2008). Activist groups oppose the established authority of incumbent firms that wish to preserve their routinized norms in their institutional field (Rao, 2009). These incumbent firms have built up global brands with reputations that make them vulnerable to public scrutiny (Bennett, 2003a). Activist groups mobilize and display concerned consumers' moral support to grab the attention of firms, media, consumers, and investors for their cause (King, 2008b; King & Pearce, 2010). In this way, activist groups aim to inflict symbolic damage on firms by tarnishing their precious reputation. Several empirical studies show that protest aimed at influencing public opinion of firm behavior may decrease a firm's reputation (King, 2008a) and financial value (King & Soule, 2007; Luders, 2006; Vasi & King, 2012). A survey that Deloitte (2014) conducted of 300 corporate executives confirms that reputational risks are perceived as one of the most important strategic business issues in practice. About 88% of executives feel that they are responsible for managing reputational risks, as these may escalate into a major strategic crisis if not properly managed, resulting in a loss of revenue and a decreased brand value, or may even trigger regulatory investigations.

The success of protest targeting firms relies strongly on activist groups' ability to mobilize enough moral support to communicate a negative image of the contested firm in the media (DeLuca, 2005; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; King & Pearce, 2010; Koopmans, 2004). Digital media lower the barrier for consumers to connect and collectively voice their opinion to a large audience (Kucuk & Krishnamurthy, 2007). A Social Media Marketing University (2014) survey of brand managers in the United

States (US) supports the finding that there is a trend towards consumers scrutinizing firms on digital media. This survey reports that 58.2 percent of brands occasionally receive customer complaints via social media and 15.8 percent often to very often receives customer complaints via social media. Of all the respondents, 26.1 percent of brands' reputations have been tarnished as a result of negative social media posts, 15.2 percent have lost customers, and 11.4 percent have lost revenue. Similar to the empowerment of concerned consumers, digital media have changed activist groups' activities in two ways. First, an analysis of the top 100 largest nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the US shows that most use digital media to inform consumers, build active communities, communicate with corporate stakeholders, and organize collective action such as protest or advocacy campaigns (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Likewise, the number of protest websites targeting firms exploded from 550 at the end of 1997 to 10,500 in December 2004, years before social media experienced their current popularity (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009).

Table 1.1 presents a more recent overview of how often the 30 largest global brands from the Interbrand ranking (2004) are mentioned in petitions on the platform www.change.org. This overview demonstrates that the 30 largest global brands attract over 7,000 petitions. Second, digital media enable new forms of activist groups that engage millions of consumers although they have no substantial offline organization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). An example is the protest platform www.avaaz.org, which claims to have almost 42 million members worldwide[7], while their professional staff members total less than 50[8]. Consequently, new internet-based activist groups pressurize firms. This pressure motivates firms to invest in technological and organizational capabilities to manage reputational risks that result from activist groups and consumers on digital media. Examples of these technologies are social media monitoring and crisis management plans (Day, 2011; Deloitte, 2014).

On a societal level, I consider online protest as a new form of dialogue between firms, their direct stakeholders (including their consumers and shareholders), and activist groups. In contrast to the criticasters of slacktivism (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2009), I argue that the low threshold for allowing consumers to express their opinion of firm behavior allows unprecedented large numbers of consumers to swiftly join discussions about corporate socially responsible behavior. Rather than merely mocking firms featured in an item on the daily news that touches them, consumers can pick up their smartphone or tablets and support a cause. The large-scale engagement of concerned consumers without strong ideological motivations may, of course, also add moderate opinions to discussions about market norms (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). There are, however, many unanswered questions about this new form of online dialogue. Currently, I see activist groups and firms struggling with this new online dialogue, resulting in many failed protest and corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns, and damaging reputations. Hence, I argue that more research is needed to understand this new form of societal discussion, so that different parties know how to effectively initiate or join ongoing discussions. This may extend online protests from emotional, short-lived conflicts to constructive stakeholder dialogues about CSR in markets.

---

[7] See the website www.avaaz.org, accessed on June 10, 2015.

[8] Based on an interview with one of Avaaz's campaigners in 2012.

Table 1.1 | Overview of the number of petitions on Change.org targeting the largest brands in the world, retrieved on September 16, 2015.

Brand ranking		**# Petitions**	**Brand ranking**		**# Petitions**
1	Apple	412 (78% accuracy)	16	Oracle	20
2	Google	737	17	Hewlett Packard	14
3	Coca-cola	112	18	Gillette / Procter & Gamble	29
4	IBM	14	19	Louis Vuitton	0
5	Microsoft	284	20	Honda	34
6	General Electrics	2	21	H&M	12
7	Samsung	100	22	Nike	50
8	Toyota	36	23	American Express	10
9	McDonald’s	143	24	Pepsi	36
10	Mercedes-Benz	41	25	SAP	3
11	BMW	26	26	IKEA	17
12	Intel	32	27	UPS	320 (36% accuracy)
13	Disney	489	28	Ebay	126
14	Cisco	11	29	Facebook	3740 (80% accuracy)
15	Amazon	250 (82% accuracy)	30	Pampers	6

Online protests targeting firms have only recently received more attention in organizational research (Castelló, Morsing, & Schultz, 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Schultz, Castelló, & Morsing, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). A reason for the previously limited attention in organizational research might be that the ongoing development of digital media makes online protest a difficult phenomenon to theorize and operationalize. Scholars may consider digital media a new modality, or treat digital media as a contextual factor in their studies. With my research, I follow-up on calls in organizational and CSR research to study the effect of digital media on the organization and outcomes of protests targeting firms (Davis et al., 2008; De Bakker & Den Hond, 2008; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001; González-Bailón, Borge-Holthoefer, Rivero, & Moreno, 2011; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). I discuss my theoretical contributions in the next section.

1.3 | **Theoretical Contributions**

1.3.1 | **Protests in Markets**

Since the 1950s, there has been an increased scholarly interest in the organization and outcome of social movements (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004). Social movements are "*collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are part*" (Snow et al., 2004, p. 11). The main activity of social movements is the organization of collective action outside the conventional channels of institutional change, such as voting in an election or joining a political party. Collective action refers to the actions taken by a group, such as a social movement, in pursuit of the perceived shared interests of its members (Olson, 1965). Without collective action, citizen grievances would remain latent and not result in the collective behavior required to achieve social change (King, 2008b; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Social movements comprise organizations representing movements and facilitating collective action (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Diani & McAdam, 2003). I call these organizations activist groups throughout this dissertation. Activist groups pursue collective action by building and maintaining collective identities, framing the cause, expressing collective grievances, mobilizing resources, and recognizing and exploiting opportunities that changes in power structures offer (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Snow et al., 2004). Consequently, social movement scholars have developed theories that explain the role of identity, framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunities in movements' effectiveness regarding challenging or defending extant authority.

Social movement theory is increasingly applied in organizational research to study how social movements and their activist groups pursue and achieve institutional change in markets (Davis, 2005; Davis et al., 2008; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2006; Hensmans, 2003; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008). Institutional change is defined as any measurable alteration in the socially constructed, routine-reproduced norms and rule systems that steer the behavior of individuals and organizations in society (Seo & Creed, 2002). Social movement theory emphasizes that institutional change in markets result from the actions of change agents, such as activist groups (King & Pearce, 2010). Social movement theory provides insights into different forms of institutional change, such the formation of new organizations and industries (Rao, Morrill, & Zald, 2000; Sine & Lee, 2009; Swaminathan & Wade, 2000), the introduction of (radical) innovations (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2006; Rao, 2009; Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003), and the influence of stakeholders on firm behavior (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King, 2008a, 2008b; King & Soule, 2007; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003; Spar & Mure, 2003).

This dissertation focuses on the direct influence of activist groups on firms' policies and practices to instigate institutional change in markets. Specifically, I contribute to research on protest that mobilizes moral consumer support to capture the attention of targeted firms, media, investors and public opinion (Bartley & Child, 2011; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; McDonnell & King, 2013). I define protest as *"a persuasive tactic in which bodies, symbols, identities, practices, and discourses are used to pursue or prevent changes in institutionalized power relations"* (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004, p. 268). Additionally, a *protest campaign* is a sustained, concerted public effort to make collective claims towards target audiences (Tilly, 2004). Similarly, marketing scholars have started studying the organization and outcomes of anti-brand communities (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Klein, Smith, & John, 2004; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 4), a brand community is *"a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand."* Consumers, however, can initiate or join a community to collectively voice their disapproval of a brand. These *anti-brand communities* aim to influence public opinion of the brand, and alter its values and meaning. Anti-brand communities are often part of large-scale anti-consumption movements that oppose the social injustice related to capitalism (Holt, 2002; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004).

1.3.2 | **The Digitalization of Protest Organization**

Digital media are increasingly used to organize and communicate protest, such as that of anti-branding communities. I define digital media as computer-mediated communication channels that transmit digitalized content between two or more electronic devices. Examples of digital media are e-mail, websites, social media applications (e.g. Twitter or Facebook), and instant messaging. Scholars in the fields of sociology, political science, and communication science have studied the impact of digital media on protest since the early 1990s (Castells, 2001; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Myers, 1994; Van de Donk, Loader, & Rucht, 2004). Early examples of these cyberactivism studies are an analysis of the Zapatistas resistance movement in Mexico that, in 1994, started using digital media to circulate information about protest activities among its members (Cleaver, 1998); the independent media center Indymedia that has used digital media to start an alternative news source and platform for political discussions since 1999 (Pickard, 2006); and the use of digital media to mobilize and report on protest participation at the World Trade Organization summit in Seattle in 1999 (Kahn & Kellner, 2004).

A key insight from this stream of research is that the use of digital media changes the premises of collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005; Castelló et al., 2013; Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006; Lupia & Sin, 2003; Shumate & Lipp, 2008). The high speed, wide reach, and accuracy of messages transmitted through digital media decrease the costs of communication for protest organizers and participants. Furthermore, the connectivity and social observability of networked digital media (e.g. Twitter and Facebook) stimulate the contagious diffusion of grievances among consumers (Castelló et al., 2013). These specific digital media characteristics may change how protests are organized and how effective protests are in achieving institutional change. Many scholars have, however, treated digital media as a new modality of protest organization instead of critically assessing how the design and use of digital media affect protest mobilization (Garrett, 2006; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). An example of the former is the comparison of offline protest mobilization with online protest mobilization by Postmes and Brunsting (2002). These authors treat digital media as a context in which protest mobilization takes place rather than as a theorized construct. In line with Orlikowsi and Iacono (2001), I argue that researchers need to better theorize digital media, their characteristics, and use when studying digital forms of protest. Other scholars call for more research on the impact of digital media characteristics on protest (Castelló et al., 2013; Diani, 2000; González-Bailón et al., 2011).

The role of digital media in protest targeting firms has recently been put on the agenda of organizational research (Bennett, 2003a; Carty, 2002; Castelló et al., 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Martin & Kracher, 2008) and marketing research (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Nevertheless, scholars call for a more systematic analysis, as most studies on the impact of digital media on protest targeting firms lack empirical grounding. For example, Castello, Morsing, and Schultz (2013, p. 683) claim that *"research lacks consistent insights into how the institutionalization of social media changes the constitution of corporate legitimacy especially through means of corporate social responsibility."* I address this gap by studying the impact of digital media on three levels: strategic orientation (1.3.3), tactical mix (1.3.4), and mobilization (1.3.5). In addition, we contribute to research on the outcomes of protest targeting firms (1.3.6). See Figure 1.2 in section 1.5 for a flowchart of these parts.

1.3.3 | **The Emergence of Internet-Based Activist Groups**

On a strategic level, digital media may change the organizational form of protest targeting firms (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Earl & Schussman, 2002). Traditionally, activist groups may range from formal NGOs to informal networks of concerned consumers emerging spontaneously. This organizational base of protest, or mobilizing structures, provides activists with resources, such as existing social ties and a campaign budget, to organize collective action (King, 2008b). Resource mobilization theorists argue that formal mobilizing structures are required to organize large-scale collective action. Formal organization provides organizers with specific incentives, defines the membership of the collective action, and enables surveillance to prevent free-riding behavior (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). However, the use of digital media has lowered the costs of protest organization and participation, while it has increased the connectivity and speed of diffusing collective action frames (Castelló et al., 2013). Bennett and Segersberg (2012) argue that while digital media decrease the communication costs of formal activist groups, it also stimulates the emergence of internet-based activist groups, called ‘dotcauses’ by Clark and Themudo (2006), that can include millions of members without formal organization. Entrepreneurs rather than managers lead dotcauses (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005; Earl & Schussman, 2002). Despite the growth of dotcauses, insights from social entrepreneurship on how to combine social and economic value have not informed social movement theory (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004; Simms & Robinson, 2008).

1.3.4 | **Online Tactical Repertoire**

On a tactical level, scholars aim to understand *how* activist groups persuade firms’ decision makers to make changes to their policies or practices (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King, 2008a). Activist groups may use different tactics to pressure firms, ranging from petitions to violent street rallies. Activist groups’ tactical repertoire has not been immune to the introduction of digital media. Several online tactic typologies have been developed (Martin & Kracher, 2008; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). The arsenal of online tactics differs in the effort required from protest participants, the disruptiveness, and the degree to which the tactic depends on digital media. Low-effort online tactics, such as internet petitions, require large numbers of participants to impress corporate decision makers (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Tilly, 2004). Current online tactic typologies are, however, static and do not explain how online tactics are used over time. Furthermore, it is unclear how online tactics are embedded in a broader influence strategy that also contains offline tactics. Bennett and Segersberg (2012), for example, argue that activist groups’ existing organizational routines may influence how online tactics are used. Hence, this dissertation contributes to this gap in understanding online tactics by studying how online protest tactics are embedded in a broader influence strategy. I contribute to Den Hond and De Bakker's (2007) framework of participatory and elite tactics by introducing the difference between private and public interactions between activist groups and firms.

Apart from the digitalization of protest tactics, social movement scholars call for more longitudinal research on how activist groups interact with firms over time and which tactical choices they employ when (De Bakker & Den Hond, 2008; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Wijk, Stam, Elfring, Zietsma, & Den Hond, 2013). Research does not only need to address the process of activist groups targeting single firms, but also the process of activist groups scaling up from targeting individual firms to instigating change in an institutional field (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). I contribute to both gaps by studying the process of an online protest campaign targeting and convincing multiple firms in an institutional field.

1.3.5 | **Online Protest Mobilization**

On a campaign level, digital media may change the recruitment of protest participants. Traditionally, social movement scholars have developed models on how citizens become protest participants (Klandermans, 2004; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Activist groups develop motivational frames that resonate with potential participants' motivations (Gamson, 2004; Gamson et al., 1992; King, 2008b). The lowered threshold for joining an online persuasive protest may attract participants who are not ideologically motivated, but join for other reasons, for example, to impress their friends or to have fun (Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011; Klein et al., 2004; Kristofferson et al., 2014). Recent research proposes that online protesters who are eager to provide token support may not follow up with more substantial contributions (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Schumann & Klein, 2015). Consequently, these participants are often called 'slacktivists' (Morozov, 2009). The question remains, however, whether low-effort participation in online protests contributes to activist group's effectiveness regarding affecting policies or practices (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Karpf, 2010). If slacktivism appears to be effective, more knowledge is needed about how the frame and design of campaigns can effectively engage this new type of protester.

1.3.6 | **Effects of Digital Media on Protest Outcomes**

Measuring activist groups' effectiveness regarding changing individual firm behavior and norms in institutional fields remains an important topic in organizational research (Bartley & Child, 2011; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012; Vasi, Walker, Johnson, & Tan, 2015; Zhang & Luo, 2013). Similarly, marketing scholars have studied the impact of protests, such as boycotts and anti-brand communities, on firm behavior (Friedman, 1999; Garrett, 1987; John & Klein, 2003; Klein et al., 2004; Koku, Akhigbe, & Springer, 1997; Pruitt & Friedman, 1986; Sen, Gürhan-Canli, & Morwitz, 2001). Den Hond and De Bakker (2007, p. 920) indicate that *"whether activist groups actually succeed in changing the nature and level of corporate social change activities"* is notoriously difficult to measure. Consequently, impact assessments in organizational and marketing research show mixed results. Many scholars measure the impact of protests on the evaluation of their shareholders and customers by means of their stock valuation (King & Soule, 2007), reputation and revenue (Bartley & Child, 2011), and perceived environmental risks (Vasi & King, 2012). The rationale is that corporate decision makers are sensitive to the feedback they receive from their shareholders and customers, which may lead them to change the disputed policies or practices (King & Pearce, 2010). King (2008b, p. 20) explains that stakeholder feedback is related to reputation: *"By damaging reputation and image, stakeholders may cause investors to lose confidence and bid down the stock price."* The reputational threats of low-effort protests in the media may force shareholders to change their risk perceptions of their investments in the targeted firm (King, 2008b). Hence, there is a need to study the impact of protests on the perceptions of both shareholders and customers. Recently, scholars have begun to assess the impact of online protest on firm behavior and performance (Koku, 2012; Zhang & Luo, 2013). Similar to offline protests, the impact of online protests targeting firms remains unclear. Given the discussions on slacktivism (see section 1.3.5), scholars will find that my study contributes to both theoretical discussions.

Last, scholars from organizational and marketing research have investigated how firms can respond to prevent or mitigate the negative effects of protests targeted at them (Clemens & Douglas, 2005; Eesley & Lenox, 2006; Lenox & Eesley, 2009; Surroca, Tribó, & Zahra, 2013; Xia, 2013; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009; Zald, Morill, & Rao, 2005). Firm responses may range from accepting protest demands to publicly opposing the claims (Oliver, 1991; Zald et al., 2005). Research on how to respond to online protests is scarce however (Hsu & Lawrence, 2015; Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012; Xia, 2013), despite scholars suggesting that digital media may change the dynamics (e.g. increased speed and heterogeneity) of stakeholder management (Castelló et al., 2013). The question is how much control firms have on the reputational damage that large-scale online protests do. For example, Hsu and Lawrence (2015) found no mitigating effects on shareholder value when firms responded to consumer criticism on social media.

1.4 | **Research Problem**

I propose that online protests targeting firms are increasingly important for activist groups, firms, and policy-makers. Furthermore, there is increasing attention regarding studying the organization and outcomes of online protests targeting firms. As described above, my research contributes to theoretical discussions on the strategic orientation, tactics, mobilization, impact, and response strategies to online protests that target firms.

The central research question of this research is:

1. *How does online protest that requires little participation effort pressure firms into socially responsible behavior?*

After a systematic review of what has been written regarding online protests, I divide the main research question in two parts: 1) the organization of online protests on three levels (strategy, tactics, and mobilization) and 2) the final outcomes on firms. Hence, the main research question is divided into the following sub questions that are derived by the theoretical gaps addressed in the theory section:

2. *Why does the use of digital media enable or constrain the mobilization of participation in protests?*
3. *How do activist groups combine online protests targeting firms and entrepreneurship to pursue sustainable change?*
4. *How do activist groups combine backstage and front stage tactics over time to promote socially responsible investment policy?*
5. *What is the effect of campaign design on motivations to participate in low-effort protests targeting firms?*
6. *To what extent do online protests decrease shareholders' and consumers' evaluation of the targeted firm?*
7. *What effect does the targeted firm's response have on the damage that online protests can do to consumers' evaluation of the firm?*

In the next section, I discuss how I will answer the main research question and sub questions in this dissertation. The scope of this PhD research are online protests targeting firms outside conventional institutional channels available to influence firm behavior (e.g. pressuring market regulators and shareholder meetings) and that aims to mobilize mass support (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007).

1.5 | Outline

This dissertation includes five scientific papers, presented in the form of chapters and followed by a general discussion. The scientific papers are included in their original form, and only the layout and numbering have been adapted. Figure 1.2 provides a visualization of how each chapter answers a sub research question formulated in the problem definition (section 1.4).

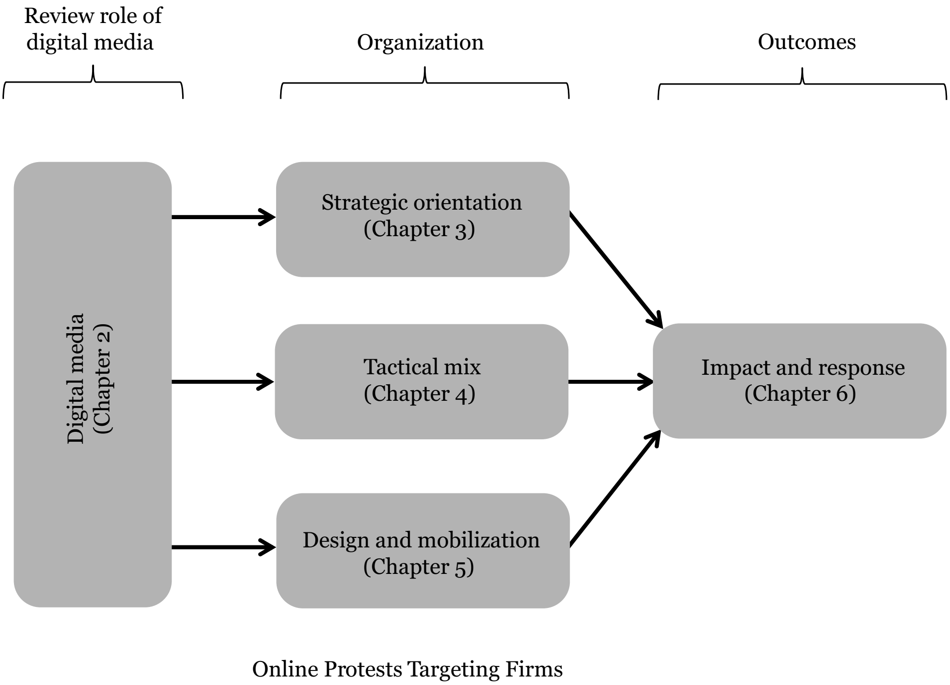

Review role of digital media
Organization
Outcomes
Digital media (Chapter 2)
Strategic orientation (Chapter 3)
Tactical mix (Chapter 4)
Design and mobilization (Chapter 5)
Impact and response (Chapter 6)
Online Protests Targeting Firms

Figure 1.2 | Flow chart of the dissertation structure

The literature review in chapter 2 answers research question 2. The goal of this chapter is to systematically synthesize the academic literature on the effects of digital media on two elements of protest mobilization: framing and mobilizing structures. This chapter presents 15 research questions of the most prominent discussions found in the literature, and elaborates on the implications for theory and practitioners on both sides of protest targeting firms.

The strategic orientation study in chapter 3 answers research question 3. To do so, the chapter combines process models from social entrepreneurship and social movement theory to analyze the actions of online activist groups, or dotcauses, whose aim is sustainability in markets. Additionally, I explore the extent to which digital media support the actions of dotcauses and reveal the ethical considerations that arise from combining entrepreneurship and activism. I collected data about eight dotcauses via semi-structured interviews and desk research.

The process study in chapter 4 answers research question 4. This chapter investigates how activist groups combine private and public influence tactics over time to promote a socially responsible investment policy. I present an in-depth process study of a large reformative activist group that organized an online protest campaign, beside its ongoing private lobbying, to motivate the Dutch financial sector to change its human rights policy concerning land investments in developing countries. To analyze this case, I use Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of impression management to develop six propositions on the interactions of activists and firms backstage and up front.

The experimental study in chapter 5 answers research question 5. In this chapter, I investigate the effect of campaign design on those protesters who are willing to make an effort in terms of the protest (activists), and protesters who are reluctant to make more than a token effort (slacktivists). In an experimental study (n=333), I assess two different motivational paths leading to protest participation, drawing on the cognitive sciences' Elaboration Likelihood Model: A central path where people delve into the protest arguments, and a peripheral path where website design cues play a more important role.

The impact and response study in chapter 6 answers research questions 6 and 7. This chapter investigates the effects that online protests and subsequent firm responses have on investors' and customers' evaluation of the firm. Two complementary methods are employed. The first is a financial analysis that includes an event study (n=116), which measures the effect of online protests on the target firms' stock price, and an investigation of the effects of specific protest characteristics. The second method is an online experiment (n = 201) to assess the effect of an online protest campaign on consumers' evaluation of a firm and on their purchase intention, as well as any mitigating effects that the firm's response may have.

The general discussion in chapter 7 answers the overall research question. In the discussion chapter, I summarize the key findings of this dissertation and formulate scientific and practical contributions. Last, I discuss the limitations of the research papers and propose directions for future research.

1.6 | **Scientific Approach**

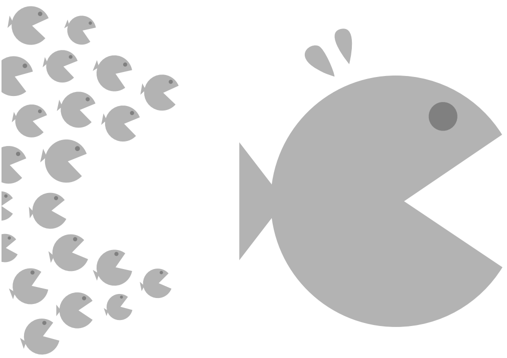
> *“A deeper form of research that engages both academics and practitioners is needed to produce knowledge that meets the dual hurdles of relevance and rigor for theory as well as practice”*
>
> Andrew Van de Ven in *Engaged Scholarship* (2007, p. 6),
> based on Pettigrew (2001)

Organizational research has been criticized about for its lack of relevance for the intended audience, for example, managers and consultants (Beer, 2001; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001). In response to this criticism, Van de Ven (2007) introduced the engaged scholarship concept as a solution to close the gap between organization theory and praxis. Van de Ven (2007) defines engaged scholarship as a participative form of research to obtain multiple key stakeholder perspectives on the complex phenomenon under study. Examples of stakeholders are researchers, users, clients, sponsors, and practitioners. The promise of this stakeholder-oriented approach is that engaged management scholars *“produce knowledge that is more penetrating and insightful than when scholars or practitioners work on the problems alone”* (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 7). An engaged scholarship approach stimulates the valorization of knowledge developed during a PhD project to practitioners.

I purposely adopted an engaged scholarship approach in this PhD project. The dissertation originates from my contract research and consultancy work at TNO, the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research. The daily challenges that my TNO clients faced regarding slacktivism, helped me to confront this problem. Ongoing consultations with these stakeholders fueled the development of my research proposal and served as a critical sounding board throughout the research process. For example, the systematic literature review and the first empirical chapter on the strategic orientation of online activist groups were part of the problem definition process of this dissertation (Van de Ven, 2007). Furthermore, I presented the work in the chapters not only at academic conferences, but also at professional summits and in one-on-one meetings with clients. The results of my research was often applied in consultancy projects that aimed, and still aim, to solve his clients’ problems. Academically, the study of online protests targeting firms requires theories and methods from four different disciplines: sociology, business ethics, marketing, and communication studies. Consequently, the framing of the chapters reflect the different disciplines related to the peer-reviewed conferences and journals where I presented my results.

Organizational scholars need to reflect on their thinking and, hence, engage in reflexivity in order to be open about their philosophical assumptions (Johnson & Duberley, 2003). Engaged scholarship is mostly grounded in the critical realism stream of the philosophy of science (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 2013; Bhaskar, 2014; Van de Ven, 2007). Critical realists advocate the existence of a real, mind-independent world. Researchers, however, can only capture parts of this real world. The researcher's prior cognitive frameworks, such as incumbent theories and previous research experiences, often influence these snippets of knowledge. Following this subjectivist view of epistemology, critical realists argue that there is no predefined methodology, or set of criteria, for judging the truthfulness of knowledge. In their view, knowledge production is a process of successive approximations of reality, in which false theories compete to approximate the mind-independent reality (often referred to multiversitude). Hence, critical realists opt for a pluralistic methodology, which implies a high degree of openness and equality regarding the use of different types of methods to study complex social phenomena. In line with this methodological pluralism, my dissertation combines qualitative and quantitative methods, ranging from an in-depth single case study to consumer experiments that assess the effect of interventions. I believe that this mixed methods approach suits the problem-oriented approach and the learning process of this PhD project. The qualitative methods (e.g. case studies) helped to explore and formulate the research problem in the early research stages, while quantitative methods helped to test the hypotheses in order to draw more robust conclusions in the latter stages of the project.

The engaged scholarship approach confronted me with several challenges. First, I had to consciously ignore my political attitude and ideals in order to act as unbiased as possible. Although I often felt juxtaposed between the contrasting views and interests that firms and activist groups have on online protests targeting firms, I guarded that the knowledge produced throughout the research process was always available to all types of stakeholders. Second, the relationships I established with stakeholders during the process, such as with the activist group in the process study, made me more cautious regarding anonymizing research. Research on the tactics that activist groups and firms use is sensitive, as it is embedded in the context of the power relationships between stakeholders (Putnam, 2009). Third, I was aware that, due confidentiality reasons, not all data sources were available to me during the project. Given these constraints, and inspired by the epistemological stance of critical realism, I triangulated different data sources, methods, and stakeholder views to form as a complete picture as possible of the organization and outcomes of online protests targeting firms.



Chapter 2

The Role of Digital Media in Protest Organization: A Systematic Literature Review[9]

Abstract

Activist groups increasingly use digital media to mobilize large groups of consumers to persuade incumbent firms to change their contested strategies or practices. Prior research suggests that the use of digital media may change the premises of protest mobilization, potentially changing the organization of protest targeted at firms. Nevertheless, organizational research has to date provided little insight into how online protest works. This chapter reviews the effect of digital media on two antecedents of protest participation: framing and mobilizing structures. Following a systematic review process, we identify 52 relevant articles. Three main themes emerge from the literature. First, the many-to-many interactivity of digital media decreases the need for formal mobilizing structures, while increasing the importance of interpersonal networks for protest diffusion and transnational cooperation between activist groups. Second, increased many-to-many interactivity provides an alternative organizational paradigm for concerned consumers and informal activist groups to express and bundle their grievances. Third, the public nature and many-to-many interactivity of digital media may stimulate the formation of multiple, online collective identities based on identification with issues rather than the activist group. We conclude this chapter by describing the most prominent relations found in the literature and discuss the implications for practitioners on both sides of protest targeting firms.

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[9] Co-authors are Michel Ehrenhard, David Langley and Aard Groen. Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the EURAM 2012 conference in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and the AOM annual meeting 2014 in Philadelphia (US).

2.1 | Introduction

In November 2010, the online petition website Avaaz.org and the charity organization Ecpat mobilized nearly 320,000 protesters to demonstrate their concern with hotel chain Hilton's refusal to sign a code of conduct to avoid human trafficking in their hotels.[10] Avaaz.org did not only succeed in mobilizing such a large online group of supporters, but also convinced the hotel chain to adopt a code of conduct that prevents Hilton hotels from unintentionally contributing to human trafficking.

The Avaaz.org-Hilton case is not unique. Digital media, particularly social media and protest websites, have become preferred instruments for organizing protests targeting firms (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Tatarchevskiy, 2011). We define online protests targeting firms as the organization and public display of consumers' collective disapproval of firm behavior by means of digital media (Martin & Kracher, 2008). Activist groups use digital media to publicly broadcast their grievances and mobilize a large number of the target firm's primary audience, such as consumers and shareholders, to question the legitimacy of its strategy or practices. Prior research has shown that mass protest can severely damage a firm's reputation (Bartley & Child, 2011; King, 2008a) and motivate firms to change their behavior (King, 2008a). Such mass protest aims at inflicting symbolic damage and tarnishing the reputation, or the moral authority, of the targeted firm (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Hence, the effectiveness of mass protest relies greatly on attention-grabbing media strategies that successfully disseminate a negative image of the contested firm (King & Pearce, 2010).

Several sociology and communication scholars claim that digital media change the premises of protest mobilization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005; Lupia & Sin, 2003). The high speed, large reach, and persistent accuracy of messages transmitted through digital media decrease the costs for protest organizers and participants. Furthermore, the connectivity and social observability of social media (e.g. Twitter or Facebook) stimulate the contagious diffusion of grievances among consumers (Castelló et al., 2013). Consequently, digital media drive low-effort protest, such as petitions and e-mail chains, that critical scholars often value as useless (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Morozov, 2009). A change in the premises of protest mobilization may impact the interactions between activist groups and firms. However, to date, organizational scholars have paid limited attention to the effect of digital media and their attributes on online protests (Castelló et al., 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). If we want to understand new digital forms of persuasive protests, we need to assess how digital media affect the antecedents of protests participation. Online activism has been studied in sociology and communication science since the 1990s (Castells, 2001; Cleaver, 1998; Myers, 1994), even in relation to firms (Bennett, 2003b; Carty, 2002). Hence, this chapter reviews and synthesizes research on online protests published in these fields. The research question of this study is: "*Why does the use of digital media enable or constrain the mobilization of participation in protests?*" The scope is online protests outside the conventional institutional channels (e.g. democratic politics, advocacy, lobbying, and cooperation), used to exert influence and is aimed at mobilizing mass support (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007).

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[10] See https://secure.avaaz.org/act/media.php?press_id=219, accessed on September 1, 2015 and http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/18/online-activism-internet-campaign-mobilise, accessed on September 1, 2015

We contribute to theory development by identifying future research questions on the effects of digital media on protest organization. These questions may guide future research on online protests targeting firms. Furthermore, we explain how future research that, for example, uses media choice theories, or makes better use of digital media data, may contribute to the current body of literature. Practically, this study is relevant and timely for managers and activists, as recent studies suggest that if firms ignore or respond too late to online protests, they may exacerbate their reputational damage (Zhang & Luo, 2013). Hence, firms need to understand how the use of digital media can change their interaction with stakeholders and how they need to develop capabilities to effectively respond to online protest (Xia, 2013). On the other hand, our review informs formal activist groups that experience competition from new, online forms of activist groups, or struggle with the use of digital media to mobilize protest participants.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, we develop a conceptual research framework that guides the literature review. This framework builds on social movement research on two elements of protest mobilization: framing and mobilizing structures (Gamson, 2004; King, 2008b; McAdam et al., 1996; Rao, 2009). Second, we provide a description of how we conducted the review in the methods section. Third, we review relevant literature according to the research framework concepts. Last, we conclude this chapter with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications, including directions for future research and the limitations of this review.

2.2 | **Theoretical Framework**

This review requires an overarching theoretical framework to categorize the studies and their findings according to the main factors of the mobilization process. We use Rao's (2009) model of hot cause and cool mobilization that builds on previous social movement frameworks (Tilly, 2004) as well as his cases of social movements in markets (Rao et al., 2003; Rao et al., 2000). Hot cause and cool mobilization refer to two factors that are, traditionally, important in protest mobilization: framing and mobilizing structures.

Framing refers to how activist groups strategically position their protest to create a shared understanding of the cause, a prognosis of how change can be achieved, and a collective identity that opposes the targeted firm (Benford & Snow, 2000; King, 2008b). A frame allows activist groups to legitimate and motivate collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000). We discern three factors that correspond to framing typology in social movement theory (Benford & Snow, 2000; Oliver & Marwell, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006): injustice, (politicized) collective identity, and collective efficacy. First, collective injustice is a shared emotion that includes an affective and cognitive perception of an unfair situation (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Second, collective identity is a sense of belonging together that emerges from common attributes, experiences, and external labels (King, 2008b). In the case of protest, the collective identity is politicized when the group members are aware of their group's power struggle in the wider societal context (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). A politicized collective identity is a strong predictor of protest behavior (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Last, collective efficacy refers to the shared belief that one's group is capable of resolving its grievances through collective action (Bandura, 2000). In other words, potential protesters need to be convinced that the protest may have an effect (Gamson et al., 1992).

A strong frame may not be sufficient to organize a protest. Activist groups also need mobilizing, which the "*collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action*" (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 3). Mobilizing structures provide activists with resources, such as existing social ties and a campaign budget, to organize collective action (King, 2008b). Formal mobilizing structures provide an "*organized and connected base of influence that coordinates strategies and provides the means to leverage resources*" (King, 2008b, p. 13). Informal mobilizing structures, such as interpersonal networks, facilitate activists in aligning and signaling their collective interests and identity (King, 2008b; Rao, 2009).

2.3 | **Methods**

We conducted a systematic literature review to assess the findings of current research on online protests. This review follows a concept-based rather than an author-based approach, which means that we categorized and synthesized relevant articles according to the research framework concepts (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003; Webster & Watson, 2002). The literature review was undertaken between December 2012 and January 2013 and was updated in January 2014.

The first step in the research process was to define six inclusion criteria based on our research question. These criteria were: 1) Studies that focus on online protests, 2) studies that focus on the mobilization of citizens or consumers, 3) studies in which the technology used is at least one of the focal variables 4) studies published in peer-reviewed journals, 5) studies written in English, and 6) studies published after 2005. We decided to use 2006 as the starting year of our literature review, as digital media have changed dramatically since the emergence of web 2.0 after 2005 (O'Reilly, 2014). For example, the most popular social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, were respectively founded in February 2004 and March 2006 and became globally popular in the years thereafter. As this literature review assesses articles on an emerging topic (Webster & Watson, 2002), we decided to include all type of studies, ranging from conceptual to quantitative.

To include as many relevant studies as possible, we searched the databases of Scopus and Web of Science. The search query was divided into three blocks of keywords: (*CMC* or *"Computer-mediated communication"* OR *Internet OR "Social media" OR web OR online OR digital OR "web 2.0" OR virtual OR "new media") AND (activis* OR protest OR "social movement") AND (mobiliz* OR fram* OR "collective action").* Some keywords included an asterisk (*) to include variations in keywords. In Scopus we searched for the keywords in the title and abstract and in Web of Science in the topic. We kept a logbook to track all the steps in the search and selection process. We followed the selection process as suggested by Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller and Wilderom (2011). Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the selection process and the results at the end of each step.

First, we removed all doubles, which resulted in 444 unique articles in the first selection step. Second, we read the title and abstracts to select the articles within the scope of the review as formulated in the introduction. This resulted in a selection of 72 articles. Third, the papers were fully read to exclude articles that seemed relevant from the abstract, but did not fit the scope of the review. Last, we scanned the references (back searching) and citations (forward searching) of the selected articles to search for other relevant articles. This resulted in a final set of 52 relevant articles. The findings of the articles were categorized in a concept-based matrix with the categories of the research framework as concepts (Webster & Watson, 2002). This concept-based matrix is presented in Appendix A. Most articles covered more than one of the research framework's concepts. Figure 2.2 provides an overview of the distribution of articles between 2006 and 2013. In general, there has been a slight increase in articles on online protest mobilization over the years.

The analysis aimed to inductively identify discussions in the literature according to the research framework concepts. The qualitative analysis software package Atlas.ti was used in the analysis develop subcategories for each theoretical concept. In the analysis, we critically compared the articles' results and concepts in terms of each research framework category. Following Webster and Watson (2002), we reflected on the similarities and differences between the articles. Figure 2.3 presents the distribution of articles on the research methods applied, which shows that qualitative case studies were their most preferred research method.

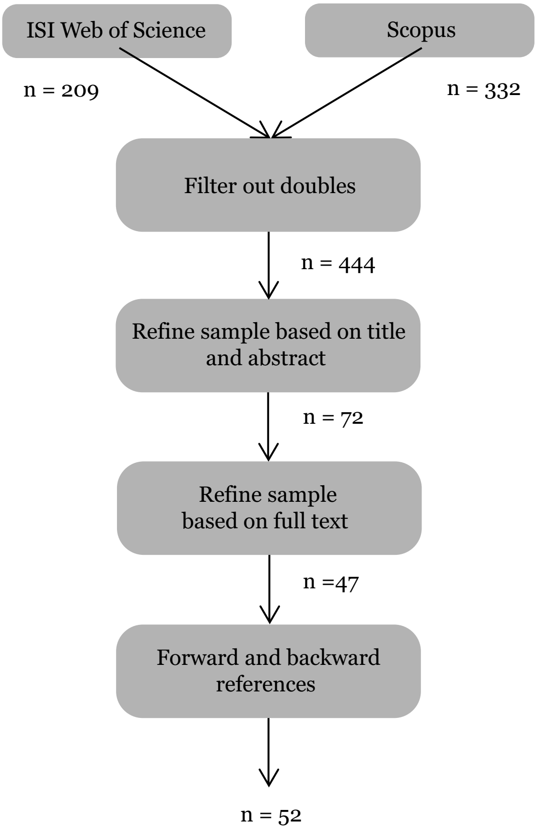

ISI Web of Science
Scopus
n = 209
n = 332
Filter out doubles
n = 444
Refine sample based on title and abstract
n = 72
Refine sample based on full text
n =47
Forward and backward references
n = 52

Figure 2.1 | Flowchart of the selection process

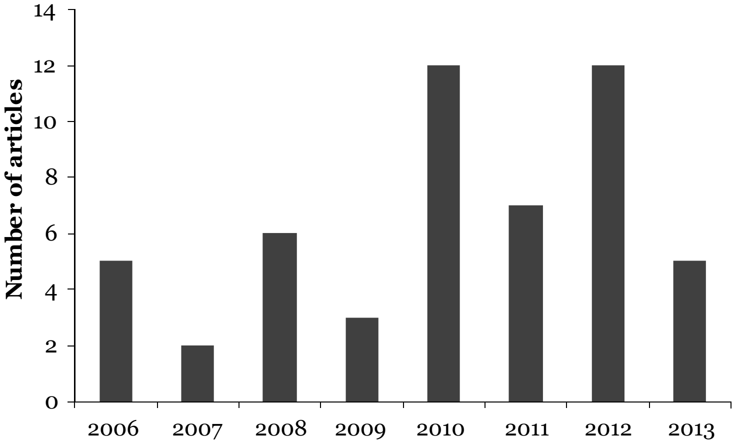


Figure 2.2 | Distribution of identified papers per publication year

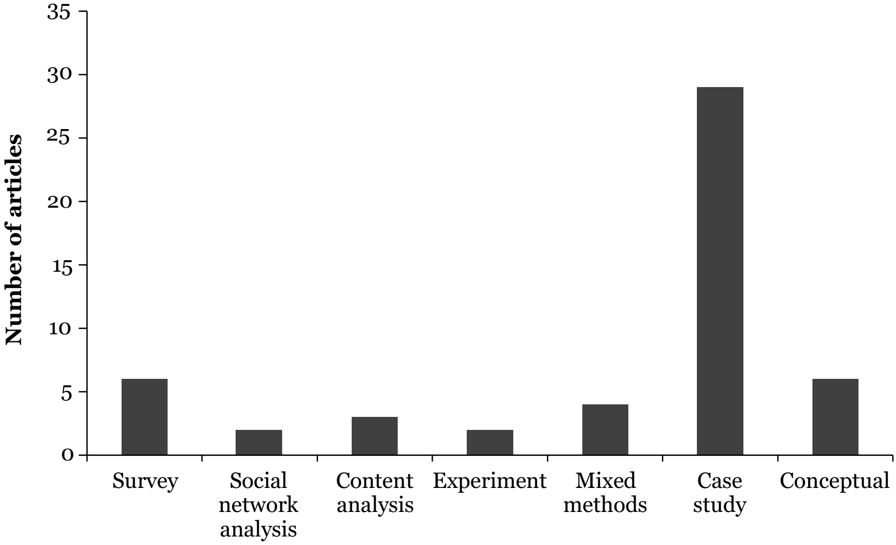


Figure 2.3 | Distribution of identified papers per research method

2.4 | **The Effects of Digital Media on Framing**

In this section, we synthesize relevant research on the effect of digital media on framing processes. Each paragraph addresses a concept of the review framework: 1) Shared injustice, 2) collective identity, and 3) collective efficacy.

2.4.1 | **Shared Injustice**

The effect of framing on public opinion about a social issue depends on how successful activist groups formulate and communicate their grievances about this issue (Rao, 2009). Mass media function as a crucial mediator of activist groups' impact on markets (King & Pearce, 2010), as media attention increases the awareness of the targeted firm's decision makers of their protests (Martin & Kracher, 2008). Hence, developing a consistent and precise frame and communicating it via mass media are fundamental skills that contemporary activists should have (Castells, 2009; Garrett, 2006). We found 14 articles about the influence of digital media on the communication of injustice.

Alternative Channel for Expressing Injustice. In many countries, governments to some extent control traditional media channels, such as television, newspapers, and radio. Scholars claim that due to the high level of user control, digital media can function as an alternative channel for mass media (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Hwang, Schmierbach, Paek, Gil de Zuniga, & Shah, 2006; Lim, 2012; Lomicky & Hogg, 2010; Postigo, 2010; Pu & Scanlan, 2012; Rohlinger & Brown, 2009; Shirazi, 2012). Several authors study online protest in countries with a repressive regime, where the state controls the mass media and the news rarely covers oppositional views. Digital media may give activists groups more access to mass media: They can express and share grievances with their supporters, for example, by circulating alternative stories (Hwang et al., 2006; Lim, 2012). The public character of many digital media may help activist groups diffuse their motivational frames beyond their members, sometimes attracting global media attention (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Lim, 2012). Anonymity on digital media may also mitigate the risks of protest in repressive states (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Rohlinger & Brown, 2009).

However, other scholars warn that claims regarding digital media being alternative channels for expressing grievances in repressed regions may be too optimistic (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2012; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010; Youmans & York, 2012). First, the recent 'Twitter revolutions' in Asia, the Middle East, and Northern Africa have shown that repressive regimes are not afraid of limiting access to the internet and increasing their surveillance of social media (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2012; Whitten-

Woodring & James, 2012). A recent example is the Turkish government closing down social media in the aftermath of the bombing of a pro-Kurdish peace rally in Ankara on October 10, 2015. Second, the anonymity that large social media firms afford their users may decrease further in the future due to more government control (Youmans & York, 2012). Third, internet access is still limited in many non-Western countries, hampering the diffusion of protests (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2012).

Cross-over Effect: From Digital Media to Traditional Media. Informal activist groups might lack access to mass media, as they lack resources or a strong reputation. Scholars argue that digital media can help increase coverage in traditional mass media by diffusing content to a large number of internet users (Pu & Scanlan, 2012). This crossover effect can increase the visibility of the motivational frame (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Theocharis, 2012; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010) and explain the influence of resource-poor activist groups on mass media coverage (Postigo, 2010). Activist groups that lack an advertisement budget may have better access to a broad audience in the digital age. Illustratively, an in-depth case study of student protest in the United Kingdom shows that the intensity of the online protest events helped students reach out to national and international media (Theocharis, 2012). The public nature of the digital media channel used, Twitter, allowed the student movement to communicate with journalists all over the world (Theocharis, 2012). This crossover effect from digital media to traditional mass media may depend on the protest frame's visibility and support among the mass media gatekeepers, such as influential online opinion makers, editors, and journalists (Pu & Scanlan, 2012).

Diminished Social Cues and Sharing a Sense of Injustice. Traditionally, face-to-face contact is seen as essential to diffuse emotions among activists and (potential) sympathizers. Although digital media can offer effective channels for the widespread and rapid diffusion of symbols and messages, some scholars criticize the effectiveness of digital media in replicating the warm and intense interactions of face-to-face contact (Diani, 2000). Digital media, which can only convey limited social cues (e.g. the communicators' eye contact, tone of voice, gestures, or facial expression), may lack the emotional richness required to build interpersonal relationships and trust between activists and (potential) supporters (Biddix & Han Woo Park, 2008; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Wall, 2007). On the other hand, Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) compare offline and online protest events and demonstrate that activist groups that were primarily mobilized online share a stronger sense of injustice. Hence, the question remains how digital media can help activists build social ties strong enough to share their cause-related grievances effectively (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

2.4.2 | **Collective Identity**

Activist create a collective identity to position themselves, and to recruit and engage protesters. Building and maintaining a collective identity is a cultural process that needs language and symbols (Melucci, 1989). Digital media, as transmitters of language and symbols, may stimulate or constrain collective identity processes (Melucci, 1996). We found 24 articles about the influence that digital media have on collective identity.

Digital Media Change the Strength of Collective Identities. Digital media seem to connect ideologically like-minded consumers beyond social and geographical boundaries, creating new collective identities (Clark & Themudo, 2006). An explanation for this ability could be that individuals who use digital media for protest participation depend less on their direct social networks (e.g. family and friends) and can therefore create, or join, collective identities that reflect their ideology instead of their social preferences, such as friends or family members (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Fisher & Boekkooi, 2010; Pickard, 2008; Van Laer, 2010; Wojcieszak, 2009). The diminished social cues of digital media may potentially decrease the perceived differences between protest group members, which fosters identification with the group and reinforces its unity (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Fisher & Boekkooi, 2010; Pickard, 2008; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998; Van Laer, 2010; Wojcieszak, 2009). Fisher and Boekkooi (2010), as well as Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010), find quantitative evidence of this claim: Protesters mobilized online tend to be more ideologically motivated and more often attended offline protests alone than those recruited offline. Similarly, an analysis of activist weblogs in Singapore revealed that, due to the public character of the blogosphere, the online activist bloggers shared strong ties and sustained communication after a campaign ended (Soon & Cho, 2013). Other scholars question the capability of digital channels to create stable ties and maintain collective identities. Digital media with a low level of social bandwidth may lack the social cues to signal shared social identity and, hence, do not help build social capital (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Shumate & Pike, 2006; Wall, 2007). Shumate and Pike's (2006) analysis of virtual protest networks suggest this relationship depends on how much effort online activists put into the social use of digital media, as opposed to purely functional use. Another critical point is that unequal access to digital media limits the potential of digital media to build collective identities beyond geographical and social boundaries (Biddix & Han Woo Park, 2008; Fisher & Boekkooi, 2010; Hooghe, Vissers, Stolle, & Mahéo, 2010; Toft, 2011; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Hence, digital media may not fully replace offline communication. In a study of a local homeless movement, Toft (2011) shows that, beside online mobilization, face-to-face contact remains important.

Casual Engagement with Multiple Collective Identities. The use of highly interactive digital media may afford activist groups the possibility to quickly develop collective identities (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Consequently, (potential) protesters can adhere to multiple collective identities and issues, rather than merely being a member of a formal activist group or organization (Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008). Protests based on digital media that allow the transmission of limited social cues (e.g. web-based petitions) may attract protest participants that want to voice their opinion on specific topics, but do not share the collective identity of the activism organization and do not want to be actively involved (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Eaton, 2010; Tatarchevskiy, 2011). Activist groups minimize personalization to offer slacktivists (a combination of slack and activist) or clicktivists (a combination of click and activist) prefabricated and weak collective identities, which results in large petition networks such as Avaaz.org or MoveOn.org (Eaton, 2010; Tatarchevskiy, 2011). Consequently, these activist groups can maintain strong control over their frame, as these low-effort participants have limited power in the frame development (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). On the other hand, highly interactive digital media allow protest participants to personalize the protest frames by means of user-generated content (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), which could lead to the fragmentation of protests' collective identity.

Digital Media Stimulate Transnational Collective Identities. On an inter-organizational level, digital media with high levels of interactivity and which are publicly visible may help activist groups building, join, and maintain *networked* collective identities. For example, they may create and approve joint statements on social issues, or develop joint codes of conducts with other activist groups (Pickard, 2008; Strange, 2011). A code of conduct, or joint statement, is often a linking pin between activist groups, for example, in the Global Social Justice Movement (Pickard, 2006; Strange, 2011). In this way, local identities may be linked to global protest identities, which may increase a sense of global solidarity (della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Pickard, 2008). In a large survey, Walgrave et al. (2012) find that activists do use digital media to link to similar activist groups. One effect of this widespread participation is that these activist networks often lack a coherent online strategy, resulting in the fragmentation of and conflict about the collective identity (Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Pickard, 2008; Shumate & Pike, 2006; Wall, 2007). A study of the G20 protests in Toronto shows that social networking sites accelerated the activists' identity formation. However, the activist network lost control over the collective identity as too many disparate groups and individuals participated (Poell, 2013).

2.4.3 | **Collective Efficacy**

Potential participants may feel incapable of affecting large institutions they want to target (Gamson, 1992). Activists therefore need to develop prognostic frames that increase the perceptions of collective efficacy by explaining how the protest will reach its social goals (Benford & Snow, 2000). We found only six articles on the link between digital media and collective efficacy.

Digital Media Show Protest Performance to Elicit Social Proof. First, digital media's wide-scale visibility may help activist groups show they can achieve their goal, for example, when the media track and publish the number of supporters already participating (Tatarchevskiy, 2011; Van Laer, 2010). Several case studies suggest that this use of digital media may increase the collective efficacy of marginalized groups, for example, in repressive regimes (Harlow & Harp, 2011; Shirazi, 2012). However, these case studies provide only anecdotal evidence and explain the underlying mechanisms imperfectly. The publication of the number of supporters may elicit a social proof process, during which (potential) protest participants use the social information to infer the protest's value (Oliver & Marwell, 2001; Rao, Greve, & Davis, 2001). A laboratory experiment on social influence showed that the signaling of a protest size can indeed stimulate protest participation (Margetts, John, Escher, & Reissfelder, 2011). The same public display allows activists to provide their supporters and the media with feedback on the success of (previous) protests, which may also boosts collective efficacy (Oostveen, 2010). However, digital media that only allow limited transmission of social cues may trigger a self-selection of protest participants, which may increase the perception of collective efficacy (Wojsciezak, 2008). This feeling might be unjustified: Online protests tend to attract like-minded and ideologically driven participants, which can cause the participants to overestimate the public support and the protests' recruitment potential (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Wojscieszak, 2008).

Increased Participation May Weaken Coordination. Last, activist groups that use highly interactive digital media for decision making may receive a great deal of input from their members and potential supporters (Carty, 2010; Oostveen, 2010). All these suggestions and ideas may complicate the process of agreeing on the prognostic frame, such as deciding on the strategies and tactics needed to achieve social change, which are important for the perception of collective efficacy (Clark & Themudo, 2006). However, this effect depends on how much decision power the participants are given.

2.5 | The Effects of Digital Media on Mobilizing Structures

In this section, we synthesize relevant research on the influence of digital media on formal and informal mobilizing structures. Formal mobilizing structures refer to dedicated activist groups that provide resources, membership, and coordination to organize large-scale protests. Informal mobilizing structures are inter-personal social networks, such as a network of friends, which may simulate the organization of protest. We found 22 articles on the effect of digital media on formal mobilizing structures and 18 articles on informal mobilizing structures.

2.5.1 | Formal Mobilizing Structures

Digital Media Lower Communication Costs. The premise of formal mobilizing structures is that large-scale collective action requires resource control and coordination by means of formal organization (McAdam et al., 1996). Digital media do not need the physical presence of face-to-face communication, which allows activist groups to quickly interact with supporters over long distances without the traditional need for material resources to organize large-scale protests (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014; Bennett, 2003b; Bimber et al., 2005; Carty, 2010; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Flanagin et al., 2006; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Consequently, activist groups that rely strongly on digital media require relatively few material resources, such as office space, physical meetings, administration, legal registration, and spokespersons (Clark & Themudo, 2006). On the other hand, the organizations' virtuality may weaken reputation, as activist groups that rely strongly on digital media that lack a physical presence may signal a temporal nature. This reputational deficit may hamper the acquisition of resources and media access (Clark & Themudo, 2006). Still, scholars argue that the use of digital media weakens the central thesis of resource mobilization theory that large-scale protests require large investments in protest communication and organization (Anduiza et al., 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005).

Formal Activist Groups Benefit Less from Cost Saving Effects. The costs-saving benefits of digital media seem to be less relevant to existing formal activist groups, as they have existing financing structures (Anduiza et al., 2014; Bennett et al., 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Although an analysis of online and offline protest events in Belgium shows that formal activist groups use digital media just as much as informal activist networks (Van Laer, 2010), this use may not drastically save costs. A reason for this could be that the use of digital media is only a minor part of organization's existing formal routines and norms of communication (Anduiza et al., 2014; Bennett, 2003b; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Van Laer, 2010; Van Laer &

Van Aelst, 2010). In the case of formal activist groups, digital media are additional communication channels more than a disruptive factor (Bennett, 2003a; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In practice, formal activist groups increasingly start internet-based activist groups as an additional channel through which they interact with (potential) protest participants, while maintaining their formal organization for cooperation and lobbying (Bennett et al., 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005; Flanagin et al., 2006), a process called hybridization (Ganesh & Stohl, 2013).

The Emergence of Dotcauses. Similar to dotcom firms in the 1990s, internet-based activist groups are called dotcauses (Clark & Themudo, 2006). Their flexible and decentralized decision-making structures (Bimber et al., 2005; Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pickard, 2008), an informal and responsive organizational culture (Carty, 2010; Clark & Themudo, 2006), and a tendency to have a flat organizational structure (Bimber et al., 2005; Carty, 2010; Coopman, 2010) characterize these dotcauses. Their internal governance seems to rely more on network mechanisms, like self-monitoring and trust, than formal leadership and incentives (Bennett, 2003c; Bennett et al., 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Lomicky & Hogg, 2010). Organizers behind dotcauses are often described as entrepreneurs instead of managers due to their informal, flexible protest organization (Carty, 2010; Earl & Schussman, 2002; Ganesh & Stohl, 2010; Garrett, 2006). The use of highly interactive and publicly visible digital media may increase protesters' wish to co-decide and even co-organize – a demand which needs dotcauses to have informal governance (Mercea, 2013). Some scholars criticize this democratic image of dotcauses, showing that some brand themselves as democratic platforms, but are in practice not open to participant input (Eaton, 2010; Tatarchevskiy, 2011). Another drawback of informal organization is the perceived lack of leadership in dotcauses (Bennett, 2003a; Bimber et al., 2005; Byrne, 2007). However, an analysis of anti-Iraq war activism suggests that a lack of formal leadership does not have to compromise organizational control (Bennett et al., 2008).

Reduced Participation Costs Change Organizational Structure. The reduced organization and participation costs of dotcauses seem to decrease the strength of Olson's (1965) free rider dilemma of collective action: Even with high levels of participants that do not contribute to the organization of the protest ('freeriding'), enough contributors will do so (Carty, 2010; Coopman, 2010). As proposed earlier, digital media could decrease membership costs, which is normally an important barrier to participation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005; Flanagin et al., 2006; Garrett, 2006). Some scholars stretch this argument even further: They argue that internet-based activism has blurred the definition of movement membership

(Earl & Kimport, 2009; Eaton, 2010; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). For example, are participants who sign an online petition simply movement users, or are they actual movement members? Dotcauses' organizational structure often consist of two parts: a small network with active members and a more symbolic mass of supporters (Bennett, 2003b; Tatarchevskiy, 2011), which follows the idea of a pyramid of unequal participation. For example, the dotcause Avaaz.org counts every internet user who signed a petition as one of its members. In this way, Avaaz.org had amassed almost 42 million members worldwide by June 2015, even though, many of these members probably had only participated occasionally.

2.5.2 | **Informal Mobilizing Structures**

Digital Media Support Mobilization of Network Resources. Highly interactive and publicly visible digital media may stimulate activist groups to create networks beyond their organizational, cultural, and geographical boundaries (Castells, 2001; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Coopman, 2010). The use of digital media seems to lower the brokerage costs for activist groups, which makes coalition building easier and organizational boundaries more permeable (Flanagin et al., 2006). Hence, networks of activist groups increasingly create global activist movements by thematically connecting activist groups (Biddix & Han Woo Park, 2008; Carty, 2010; Diani, 2000; Garrett, 2006; Gillan & Pickerill, 2008; Hooghe et al., 2010; Lomicky & Hogg, 2010; Theocharis, 2012). Apart from creating networked identities, as suggested earlier, global activist networks may provide activist groups with financial, social, cultural, and moral resources (Garrett, 2006). For example, activists may use digital media to exchange knowledge on successful protest tactics and practices (Earl & Kimport, 2009). However, the potential of digital media to acquire external resources is disputed in the literature. Several scholars argue that digital media do not stimulate the sharing of non-informational resources due to a lack of trust (Coopman, 2010; Gillan & Pickerill, 2008). Furthermore, global activist networks may face coordination problems due to a lack of leadership, changes in the network structure, power asymmetries, and cultural differences (Pickard, 2006, 2008; Shumate & Pike, 2006; Strange, 2011).

Digital Media Increase the Protest Diffusion across Interpersonal Networks. On the interpersonal level, high levels of interactivity and the publicness of digital media increase their capacity for direct, many-to-many communication (Bennett et al., 2008). Online social networks can increasingly function as informal mobilizing structures for protests (Bennett et al., 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Clark & Themudo, 2006), stimulating the diffusion of ideas and issues on *"an unprecedented scale, significantly reducing mobilization costs of social movement actors"* (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010, p. 1151). Coopman (2010) even argues that the use of digital media may reduce the need for traditional sources of informal mobilization structures, such as churches and local communities. Specifically, the public visibility of digital media seems to foster the rapid diffusion of online protests. In Nature's Scientific Reports, an extensive network analysis of a Twitter campaign against the Spanish government reveals two functions of online social networks in the diffusion of protest: global bridges and local, social networks (González-Bailón et al., 2011). First, well-connected, help spread information to a large audience. These bridges can be well-connected opinion makers, celebrities, or press offices. Second, local online social networks help spread collective action behavior by means of social contagion (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Langley, Bijmolt, Ortt, & Pals, 2012). In this way, Twitter combines the global reach of network bridges with local, personalized relationships (González-Bailón et al., 2011), thereby stimulating the mobilization of participants. Tufecki and Wilson (2012), as well as Lim (2012), find similar results in their online content analyses of the 2012 Arab Spring.

2.6 | **Discussion**

Organizational scholars have paid limited attention to date to the effects of digital media on protest mobilization (Castelló et al., 2013; De Bakker, 2012; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Martin & Kracher, 2008). However, firms increasingly face pressure from protests campaigns organized on the internet. In this chapter, we investigate why digital media enable, or constrain, activist groups when they organize protests. The aim was to identify the most important research questions in this emerging and fast developing stream of research. We used Rao's (2009) model of hot cause and cool mobilization to discuss the results of 52 online activism studies retrieved from political science, sociology, organization studies, and communication science. In this section, we summarize the key findings of the literature review according to the review framework concepts and extract research questions from our discussion of the literature. We subsequently describe the theoretical implications of these research question and formulate directions for future research. We conclude the discussion with the implications of our findings for campaigners and managers.

2.6.1 | **Findings and Theoretical Implications**

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the research topics and related research questions that we identified in the selection of articles. We discuss these findings in more detail.

Table 2.1 | Overview of the topics and research questions discussed in the literature.

Concept in theoretical framework	Research topic	Research questions
Framing		
Shared injustice	Alternative channel for expressing injustice	To what extent does digital media offer activist groups an alternative outlet to express their grievances to a broad audience?
	Cross-over effect to traditional media	How does the use of digital media result in attention to injustice in traditional mass media?
	Diminished social cues	To what extent do the diminished social cues of digital media hamper, or stimulate, the diffusion of injustice?
Collective identity	Strength of collective identity	To what extent does the use of digital media change the strength of a protest's collective identity?
	Multiple collective identities	How does the use of digital media help activist groups and protesters build and maintain multiple identities?
	Inter-organizational, networked collective identities	How does the use of digital media stimulate the formation and coordination of networked collective identities?
Collective efficacy	Signaling social proof	How, and to what extent, does the use of digital media stimulate social proof processes in (potential) participants?
	Homogenization boosts efficacy	What are the effects of digital media on how online communities of like-minded protesters perceive their efficacy?
	Weakening decision making and leadership	What is the effect of digital media's interactivity on the effectiveness of decision making in activist groups?

Table 2.1 | *(Continued)*

Concept in theoretical framework	Research topic	Research questions
Mobilizing structures		
Formal mobilizing structures	Communication and organization costs	How does an increase in costs due to digital media change protest organization?
	Cost savings for formal activist groups	How does the use of digital media decrease communication and organization costs for formal activist groups? How can activist groups balance offline and online activities?
	Dotcauses	Why do dotcauses emerge? How do dotcauses use digital media to organize protests?
	Movement membership	How does the use of digital media change movement membership and protest participation?
Informal mobilizing structures	Resources from networks	To what extent does the use of digital media help activist groups acquire resources from (inter-personal) networks?
	Protest diffusion	How does the use of interactive and publicly visible digital media change the diffusion of protests?

Digital media seem to help activist groups develop and diffuse a shared sense of injustice to a broad audience. First, research argues that digital media are important in countries with a regime that does not allow its citizens to express and share deviant views in traditional news outlets. Most studies found that the speed, interactivity, and anonymity of digital media provide concerned consumers and activist groups with an alternative medium beyond the control of repressive regimes. Several scholars temper this technological optimism: Repressive regimes may not be afraid of increasing their control of public digital media and activists need to make extra efforts to remain anonymous. Second, digital media provide activists with alternative ways to stimulate traditional mass media to report on their campaign. When a protest campaign attracts large-scale attention on digital media, mass media are more likely to report this. However, as an alternative medium, publicly visible digital media, such as social media, may change protesters' access to mass media. Third, the question whether digital media are capable of replacing face-to-face contact regarding the diffusion of grievances remains a topic for scholarly discussion. Digital media could play a more important role in expressing and diffusing shared injustice if the social cues they transmit were to increase. An implication for organizational research is to what extent protest on digital media influences the perception of shareholders and customers. Does negative attention from online protest inflict reputational damage to firms in the same way as protest covered in traditional media? (Bartley & Child, 2011; King, 2008a; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009)

The bulk of research addressed in this chapter focuses on the use of digital media to build and maintain collective identities. First, scholars discuss whether public and highly interactive digital media help like-minded people find each other quickly and create large collective identities, thus transcending their social and geographical borders. Second, internet-based protest is often triggered by identification with issues, rather than association with the organization behind the protest. Hence, research shows that activist groups create, connect, and maintain multiple identities. Third, similar to debates on injustice, scholars dispute whether digital media provide activists with enough interactivity to create strong bonds and maintain collective identities. For example, research on transnational online activist networks suggests that of subcultures may emerge in large weak collective identities, leading to conflicts and confusion within the activist network. Theoretically, this swift formation of multiple collective identities on corporate issues can increase the dynamics and complexity of a firm's stakeholder environment. Current stakeholder models might also be too static and ignore the dynamics of online protest. Based on our review, we suggest that the use of public and highly interactive digital media may increase the salience of resource-poor activist groups, because they can more easily convey a larger collective identity. In other words, activist groups that seem powerless in the first instance might use catchy frames to quickly mobilize mass participation. Consequently, a traditional, resource-based perspective on activist groups' legitimacy becomes less relevant (Eesley & Lenox, 2006). In contrast, King (2008b) suggests that inexperienced organizations forming new collective identities may decrease the salience for firms. Future research may examine how the use of digital media changes the salience of activist groups as stakeholders. Furthermore, in contrast to Rowley and Moldoveanu's (2003) interest and identity-based model of social movements, activists' use of highly interactive digital media could cause a shift from collective identity to personal interest as a motivation for participation.

Limited research efforts have been dedicated to the effect of digital media on collective efficacy. Extant research shows, first, that digital media might help activist groups signal the protest size and success stories in real time, which can convince an activist group's participants of its capability to actually achieve social change. Second, high levels of interactivity in internet-based activism might make achieving consensus on the focus, strategy, and tactics problematic. Third, as digital media may attract like-minded protesters, their perception of the protest's efficacy may be overly optimistic.

Regarding mobilizing structures, the review shows that the effect of digital media exceeds the digitalization of existing protest tactics (Martin & Kracher, 2008). Activist groups use highly interactive digital media as platforms for self-organization, seeming to rely less on formal organization (e.g. organizational membership and hierarchical layers in an organizational structure) to mobilize large-scale protest support. Consequently, internet-based activist groups, or dotcauses, appear, which are often resource-poor, flexible, informal, and have a nonhierarchical organizational structure. Despite their lack of experience with organizing protest, these dotcauses often mobilize large masses of consumers, and are able to pressurize firms. Theoretically, this is contrary to Den Hond and De Bakker's (2007) notion that large-scale persuasive protests are increasingly difficult to organize. Furthermore, the emergence of dotcauses may require more emphasis on informal mobilizing structures, such as interpersonal networks (King, 2008b).

Dotcauses could be considered partial organizations, because they lack the requirements of formal organization (e.g. membership or incentive systems) (Rasche, De Bakker, & Moon, 2013). A question remains whether dotcauses are truly as democratic in their internal decision making as they claim to be. Most dotcauses offer consumers low-cost protest opportunities, which merely require a click or the sending of an e-mail message. Such large-scale protests do not allow dotcauses to provide their participants with a high degree of interactivity, as high levels of interactivity would increase the need for resources and resource control. On the other hand, traditional activist groups, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are increasingly taking steps to reap the same benefits from online protest and some have started new dotcauses, while maintaining their own formal organization. This trend creates hybrid organizations that aim to combine the advantages of both formal and informal mobilizing structures.

A substantial amount of research details the role of digital media regarding providing networks for protest diffusion. First, the literature disputes the potential of online networks to generate resources. Apart from exchanging knowledge (e.g. best practices and tactics), there is no solid evidence that online activist networks provide activist groups with material resources. Second, interactive and publicly visible digital media, such as social media, provide interpersonal social networks that help diffuse protests quickly. These networks are both local (e.g. between friends) and global (e.g. between press office and consumers).

2.6.2 | **Limitations and Future Research**

The research questions formulated in this review provide various directions for organizational research on online protest. Below, we formulate four broader directions for future research.

First, this chapter focuses on persuasive and participative protest forms on the internet, such as online petitions. However, this is only a part of activist groups' tactical repertoire. Future research should extend and test online protest typologies, such as their level of contribution and their degree of disruptiveness to firms (Earl & Kimport, 2008). An example of such disruptiveness is ethical hacking, when activist groups such as Anonymous use digital media to disrupt firms' operations by, for example, blocking their websites. Such research may contribute to our knowledge of how activist groups adapt their communication to target different firms and mobilize audiences (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Furthermore, future research could study how offline and online protest tactics interact.

Second, we noticed that the current literature does not theorize the structural attributes, goals, and context of the ways protest organization use digital media. There are, however, calls in the selection of articles for more research on the effects that digital media's attributes have on protest mobilization (González-Bailón et al., 2011). Earlier communication studies show that digital media may differ greatly in their social affordances (Barry & Fulmer, 2004; Leonardi, Neeley, & Gerber, 2012). Even social media applications are not all alike: The microblogging website Twitter, for example, primarily allows for public communication, whereas communication on Facebook is more private. Future research could borrow from media choice theories, as this body of research has conceptualized digital media attributes to explain why social actors use a specific type of media channel and how effective this use is (Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Watson-Manheim & Bélanger, 2007). Examples of relevant theories are social presence theory; reduced social cues approach theory; Postmes, Spears and

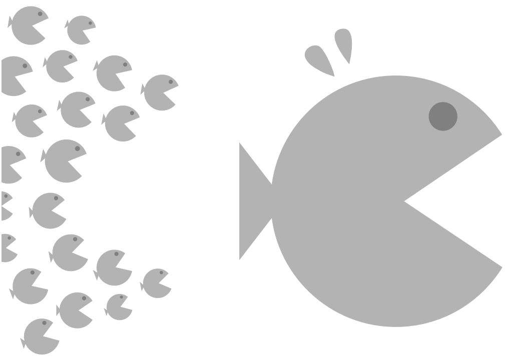
Lea’s (1986) social identity model of deindividualization effects (SIDE); and Walther’s (1995) social information processing model.

Third, we noticed that only a few papers apply large-scale social network analysis to study online protests (Bennett et al., 2008; González-Bailón et al., 2011). However, an increasing amount of social media data is becoming available (George, Haas, & Pentland, 2014), which provides researchers with opportunities to study the mobilization process of online protests with unobtrusive methods. Social network analysis, for example, based on hyperlinks between protest websites, or social media interactions, could help scholars map complex activist networks and their interactions with firms (De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013). Furthermore, social network analysis may help researchers assess the effects of online protest campaigns on (social) media discourse (Vasi et al., 2015). The case study method that is dominant in the selection of papers could be complemented with experimental research to move online protest research from theory building to hypothesis testing.

Last, the effects of digital media on protest efficacy received the least attention in the studied articles. Future research could explore how digital media and its specific attributes increase or decrease protest efficacy, for example, by signaling the potential success by means of social proof (Oliver & Marwell, 2001; Rao et al., 2001).

2.6.3 | **Practical Implications**

Practically, this chapter aims to make both the corporate decision makers in firms and the campaigners in activist groups more aware of how protests work. First, changes in mobilizing structures urge corporate decision makers to pay attention to new, resource-poor activist groups, such as dotcauses. Despite their newness, these activist groups may threaten firms’ reputation. However, managers should be aware that the internet is not only a source of threats. The same online networks offer firms opportunities to connect to social movements and start constructive online dialogues. In turn, formal activist groups, such as NGOs, could learn from the strategies and tactics that dotcauses employ to innovate their activities, or collaborate with online activist networks. Second, activist groups’ use of digital media may have an effect on protest framing: They may help diffuse grievances quickly, which decreases the time that activists need to create and build a campaign to contest organizational behavior. Furthermore, the use of digital media may lead to an increase in the complexity of the collective identities that activist groups need to maintain. The findings of this study could help campaigners discuss dilemmas in their strategies and tactics, as well as help managers on the other side understand how digital media could change the organizational form of and interactions with their stakeholders.



Chapter 3

Dotcauses for Sustainability: Combining Activism and Entrepreneurship[11]

Abstract

Dotcauses play an increasingly important role in creating and maintaining social movements that are aimed at promoting sustainability. Yet, like offline activist groups, dotcauses still need to exploit and mobilize resources, such as donations, media attention, and moral support, and they still need to be efficient and creative for the promotion of their social cause. Unfortunately, the social movement and social entrepreneurship streams of research have tended to produce separate literatures despite their potential synergies. We bring together both streams by using process models from social entrepreneurship and social movement theory to analyze the actions of dotcauses for sustainability. Additionally, we explore to what extent digital media support the actions of dotcauses and reveal which ethical considerations arise from combining entrepreneurship and activism. We collect data on eight dotcauses via semi-structured interviews and desk research. Our cross-case analysis reveals two types of dotcauses: online social entrepreneurs that partner up with firms and online entrepreneurial activists that target firms for protest. These two types differ substantially with regard to their collective identity and their ethical considerations. Our findings show that digital media enable activist groups to act in a more entrepreneurial and open manner. We suggest directions for future research, including a combination of social movement theory and social entrepreneurship theory to describe, and explain the role of digital media in processes of organizational change.

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3.1 | Introduction

Activist groups increasingly use digital media to put pressure on governments and firms, for example, to improve their sustainability performance (Burrell, 2012; Roper, 2002). Research on the use of digital media by activists, so-called cyberactivism, emerged during the turn of the millennium (Castells, 1997; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Van de Donk et al., 2004). This emerging field of research shows both advantages and disadvantages of digital media usage by activists (Bimber et al., 2005; Garrett, 2006; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Digital media lower the threshold for potential activists to establish their own advocacy organizations, as large groups of consumers can participate with low effort or co-presence, while the costs of organizing an online protest stay relatively low (Lupia & Sin, 2003). Dotcauses are a specific form of cyberactivism, which have rapidly gained in number since the 1990s (Clark & Themudo, 2006). Dotcauses are often informal, political networks that mobilize support for their social cause (partly) by means of digital media. A prime example is Avaaz.org, which mainly operates on the Internet and has a global network of almost 42 million members as of June 2015.

In practice, activists and (social) entrepreneurs adopt each other's strategies. Activists, including dotcauses, often draw on entrepreneurial strategies that help them mobilize and exploit resources – such as donations, media attention, and moral support – in a more efficient and creative way (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Nicholls, 2010; Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009). On the other hand, Mair and Marti (2006) mention how tactics used by activists, such as framing, mobilization, protest, and negation, can be useful for social entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, both social movement and social entrepreneurship literatures appear to have developed quite independently of each other (Alvord et al., 2004; Simms & Robinson, 2008).

However, the combination of an ideological support base of activists with entrepreneurial strategies, such as slick marketing campaigns on social media, may cause difficulties (O'Shaughnessy, 2012; Tatarchevskiy, 2011). This problem has been described in social movement research as 'mainstreaming' activism (Gamson, 2004). The ethical dilemma of dotcauses is how they treat their support: as consumers or critical citizens. For example, Tatarchevskiy (2011, p. 302) points out that mainstreaming the message of social justice can raise questions about *"the democratic potential of such culture of popularized charity and advocacy"*.

We aim to study how dotcauses combine activism with entrepreneurship in relation to sustainability challenges. We focus on sustainability challenges because this is an area in which organizations are closely scrutinized by the public, and in which they risk protest campaigns if they are perceived to behave socially irresponsible. The research question of this chapter is *"How do dotcauses combine activism and* *entrepreneurship to pursue sustainable change?"* We address this research question by comparing eight dotcauses that combine activism and social entrepreneurship activities for sustainability in different degrees. The dotcauses differ in the type of social cause, the degree of virtualization, and the degree of entrepreneurship.

3.2 | **Theory**

Activists are often members of social movements, which are collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are part (Snow et al., 2004). To achieve their desired social change, activists recognize and exploit political opportunities, frame causes, mobilize resources and are in repertoires of contention (McAdam et al., 1996). Activist groups are their organizational vehicle, which can be formal (e.g. NGOs) or informal (e.g. ad-hoc groups like Occupy Wall street). Their essential goal is to reach social change. For this purpose, activist groups increasingly focus on markets: they put pressure on brands, firms, and even institutional fields to change their behavior (Soule, 2009).

Social entrepreneurs, on the other hand, do not necessarily strive for radical social change. Their primary goal is to fulfill social needs while creating economic value by offering products or services: *"social entrepreneurs discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner"* (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009, p. 519). Yet, Zahra et al. (2009) and Nicholls (2010) both specify a type of social entrepreneur that aims at social change and fulfillment of social needs at the same time. The social engineers (Zahra et al., 2009) or the transformational social entrepreneurs (Nicholls, 2010) are institutional entrepreneurs, such as activist groups, that use advocacy and campaigning to achieve systemic social change. We propose a new framework (Table 3.1) that positions transformational social entrepreneurs as a specific type of social entrepreneurship that combines (radical) social change and the fulfillment of social needs.

Table 3.1 | Transformational social entrepreneurs desire social change and fulfill social needs

		Fulfilling social needs	
		High	*Low*
Desire for social change	*High*	Transformational social entrepreneurs (Zahra et al, 2009; Nicholls, 2010)	Activists
	Low	Social entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs

3.2.1 | Social Entrepreneurship and Social Movement Processes

Social entrepreneurship theory and social movement theory propose process models to describe the process of social innovators toward social change. The activities undertaken in this process, although described by different terminologies in the two fields, overlap. Table 3.2 shows the steps in the social entrepreneurship process (Perrini & Fazzolari, 2006; Thompson, 2002) and social movement process (McAdam et al., 1996; Rao, 2009). There are three main differences between the activities of social entrepreneurs and activists: 1) scope; 2) phase in process toward social change; and 3) formal organization. First, the activities of social entrepreneurs as described in Perinni's process model are essentially on individual and organizational levels. The process model by Thompson (2002) emphasizes the individual social entrepreneur, in their role of champion and project leader, as a critical success factor to reach social change. Social movement literature, however, often highlight the group who embraces an idea for social change rather than the initiator. An explanation is that the concept of leadership is insufficiently developed in social movement theory (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Second, social entrepreneurship focuses more on recognizing and evaluating opportunities that are worth exploiting, whereas social movement literature mostly starts with the premise that there is a social cause to fight for. Moreover, in the social movement process, there is more focus on how to spread the idea through the creation of a social identity (Polletta & Jasper, 2001), than the exploitation of the resources. For example, the key success factor of a social movement is the number of people (see, e.g. WUNC by Tilly (2004)). Third, social entrepreneurship theory focuses more on formalizing the efforts by enacting a business plan to acquire recourses enabling the entrepreneur to effectuate his or her plans.

Table 3.2 | Overview of social entrepreneurship and (SE) social movement (SM) activities

	SE activities	**Description**	**SM activities**	**Description**
Identification	Social opportunity identification	The social entrepreneurs’ awareness of the need for challenging mainstream views surrounding a social burden. (Perrini & Fazzolari, 2010)		
Evaluation	Social opportunity evaluation	Balancing the extent to which a long lasting change will be produced and the economic sustainability of the social innovation. (Perrini & Fazzolari, 2010)		
Expression	Social opportunity formalization	Articulating consistently the innovativeness of the offering, its expected social impact and the bases for its sustainability. (Perrini & Fazzolari, 2010)	Framing	Call upon shared understanding and emotions of the problem. (Rao, 2009; Snow and Soule, 2009)
Exploitation	Social opportunity exploitation	Developing an appropriate intervention model and organizational vehicle for the social innovation. (Ucbasaran, Westhead, and Wright 2001; Perrini & Fazzolari, 2010).	Identifying political opportunity	Analyzing constraints and drivers in the political context (structures, configurations of power and interaction contexts) that affect the opportunity set of the social movement. (Kriesi, 2004).
Mobilization	Social opportunity scaling-up	Spreading the social innovation as widely as possible in order to maximize social change (Chell, 2007; Perrini & Fazzolari, 2010).	Mobilization	Mobilizing resources and diffusing the cause through informal and formal mobilizing structures. (Rao, 2009)
Persuasion			Contentious activity	Contentious collective action challenging extant authority using tactical repertoires, such as protest and dialogue. (Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2004;Rao, 2009)

3.3 | **Methods**

In the previous sections, we described the rise of dotcauses that use digital media to combine activism and entrepreneurship actions to pursue sustainable change. We focus on the social change process of these dotcauses and how elements of the process models in social movement theory and social entrepreneurship are combined. To do so, we provide a comparative case-study analysis of eight dotcause cases. The multi-case study design aims at exploring the strategies, activities, and struggles of the specific cases in detail, rather than testing hypothesis (Yin, 2003). We sampled the cases on various sizes (ranging from a small team with 1000 members to a global organization with over 13 million members at the time of data collection). Additionally, we used the following selection criteria: some form of online mobilization of consumers; aimed at social change, rather than fulfilling social needs; active in markets, rather than only in the public sector; recent activity: at least active in 2009, 2010, or 2011; visible in the Dutch media. Consequently, the scope of this study is limited, owing to a low number of cases and visibility in the Netherlands.

We used in-depth semi-structured interviews and project documentation (Yin, 1994) to collect data. The interview's questions are attached in the appendices. All dimensions of the research model were operationalized in our interview protocol. We selected eight interviewees by using snowball sampling to ensure richness in data. Interviewees include directors, online campaign managers, innovation directors, or communication managers. We conducted nine interviews in a period of 2 months. One organization was interviewed twice, to obtain additional information. The average interview length was approximately an hour. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Apart from interviews, a substantial amount of online content, annual reports, and media papers was collected to contextualize and enrich the interview data. After the interviews, additional questions were asked by email to fill information gaps.

We analyzed the data by coding relevant words and phrases in the interview transcriptions. A matrix was used to cluster all coded phrases on the concepts of the research model (Miles & Huberman, 1994), in which the factors and interviewees were listed on differences and similarities. Subsequently, a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare all cases. We compared these cases along the three sub research questions: 1) mix of activities; 2) digital media support; and 3) ethical considerations of mainstreaming activism. Table 3.3 provides a brief overview of the cases: 1) description; 2) online activities; 3) size; and 4) legal status.

Table 3.3 | Overview of the eight dotcause cases

Case	Description	Nr of employees	Funding	Legal status
A	A Dutch online community of about 1000 citizens, which collects and highlights (quick) charity actions to be taken by citizens. Established in 2011 by a social entrepreneur.	5-25	Subsidy and advertisement	Company
B	A UK-based multi-campaign website with over 800,000 members in 2011. It describes itself as a citizen-driven online social movement. Established by entrepreneurs in 2009.	5-25	Donations by members	Company
C	A global multi-campaign website with over 13 million members in 2012. It describes itself as a network of citizens that take action on issues. Established by activist networks in 2007	25-100	Donations by members	Foundation
D	A Dutch foundation and online community that researches the sustainability (e.g. fairness) of consumer goods (e.g. food and clothing). It publishes rankings and advice for consumers on its website. Established by a social entrepreneur in 2002.	5-25	Membership fees and firms	Foundation
E	A Dutch online platform of 16,000 consumers in 2011, which connects and encourages consumers and firms to jointly develop and execute sustainability innovations. Established by a former businessman in 2010.	5-25	Advertisement and income from services to firms	Company
F	A global environmental trust with over 5 million members that aims to improve the environmental sustainability on the earth. It uses digital media to globally mobilize millions of consumers, for example to turn off their light during the earth hour (earthhour.org). Established in 1961	100+	Donations and subsidies	Trust
G	Dutch affiliate of a global advocacy association, dedicated to a fair world without poverty. It has over 400,000 members in the Netherlands. It aims to be a platform for consumers to take action: it increasingly uses social media to inform, mobilize and even co-create projects and decision-making. Established in 1956.	100+	Donations and subsidies	Association
H	Global environmental advocacy organization with almost 3 million members. Apart from research and lobbying, it uses digital media for campaigns against unsustainable behavior by firms. An example is a large scale online campaign against the construction of coal plants in the Netherlands. Established in 1971.	100+	Donations and subsidies	Association

3.4 | **Results**

This section describes the patterns identified across the eight cases on three aspects: mix of social entrepreneurship and social movement activities, digital media support for activities, and ethical considerations. We provide tables with brief descriptions of the cases on various dimensions of these aspects. We briefly discuss the differences and similarities that emerge from the cross-case analyses.

3.4.1 | **Mix of Social Entrepreneurship and Social Movement Activities**

Table 3.4 shows an overview of the social entrepreneurship and social movement activities that were identified in the cases. In general, the more formal the dotcauses, the more they combine social movement and social entrepreneurship activities. Three cases (B, C, and G) combined all social entrepreneurship and social movement activities. All cases evaluated the social opportunities they identified. In some cases, this was carried out through informal networks, for example, asking strong ties, such as friends and family members, if a social cause was worth pursuing. In other cases, specifically the more formal cases B, C, and E, this was carried out by consulting their (online) membership base. At last, in some cases, the social opportunities were evaluated by internal decision making, for example, by a professional campaign team.

All cases but one formulated a specific mission and goals for their social cause. However, only five of eight cases framed their social cause on purpose to call for shared understanding and emotions. Almost all cases, except the single consumer, defined a business model and organizational vehicle to exploit the social opportunities. However, in some cases, the organization remains mainly online. For example, cases B and C are totally financed by virtual members. Strategically analyzing the political opportunity and subsequent contentious activity seem to differentiate activists from social entrepreneurs. Cases B, C, D, G, and H did conduct a strategic analysis prior to their actions (e.g. protests or collaborative projects). For example, case C uses a team of professional campaigners to draw a complete picture of the political situation: stakeholders, their goals, potential weak points, and broader power sources such as policy and regulation. Moreover, specialists, consumers, and journalists give political insights, so the organization can optimally define how to exploit best the social opportunity. In case of the fair trade industry, local partners provide intelligence to the cases about the sustainability performance of the whole value chain of incumbent firms in the food industry.

Table 3.4 | Overview of the activities that were identified

			Case							
Phase	**Activities (Social Entrepreneurship or Social Movement)**		**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**
Identification	Social opportunity identification	SE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Evaluation	Social opportunity evaluation	SE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Expression	Social opportunity formalization	SE		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Framing	SM		√	√				√	√
Exploitation	Social opportunity exploitation	SE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Identifying political opportunity	SM		√	√	√			√	√
Mobilization	Social opportunity scaling-up	SE	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
	Mobilization / collective identity	SM	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Persuasion	Contentious activity	SM		√	√				√	√

Contentious activity, in other words protest, is applied by five of eight cases. In most of these cases, for example, two large activist groups (cases G and H), the extant authorities are firms that behave in environmentally unsustainable way. During this research project, case G focused on supermarkets that sell unfair chocolate or banks that invest in firms producing cluster bombs. Last, some form of scaling up of social innovation is found in almost all cases. The exception is case E, which does not explicitly diffuse their social opportunities among consumers. Yet, they benchmark the sustainable performance of firms and provide the consequent ranking to consumers, firms, and other activist groups. At last, five cases aim to grow their membership base and form a strong collective identity. The commitment of their membership can range from clicking once on a petition (passive) to submitting and evaluating social causes (active). The cases A, D, and E, however, do not protest, but deliberately choose to cooperate with firms and governments. For example, case E encourages firms to submit and execute projects with the members of their website. These projects aim to increase the environmental sustainability of products and services of these firms.

3.4.2 | **Activities Supported by Digital Media**

Table 3.5 gives an overview of how digital media have been used to support the activities of the dotcauses. Especially, the social movement activities, such as framing, mobilization, and contentious activity toward the extant authority, were supported by digital media, such as websites and social media. It seems that social entrepreneurial

Table 3.5 | Overview of how digital media support social entrepreneurship and social movement activities

Phase	Activities (Social Entrepreneurship or Social Movement)		Cases	Ratio	Description
Identification	Social opportunity identification	SE	B, C, and E	3 out of 8	Cases C, D, and F offer a crowdsourcing platform on their website. Internet users can, after registration, submit social opportunities or causes.
Evaluation	Social opportunity evaluation	SE	B,C, and E	3 out of 8	Cases B and E use the same social media platform on their website to evaluate the submitted opportunities. Internet users can vote on their favorite opportunity. In case C, a weekly online poll is used to test and evaluate the identified social opportunities.
Expression	Social opportunity formalization	SE	B, C, and E	2 out of 7	Only three cases (B, C, and E) used digital media to articulate the mission and goals of each social opportunity. For example, case C visualizes the goals on their webpage with counters that indicate how many support a petition needs.
	Framing	SM	B, C, G, and H	4 out of 4	All dotcauses that use frames to elicit emotions, use digital media in some form. Images, stories, and persuasive texts are prominent on the websites. Some cases, for example G and H, publish shocking or entertaining YouTube movies.
Exploitation	Social opportunity exploitation	SE	Cases B, and E	2 out of 8	Overall, the actual organization of the dotcause remains offline. In case B and E, however, the organizational vehicle and business / intervention model, is almost only virtual. For example, case F offers an online platform where internet users can collaborate on social causes.
	Identifying pol opportunity	SM	None	0 out of 5	The strategic analysis of the political opportunity is done offline in teams. No digital media and help from internet users are used. A possible reason is the political sensitivity of the information.

Table 3.5 | *(Continued)*

Phase	**Activities (Social Entrepreneurship or Social Movement)**		**Cases**	**Ratio**	**Description**
Mobilization	Social opportunity scaling-up	SE	All	7 out of 7	All cases that try to scale-up their social opportunity use digital media as diffusion channels. Most cases even state that there is no other technology available that has the global reach, speed, and social infrastructure. Although some cases (for example case B and C) mention the low costs of digital media, other cases (e.g. case A and G) point out that the uncertainty of large-scale diffusion is high. Most cases use online (micro) donations to fund their activities.
	Mobilization / collective identity	SM	All	6 out of 6	Like scaling up, all dotcauses use digital media to form a collective identity. Specifically, the dotcauses use social media (primarily Twitter and Facebook) and forums on their own website to mobilize and engage members. However, a stronger form of identity creation is prevalent in the smaller cases (A and E): these cases use their own online social networks, where members have profiles and can communicate. Case A organizes competition between members who spent most time on social causes.
Persuasion	Contentious activity	SM	All	4 out of 4	All cases with contentious activity use digital media for their protest. A wide range of online tactical repertoires are used: Twitter and Facebook attacks, large scale e-mail campaigns towards the target, telephone attacks, online petitions, YouTube videos and even games. For example, case G designed an online game, in which internet users could paint messages on the buildings of the firms that were targeted.

activities, such as opportunity recognition, evaluation, formalization, and exploitation, are performed offline. Smaller cases, such as B, C, and E, are more virtual organizations. These organizations would be called 'clicks only' by Clark and Themudo (2006). As these organizations are almost completely driven by their online members, they need online platforms to receive and discuss the members' input. Digital media allow these 'clicks only' dotcauses to recruit and engage a large membership base (e.g. 13 million in case C), while spending only little on organizational costs (e.g. case C has only 50 employees). Cases B and C claim to be completely financed by the online donations of their online members, so they do not need any subsidy from the government.

The use of digital media to support social entrepreneurship and social movement activities has advantages and disadvantages. The global reach, speed, interactivity, and low costs allow dotcauses to mobilize and engage thousands of consumers, journalists, experts, and firms. For example, some cases use online platforms to identify and evaluate social opportunities or to organize collective protest against firms. Moreover, social media offer an existing mobilization structure for dotcauses. Some cases, however, indicated also disadvantages. As stated by Rao (2009), face-to-face contact is needed to create a strong collective identity. Therefore, even the completely online dotcauses considered taking steps to combine their online community with face-to-face meetings. Next, the low threshold to start a dotcause has a drawback: the competition for the attention of consumers, for example, for a social opportunity, is very high. Traditional media and collaboration between dotcauses and other organizations is needed to grow or, at least, to stay visible. Last, some dotcauses pointed out that diffusion via digital media is quite uncontrollable. For example, why do some social innovations (e.g. social causes) spread faster on social media than others?

3.4.3 | **Ethical Considerations of Combining Social Entrepreneurship and Activism**

As mentioned in the introduction, nonprofit organizations can face ethical considerations when combining social with economic value creation. A profitable business model could possibly clash with the ideology of these nonprofit organizations (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009). Two cases (A and E) do indeed struggle with this dilemma of legitimacy. Both cases collaborate with firms instead of challenging them and, often, require a contribution for their services. For example, case A offers firms and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to place their petition on its website for a small financial contribution. Some NGOs and most consumers, however, hesitate to pay this financial contribution, as they do not want to spend any money on advertisement. Additionally, the dotcause does not optimally use its democratic potential, as it increases the barrier for consumers to place their petition on the website. Both dotcauses (cases A and E) are careful in selecting firms they cooperate with. They only select firms that are known for their sustainable reputation, as they fear criticism of supporting ‘greenwashing’ or deceptive promotion of a firm’s sustainable credentials. The use of digital media raises ethical considerations as well. Some cases (e.g. A, F, and G) use entertainment and competition as incentives for Internet users to participate. For example, case A has a monthly prize for the most active member of the community. However, some board members of the dotcause consider competition as an undesirable incentive to support a social cause. The same ethical considerations apply to the use of entertaining elements, such as games and humorous YouTube films. However, in a utilitarian view, these marketing strategies help to effectively reach the social goal. Last, some scholars criticize the ease of online actions, such as online petitions (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2009). The cynical term ‘slacktivism’ or ‘clicktivism’ refer to these low-cost tactics of dotcauses. However, none of the cases expressed the fear that consumers are replacing activism on the streets by virtual clicks. On the contrary, most cases see low cost tactics as opportunities to make consumers aware of social causes and as a first step to engage them in high-cost tactics, such as street rallies or sit-ins.

3.5 | **Discussion**

This chapter analyzed eight cases of dotcauses, which combined activism and entrepreneurial strategies in different degrees. We compared these cases on three aspects: 1) mix of social entrepreneurship and activism activities, 2) use of digital media, and 3) ethical considerations.

3.5.1 | **Dotcauses: Social Entrepreneurs or Entrepreneurial Activists?**

We found that most cases combine social entrepreneurship activities with activism activities. Specifically, the activities related to the identification and evaluation of social opportunities seem to complement the traditional activism activities. However, mobilization and the scaling up of social opportunities overlap, indicating the importance for both social entrepreneurs and activists. However, a significant distinction among the dotcauses is how firms were perceived: as targets of their protests or as business partners? It seems that dotcauses struggle with their organizational identity: are they reformative or radical activist groups? (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). In case the dotcause perceived (environmentally sustainable) firms as partners, the dotcause relied on the income of the services offered to these partners. So, although all cases mix social entrepreneurship and activists activities, the analyses reveal two types of dotcauses: 1) the online social entrepreneurs that when needed use social activism and 2) entrepreneurial activists that leverage digital media to protest in an entrepreneurial way, recognizing and exploiting political opportunities, risk taking and creative in resources, and highly flexible in strategies. Some of the activists do indeed describe their behavior as entrepreneurial. For example, one of the online campaigners stated: *"We need to change our strategies every day to be as effective as possible, in some sense we are entrepreneurs"* and *"online campaigning is, apart from low-costs, more risky in financial terms and uncontrollable than conventional channels for protest"*.

3.5.2 | Digital Media Enable Entrepreneurial Activism But Can Constrain Collective Identity

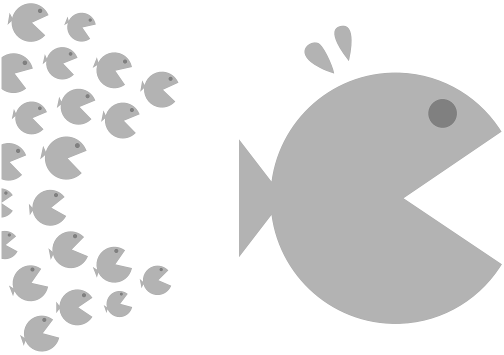
On the basis of our study, we conclude digital media indeed lowered the costs to frame a social cause to a wider public, mobilize quickly, and engage large groups in low-involvement protest, such as petitions or social media messages to firms. Therefore, relatively small organizations can engage with an enormous membership base. Moreover, the free flow of information and increased transparency helps activists monitor their targets and identify opportunities for social change. However, the social entrepreneurs among the dotcauses also experienced drawbacks of their online existence. The low threshold for starting a dotcause can create an overload of initiatives, all competing for the attention of the same consumer. Additionally, creating a shared identity requires face-to-face contact. An online community, therefore, could consist of a large group of passive members and a small group of active members that form the core of the collective identity.

3.5.3 | Dotcauses Struggle with Competing Incentives: Ideological, Financial, or Hedonistic

Dotcauses do experience some ethical difficulties when they combine entrepreneurship and activism. As Zahra et al. (2009) noted, social entrepreneurs increasingly rely on private contributions (e.g. from consumers or firms), putting pressure on the use of business strategies, such as offering products and services or slick marketing strategies. This raises the question about the 'right' motivation of consumers and firms to join their initiative. Are consumers, for example, reduced to 'unscrupulous members of the capitalistic system' if the dotcause uses entertaining marketing strategies to engage with them? And regarding firms, what is the risk that a firm abuses a dotcause to promote its sustainable image, for example, while tolerating unsustainable behavior by its suppliers? In general, these ethical considerations urge dotcauses to think about their desired impact: do they strive for achieving social change (no matter what motivations were used) or try to make consumers and firms aware of the social cause?

3.5.4 | Limitations and Future Research

This research has several limitations. First, the number and selection of cases was rather limited. A more quantitative approach, for example, a largescale survey or case analysis, could help draw a broader picture of organizations that combine social entrepreneurship and activism, such as dotcauses. For example, a distinction could be made between campaigns, lobby groups, and monitoring sustainable firm behavior and performance (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Second, we looked at two process models that describe the activities of social entrepreneurs and activists. However, more in-depth research could compare entrepreneurial theories and social movement theories in specific phases of the process, for example, diffusion of the political processes. Third, we used linear process models, which do not one-on-one describe the often fluent process of entrepreneurship and activism. Some cases indeed indicated that they needed to be flexible in their process toward social change, which points at the possibility of applying effectuation models to describe social entrepreneurship (Corner & Ho, 2010). Fourth, we explored dotcauses, which vary in how virtual their organization and activities are. However, we did not compare these dotcauses with traditional social entrepreneurs or activists. In addition, research could provide insight in best practices of the use of digital media. For example, can we determine an optimal mix of offline and online activities?



Chapter 4

Never the Twain Shall Meet? How Activist Groups Combine Frontstage and Backstage Tactics to Promote Socially Responsible Investment Policy

Abstract

Online protests targeted at firms may inflict reputational damage. Hence, the strategies and tactics that activist groups employ to influence corporate social responsibility are of interest to business ethics scholars, activist groups, and firms. We study how activist groups combine public and private influence tactics over time to promote socially responsible investment policy. To do so, we present an in-depth process study of a large reformative activist group that organized an online protest campaign beside its ongoing private lobbying to motivate Dutch retail banks to change their human rights policy concerning land investments in developing countries. We draw on Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of impression management to develop a process model with six propositions on the interactions of activists and firms up front and backstage. Our model includes the four stages of drama: framing, scripting, staging, and performing. We contribute to theory in four ways: First, we add a dramaturgical perspective to the collation of influence tactics, which helps us understand the complex public and private interactions between activist groups and firms. Second, our process study highlights the dilemma resulting from the competing frames that large activist groups with campaigners and lobbyists may experience. Third, we show how a reformative activist group escalates their influence strategy to target firms with different levels of resistance. Last, we emphasize the employment of influence tactics over time rather than contingency-based typologies.

4.1 | **Introduction**

> *“Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.”*
>
> Rudyard Kipling, “The Ballad of East and West”, 1895, p.1.

The influence strategies tactics that activist groups employ to motivate firms to behave more socially responsible are of key interest to business ethics scholars, activist groups, and firms (Arjalies, 2010; Davis, 2005; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013; King & Pearce, 2010). Prior research shows that activist groups employ a wide range of tactics that vary in their incentive structure, disruptiveness, and degree of participation (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Digital media, such as social media, are increasingly part of activists’ tactical repertoire. On this virtual frontstage, activist groups often threaten firms with negative publicity as an incentive for them to change their policy or practices. Participatory tactics, such as online petitions or letter writing, aim to mobilize large numbers of consumers to publicly display disapproval with a firm’s socially irresponsible behavior (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Recently, the Social Media Marketing University demonstrated by means of a survey that 26.1% of firms have had their reputations tarnished due to negative social commentaries on social media, 15.2% have lost customers and 11.4% have reported lost revenue as a result of negative publicity on social media.[12] At the same time that publicly visible conflicts are fought by means of online campaigns, many large activist groups also lobbied the corporate social responsibility (CSR) officers of the relevant firms privately. Such lobbyists aim to convince a firm to change its policy and practices by nurturing a relationship, developing a shared understanding of CSR issues of importance to the activist group, and by trying to convince the firm to change. In practice, these *private* lobby activities may – intentionally or unintentionally – interact with the *public* protests organized by the same activist groups’ campaigners. For example, lobbyists may use their campaigners’ threat to inflict reputational damage as leverage for their negotiations with the firm.

To date, studies on activist groups’ influence tactics have neglected the interplay between public and private interactions with targeted firms and how this interplay triggers organizational responses (Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010; Zietsma & Winn, 2008). Furthermore, scholars have called for in-depth process research on activist groups' influence tactics (De Bakker & Den Hond, 2008; Van Wijk et al., 2013), and how tactics aimed at individual firms add up over time to induce change in an institutional field (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Current typologies of tactical repertoires are static (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010) and do not include the strategic sequence and interplay of different tactics.

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[12] See http://socialmediaimpact.com/brands_social_media_complaints/, accessed on March 1, 2015

Hence, our study aims to contribute to this literature by examining how campaigners and lobbyists combine frontstage and backstage tactics over time to promote a socially responsible investment (SRI) policy. To answer this question, we present an in-depth case study of a large and reformative activist group that organized an online protest campaign, besides its ongoing private lobbying, to motivate the Dutch financial sector to change its human rights policy concerning land investments in developing countries. The demanded change in investment policy aimed to prevent the unlawful acquisition, which the group also framed as 'landgrabbing,' of large areas of cheap real estate by investors uninterested in the local implications of their investments, such as the forced removal of inhabitants and livestock. Besides the tactical sequencing of public and private activities that the activist organization undertook, we track the traditional media attention, the public's engagement on digital media, and the subsequent firm responses. We collected data by means of interviews, diaries, desk research, and digital media metrics (e.g. website visits, Twitter messages, Facebook wall posts, and e-mails).

Theoretically, we draw on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach to analyze social interactions in public and private. We consider a protest campaign as a performance in which lobbyists interact with firms in backstage privacy, while firms have to perform with activist groups' campaigners in front of an audience, the public. Our study contributes to business ethics and organizational literature in four ways: First, our study contributes a dramaturgical perspective to the collation of influence tactics, including four phases and five interactions between the frontstage and the backstage. Second, our study highlights the dilemma resulting from the competing frames that large activist groups with lobbyists and campaigners may experience. The case study highlights how one activist group has to combine a nuanced frame for lobbying and an adversarial frame for campaigning in one influence strategy. Similar to the institutional complexity concept, we call the dilemma of conflicting frames 'tactical complexity'. Third, we show how a reformative activist group escalates its influence strategy to target firms with different levels of resistance. Last, our study contributes to the emerging body of literature on how activist groups use digital media to pressurize incumbent firms (Bennett, 2003; Carty, 2002; Castelló, Morsing, & Schultz, 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013).

The chapter is structured as follows: First, we review ongoing research on activist groups' tactics to promote ethical behavior among firms. We describe the theoretical background and introduce the dramaturgical approach. Second, we describe the design, methods, and setting of the landgrabbing case. Third, we analyze the campaign process and develop a process model with six propositions. Last, we discuss the scientific and practical implications of our research and provide directions for future research.

4.2 | **Theory**

4.2.1 | **Theoretical Background**

The Pressure of Public Scrutiny by Activist Groups. An increasing body of research indicates that the public display of disapproval with a firm's socially irresponsible behavior can severely damage that firm's reputation (Bartley & Child, 2011; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; Spar & Mure, 2003). Hence, the threat of negative media coverage may motivate firms to change their behavior. In an event analysis of protests targeted at US firms between 1962 and 1990, King and Soule (2007) showed that firms are more receptive to protests if the media has covered these firms substantially before the protest event. Their analysis demonstrated that this attention provides (potential) investors with information that may supplement the messages that protestors broadcast. Similarly, King (2008a) analyzed boycotts of US firms featured in the news between 1990 and 2005. He found that firms were more receptive to protestors' requests if their boycott action received more media attention. Previous negative media attention amplified this effect for a firm, making the targeted firm more sensitive to additional negative news. In an analysis of the anti-sweatshop campaigns targeted at US firms between 1993 and 2000, Bartley & Child (2011) found that public campaigns had a small negative effect on firms' reputation. A firm's previous reputation may temper the disruptive effect of negative media coverage (King, 2011). McDonnell and King (2013) found a similar effect, which they call 'buffering,' through which highly reputed firms may employ prosocial claims to shield themselves from protests.

The effectiveness of activist groups depends on how much they appeal to the media, for example, through their ability to organize public demonstrations, or mobilize celebrity endorsements (King, 2011). Hence, the media strategies and tactics that activist groups employ play an important role in mobilizing protest participants (Gamson, 2004). This importance has increased due to the rapid use of digital media, such as social media, as complementary media (Bennett, 2003a; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Ward & Ostrom, 2006; Whelan et al., 2013). Digital media enable activist groups to mobilize and empower consumers with a negative opinion of a firm. They can produce their own content, transmit content across borders, create large interactive social networks, and collectively convey their opinion to the firm in question and to the mass media. Hence, digital media have become popular activists tools to organize protests targeted at firms (Bennett, 2003a; Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Leizerov, 2000; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Ward & Ostrom, 2006; Xia, 2013). Protests which succeed in attracting large numbers of participants help campaigners draw mass media, regulators, and investor attention, which puts them in a powerful position with respect to the targeted firms. Apart from this 'logic of numbers' (della Porta & Diani, 1999; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007), digital media enable large masses of consumers to personalize the frames that activist groups offer (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). This (digital) media attention pressure motivates firms to communicate with activist groups, among other stakeholder, about their CSR efforts (Tata & Prasad). Hence, scholars have argued that the analysis of how firms and activist groups use digital media to engage consumers in CSR is important for business ethics researchers (Lyon & Montgomery, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013).

The Interplay of Public and Private Tactics. Given that increased protest pressure has appeared on the corporate agenda, scholars have called for research on the analysis and understanding of the strategies and tactics that activist groups may deploy to influence firm behavior. Apart from research on the consequence of protests for firms, more detailed process studies are needed on how activist groups employ strategies and tactics to influence the corporate agenda (De Bakker & Den Hond, 2008; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Tata & Prasad, 2014; Weber, Rao, & Thomas, 2009; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010; Zietsma & Winn, 2008). Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) pioneered theories about how activist groups employ strategies and tactics. They developed propositions on the tactical choice that different types of activist groups use in a specific phase of institutional change. Specifically, they propose that when experiencing resistance from targeted firms, reformative activist groups use more confrontational tactics aimed at symbolic damage (e.g. petitions) and mass participation. Radical activist groups, in their turn, are inclined to move towards confrontational tactics that inflict material damage.

Scholars have paid limited attention to the interplay between tactics (Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010; Zietsma & Winn, 2008). Building on Den Hond and de Bakker (2007), Van Huijstee and Glasbergen (2010) examined two contrasting tactics, symbolic gain and symbolic damage, that two activist groups employed. They demonstrate that symbolic gain and damage tactics have an amplifying effect: *"the symbolic damage NGO strategy will deinstitutionalize the status quo and provide* *the company/sector with an incentive for reinstitutionalization, while the symbolic gain NGO strategy will guide the process of reinstitutionalization." (Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010 p. 21).* Similarly, in a process study of a stakeholder conflict in Canada Zietsma and Winn (2008) demonstrate how multiple activist groups develop an influence chain and jointly direct influence flows towards targets to increase their impact. The interplay between public and private influence tactics can also occur in a single activist group. However, we do not know how such activist group cope with the complexity that may result from conflicting tactics.

4.2.2 | **A Dramaturgical Analysis of Public and Private Influence Tactics**

Dramaturgical analysis models social interactions as performers acting on a theater stage. Scholars applied dramaturgical analysis to study activists' framing activities (Benford & Hunt, 1992), use scripting as a metaphor of organizational behavior (Gioia & Poole, 1984), student resistance (McFarland, 2004), the role of media in activism (Gamson, 2004), and social and environmental reporting (Solomon, Solomon, Joseph, & Norton, 2013). Goffman's seminal work 'The presentation of self in everyday life' (Goffman, 1959) is specifically used to explain the social interactions of individuals when they are in the presence of others, also known as 'the public.' The pattern of actions between the performers is unfolded during a performance, which entails all the activity a performer undertakes to influence the opinion of others. A performance may be part of a series of performances, which is called a routine. In the theater, the audience witnesses a performance. Goffman's central thesis is that the performer who enters the presence of others tries to influence the definition of the situation that the others formulate in his or her presence. His or her performance is, thus, aimed at *"expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of expression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan"* (Goffman, 1959, p. 2). Hence, individuals who present themselves will accentuate certain facts that underline the desired impression and suppress those that undermine the desired impression.

Goffman's (1959) insights into impression management has been widely applied in organizational research to understand the impression management of individuals in organizations (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Research on impression management by organizations is scarcer (Bolino et al., 2008; McDonnell & King, 2013). In practice, firms rely on effective impression management of CSR to build and maintain their reputations (Highhouse, Brooks, & Gregarus, 2009; Solomon et al., 2013). Their legitimacy depends on the evaluation of their target audiences, such as their consumers, investors, and employees. We adopt Goffman's dramaturgical perspective to understand the tactics that activists employ and the responses of the targeted firms. Below we describe five impression management mechanisms.

Defining the Situation. The initial activity of defining the situation offers performers an opportunity to cooperate with each other. Some may choose a combative approach and try to force their frame of the situation onto the public, while others may jointly define a modus vivendi, which is a compromise between performers. This initial definition affects the public's perception of the issue and can constrain future performances. Goffman (1959, p. 4) describes this initial stage as following: "*Together the participants contribute to a single overall definition of the situation which involves not so much a real agreements as to what exists but rather a rea agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured. Real agreement will also exist concern the desirability of avoiding an open conflict of definitions of the situation.*" When an individual projects a definition of the situation in which he or she claims to be a particular kind of person, he or she implicitly makes a moral claim on the others, obliging them to value and treat him or her in the manner that such type of people may expect.

In the same vein, activist groups and firms define the situation at the start of activist efforts on an issue. When lobbyists from the activist group and CSR managers from the targeted firm collaborate and develop a shared understanding of the situation, this may impose restrictions on the moral claim the activist can make up front during the campaign. Although activist groups and firms may disagree on the to-be institutionalized norms, they can agree on the tactics and frame the influence process. According to Goffman (1959, p. 4), the initial definition of the situation *"… can be purposely set up as a time and place for voicing differences in opinion, but in such cases participants must be careful to agree not to disagree on the proper tone of voice, vocabulary, and degree of seriousness in which all arguments are to be phrased, and upon the mutual respect which disagreeing participants must carefully continue to express toward one another."* Previous research on institutional actors' influence on impression management in respect of investors does reveal that defining the situation is a key aspect of organizational impression management (Lamertz & Martens, 2011).

Frontstage and Backstage. Interaction between performers takes place on two distinct stages: 1) the frontstage, where the performance is given, and 2) the backstage, where performers are shielded from the audience and other observers (Goffman, 1959). Hence, performers assume that they can behave privately backstage, trusting that no outsiders will intrude. Hence, a backstage is a place where the impression that the performance fosters is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course, and the performers' behavior and language are more relaxed, informal, and cooperative than on the frontstage Specifically, backstage speech includes *"reciprocal first-naming, co-operative decision making, and profanity"* (Goffman, 1959, p. 79). In this privacy, performers can show their true self without the mask of impression management: *"Behind the many masks and characters, each performer tends to wear a single look, a naked unsocialized look, a look of concentration"* (Goffman, p. 151). When entering the frontstage, performers again adopt their role and become alert. Hence, not all the issues discussed backstage make an appearance frontstage. In the same book, Goffman (1959) even suggests that the impression that the performance frontstage fosters is often purposely contradicted by the backstage behavior.

Similarly, activist groups and firms both perform frontstage and in the privacy of the backstage. On the frontstage, firms interact with the activist groups' campaigners and public relations (PR) officers. Backstage, firms interact with the activist groups' lobbyists and, sometimes, with their board members when issues escalate. They may feel safe to share secrets, or, as Goffman (1959) calls them, dark secrets, when they trust their negotiation partners. The two frames that lobbyists and public campaigners use in these spheres may conflict. Although the interpretation of the issue backstage and frontstage does not have to be identical, the difference between the frames frontstage and backstage may constrain activist groups. In other words, a more cooperative frame on the backstage may temper the adversarial frame on the frontstage. In an analysis of European venture philanthropy, Mair and Hehenberger (2014) demonstrate that that interactions that take place in the privacy of the backstage (workshops) help shift the interaction from ideological constraints to mutually sense making and agreement among actors. The frontstage (literally the mainstage of conferences) helps actors reach a broad audience.

Making and Preventing Scenes. The past and current behavior of performers may include facts, which, if introduced during a performance, could discredit how the performer desires to project himself. Other performers' Intentional verbal statements, or non-verbal acts, such as gestures, often introduce such discrediting facts. Goffman (1959) calls these discrediting acts 'faux-pas.' Other performers may make *scenes*, which are situations in which performers act in such way as to jeopardize the definition of the situation, while aware of the consequences that such a dissonance may cause. During such disruptive events, the discredited performers may feel ashamed and find the presence of others, such as the audience, hostile. According to Goffman (1959), scenes often occur when co-performers cannot tolerate another's performance and start to vent public criticism of the performer(s) with whom they normally cooperate. Co-performers may perhaps have first vented their criticism backstage, but if the malperformance continues, the co-performers may decide to make a scene publicly. Goffman (1959, p. 134) describes this: *"Some scenes occur when team-mates can no longer countenance each other's inept performance and blurt out immediate public criticism of the very individual with whom they ought to be in dramaturgical* *co-operation. Such misconduct is often devastating to the performance which the disputants ought to be presenting."*

To avoid scenes, performers take measures backstage to prevent the frontstage display of discrediting information that may disrupt their projected definition of the situation. Similarly, firms that are sensitive to the reputational damage of discrediting events presented frontstage, for example, in the (digital) media, may take preventive measures backstage. Previous reputational damage, for example due to corporate scandals, increases firms' sensitivity to a potential discrediting performance (King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; McDonnell & King, 2013). Research shows that firms may make public prosocial claims to mitigate any reputational damage (McDonnell & King, 2013; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009). However, an important preventive measure for targeted firms if they believe that damaging information may be presented frontstage, is to move towards the lobbyists' demands backstage. CEOs may personally want to avoid discrediting events to maintain face (Sutton & Callahan, 1987). This attitude may help activists adopt a 'good cop, bad cop' approach with the lobbyists warning the firm of their adversarial colleagues' impending attack in a public campaign.

In Flagrante Delicto. To guard the frontstage-backstage duality, it is important for performers to strictly control access to the frontstage and the backstage. Goffman (1959, p. 70) describes the control of stage access as: *"…it is natural to expect that the passage from the front region to the back region will be kept closed to members of the audience or that the entire back region will be kept hidden from them."* As aptly characterized in Kipling's quote, backstage and frontstage are two spheres that shall never meet. However, if the two spheres do meet, this intrusion of outsiders, or the leakage of backstage information, may cause a breech between the performers. When an outsider accidently enters a region in which a performance is being given, or when a member of the audience inadvertently enters the backstage, the intruder is likely to catch those present *'in flagrante delicto,'* which translates as 'caught in the act' (Goffman, 1959). This intruder could catch a glimpse of backstage behavior may discredit the claims the performers make frontstage. In other words, the intruder sees the performers 'out of character.' One could question whether, as Goffman claims, in flagrante delicto always inflicts damage on the performers' reputation. For example, the intruder may feel privileged to meet and greet the performers behind the scene.

Similarly, activist groups and firms organize lobby and campaign efforts in two spheres that do not meet. In their analysis of institutional change in the forest industry in British Columbia (Canada), Zietsma and Winn (2008) conclude that the privacy of the backstage was critical for the negotiations between the activist groups and firms, as they were able to build trust and mutual understanding in *"a place where they would not be held accountable for their rhetoric"* (p. 91). However, information leakage, or the intrusion of outsiders may cause firms to adopt a defensive stance, as they feel that their secrets have been revealed and the audience will get to know about the competing backstage and frontstage speech. Such intrusion may damage the relationship between the lobbyists and the firm, as well as the public's perception of firms' definition of the situation. Such a cross-over from the backstage to the frontstage may thus decrease the likelihood of firms adopting any activist group requests.

Open Discord. Usually, audience members have protective techniques that save the day when discrediting events happen to performers. Examples are: not reacting negatively, looking away, or maintaining applause. However, the audience may also be a source of disruption. A scene can also reflect *open discord* when the audience decides to confront performers with their malperformance. Goffman (1959, p. 134) describes this type of scene as following: *"Another type of scene occurs when the audience decides it can no longer play the game of polite interaction, or that it no longer wants to do so, and so confronts the performers with facts or expressive acts which each team member knows will be unacceptable."* As in criminal trials or a traditional pantomime, rival performers may encourage the audience to loudly express their grievance towards antagonists by, for example, jeering, or even entering the frontstage. Such open discord may amplify targeted performers' embarrassment about discrediting events.

In the same vein, activist groups may exploit the interactivity of digital media to allow consumers to personalize their frames (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011) and express their grievances directly to the employees (even CEOs) of the targeted firms. This interaction may take place publicly on social media and/or privately by e-mails or direct Twitter messages. This mass interaction from consumers may amplify the disruptive effect of activist groups' campaign efforts on the frontstage (Bennett, 2003a).

4.3 | **Methods**

To study the interplay between public and private influence tactics, we designed a process study that focused on the sequence of critical incidents (Langley, 1999; Van De Ven & Poole, 1995). As the goal is to inductively develop a process model and propositions, we approach the research question with an explorative in-depth case study. Following Yin's (1994) guidelines on case study research, we used multiple data sources (interviews, diaries, document analysis and digital media metrics), developed an incidence database, and kept a chain of evidence across all the case study phases.

4.3.1 | **Case Selection and Setting**

We selected a case based on theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), which means that we searched for a case in which a single activist group organized a campaign that combined public, private, and, preferably, digital tactics to motivate an institutional field to adopt new CSR policies or practices. Furthermore, we decided to choose an ongoing and accessible case to ensure access to rich data (Yin, 1994).

Over the last decades, banks have increasingly adopted Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) policies to avoid unsustainable investments and decrease their negative social and environmental impact, because *“the key distinguishing feature of SRI lies in its combination of social and environmental goals with the financial objective of achieving a return on invested capital approaching that of the market*” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 201). Activist groups facilitate this institutional change process by putting SRI on the political and corporate agenda, motivating stakeholders to change their investment policy, and monitoring the implementation of SRI (Arjalies, 2010). The norms of SRI change as the societal challenges we face change. The rise in food prices in 2007 led to investors increasing their number of large land acquisitions in developing countries. Land acquisitions that do not take the human rights of the original inhabitants into account, are called ‘landgrabbing’ (De Schutter, 2011). Landgrabbing harms the original land users who depend on its natural resources. The United Nations (UN) estimates that landgrabbing in developing countries endangers about 500 million people. Hence, the UN recommends that investors adopt guidelines in their investment policy to prevent landgrabbing (UN, 2011). Activist groups, such as the International Land Coalition, have advocated this institutional change since 2007. The lobby and campaign efforts we study are part of this broader movement.

In 2011, a large activist group commissioned a study to assess if Dutch banks had sufficient policy in place to prevent their involvement in landgrabbing. Their report showed that almost all banks needed to improve their policies in this regard. After lobbying efforts, four banks, including two of the largest banks in the Netherlands, were reluctant to take steps to change their investment policy. As a consequence, the activist group announced an online protest campaign targeted at the four resisting Dutch banks in February 2012. After meetings with this activist group about the report and their campaign plans, we identified their influence strategy as a potentially rich and typical case of the strategic use of public and private tactics to foster SRI. The activist group had experience with successful protest campaigns, such as a campaign against sourcing cocoa for chocolate from areas implicated in child labor (Langley & Van den Broek, 2010), and a protest against banks investing in the weapon industry, including cluster bombs. The Dutch retail banks are typical targets for an online protest campaign: They are visible to the general public, perceived as being powerful, have commercial objectives which may conflict with CSR objectives, and rely on consumers perceiving them as legitimate.

4.3.2 | **Data Collection**

We designed a process study to the type, phases, and sequence of the campaign process events (Langley, 1999; Van De Ven & Poole, 1995; Van Wijk et al., 2013). Our units of analysis were the activist group's team members working on the landgrab issue, who were divided into lobbyists and campaigners / PR officer, and the CSR / communication professionals at the banks. We collected data from February 2012, which was seven weeks before the campaign launch, to June 2012. First, we conducted nine interviews with the team members and collected documents (such as plans, minutes, and weblogs) at the preparation stage of the campaign. We asked nine team members to describe their role in the process, the context of the campaign, the key events leading to the campaign, and their expectations regarding the use and effects of digital media. The average length of the interviews was 65 minutes. During the campaign, all except one of the team members kept a weekly diary until the end of the campaign (seven weeks; a total of 53 diary entries). Some diaries are missing due to team members being absent that week. In these diaries, the team members described what they thought were the most critical incidents. In the meantime, data from secondary sources – meetings, fundraising accounts, newspaper archives, and digital media metrics – were collected. After the campaign, the same nine activist group team members were again interviewed to identify the critical (positive and negative) incidents during the campaign. The average length of the interviews was 55 minutes.

As suggested by Van De Ven and Poole (1995), we organized a workshop with all the team members and had two e-mail reviews from the project manager to validate the critical incidents identified in the data sources. We further conducted two semi-structured interviews with a CSR and communication officer at the banks in July 2012 to review the critical incidents. The banks' organizational responses — their acquiescence or avoidance — were publicly available in press releases, on social media, and on their corporate websites. We therefore reconstructed the organizational responses based on the public data that we collected from the firm websites and newspaper articles. In addition, to further triangulate our assessment, we had the opportunity to talk to two officers at the banks. We agreed with the activist group and banks to anonymize the case to avoid the publication of sensitive information. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the data sources.

Table 4.1 | Overview of data sources

Sources	Types	Amount
18 semi-structured interviews with members of the activist group prior to and after the campaign.	Project Manager	2
	Campaigners	6
	Lobbyists	4
	Communication advisors	6
Two semi-structured interviews with members of the bank after the campaign.	Communication advisor	1
	CSR officer	1
Documents from the activist group, media, and press releases during and after the campaign.	Plans, reports, minutes, press releases, media articles, etc.	> 200 pages
Social media and website data, retrieved from activist group and Twitter API.	Twitter messages	202
	Facebook wall posts	1670
	Website visits	21,272
	E-mails sent to firms	685
53 weekly diaries of activist group team members.	Report on events during campaign	53

4.3.3 | **Data Analysis**

Since we wished to examine *how* activist groups employ public and private tactics to motivate firms, we approached the case study design and analysis as process research that focuses on the causal sequencing of events. To do so, we applied the process methodology of Poole and Van De Ven (1995).

First, we went through all our data to identify incidents that were critical to the outcome of the campaign. All the data sources (interviews, diaries, documents, and digital media) were imported into the qualitative analysis software package Atlas.ti. Next, we identified passages that described a critical incident that changed the course of the influence tactics, for example, an important decision, activity or external event. This resulted in a first list of 449 incidents. The second step was to develop a coding scheme based on the different stages and actors in the influence strategy (see theory section). The coding categories covered actions by the firms, lobbyists, campaigners, traditional media, and digital media. In this way, we could track organizational responses, lobbying efforts, campaign efforts, media attention, and digital engagement.

We used Oliver's (1991) typology of firm responses to institutional pressure to code the banks' response strategies. Furthermore, we used both Goffman (1959) and Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) to code the activist group tactics. A codebook with instructions was developed to guide the coding and to explain the operationalization of the coding categories. Third, following Van de Ven and Poole (1995), we designed an incident database that included the incident number, temporal brackets, incident description, summary, coding categories, and data source. After ordering the incidents by date and time, we clustered incidents mentioned by multiple sources, and validated these by means of the workshop results and consultations with the project manager. This resulted in a list of 167 critical incidents. Fourth, to ease the process data analysis, we developed visual displays to map the critical incidents (Langley, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). We identified the distinct phases of the influence process, which helped us break down the influence strategy process. Next, we plotted the response curves from the secondary data on the sequence maps to analyze which incidents could possibly have led to variance in the media attention, digital media engagement, and, eventually, changes in the firm investment policy.

4.4 | **Case History**

We first describe the interactions and outcomes per phase of the influence strategy process. Following Gardner and Avolio (1998), the analysis includes framing, scripting, staging, and finally performing the play on the virtual frontstage. Each phase is accompanied by a visual process map that grounds the storyline. Firm responses have a color that match their strategy: green when approaching the activist group's demands and red when moving away. We coded the banks with letters (e.g. Bank C) instead of their real names. Figure 4.2, presented in the next section, gives more information on the banks and their responses.

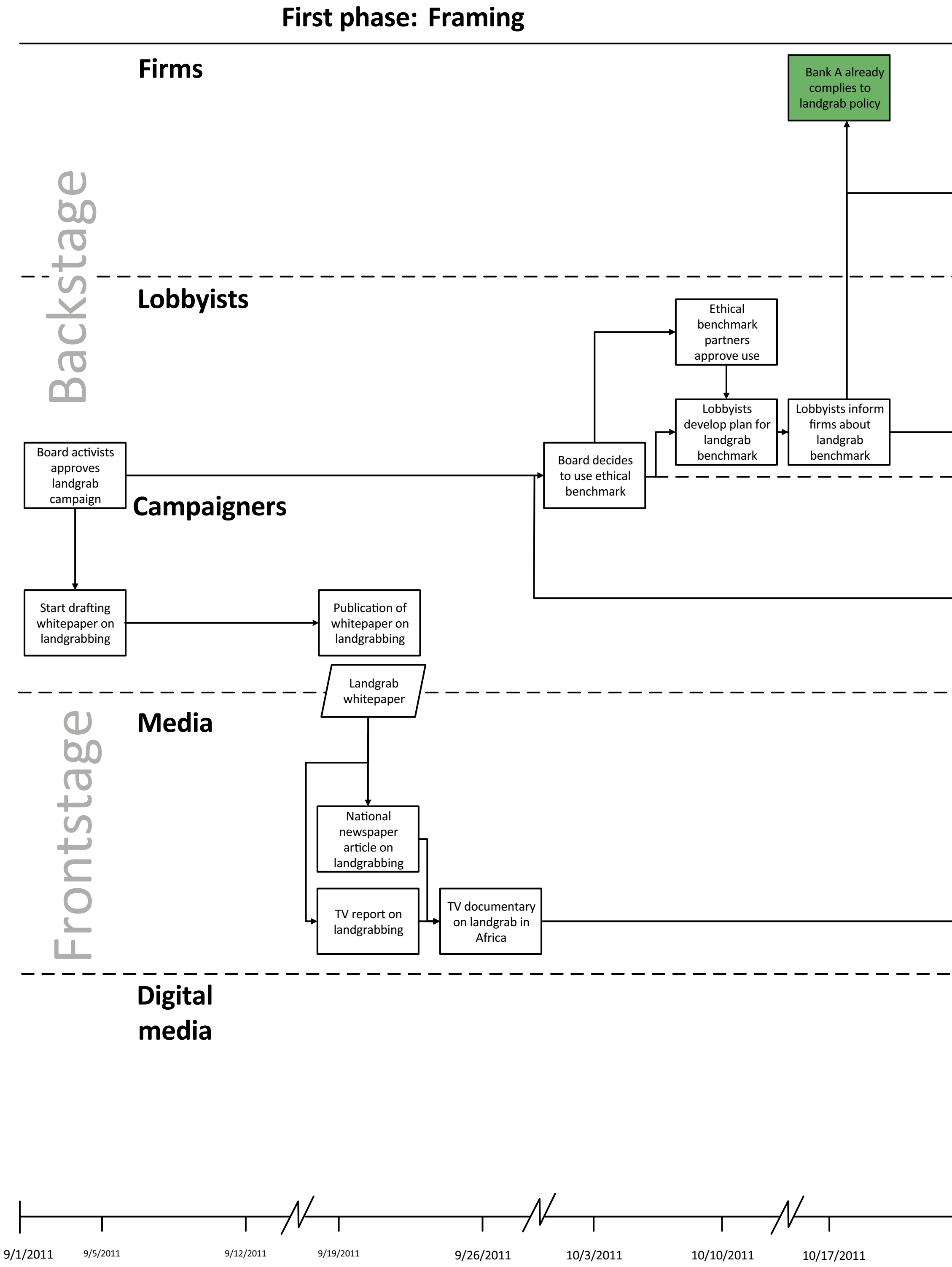
4.4.1 | **Phase 1: Framing**

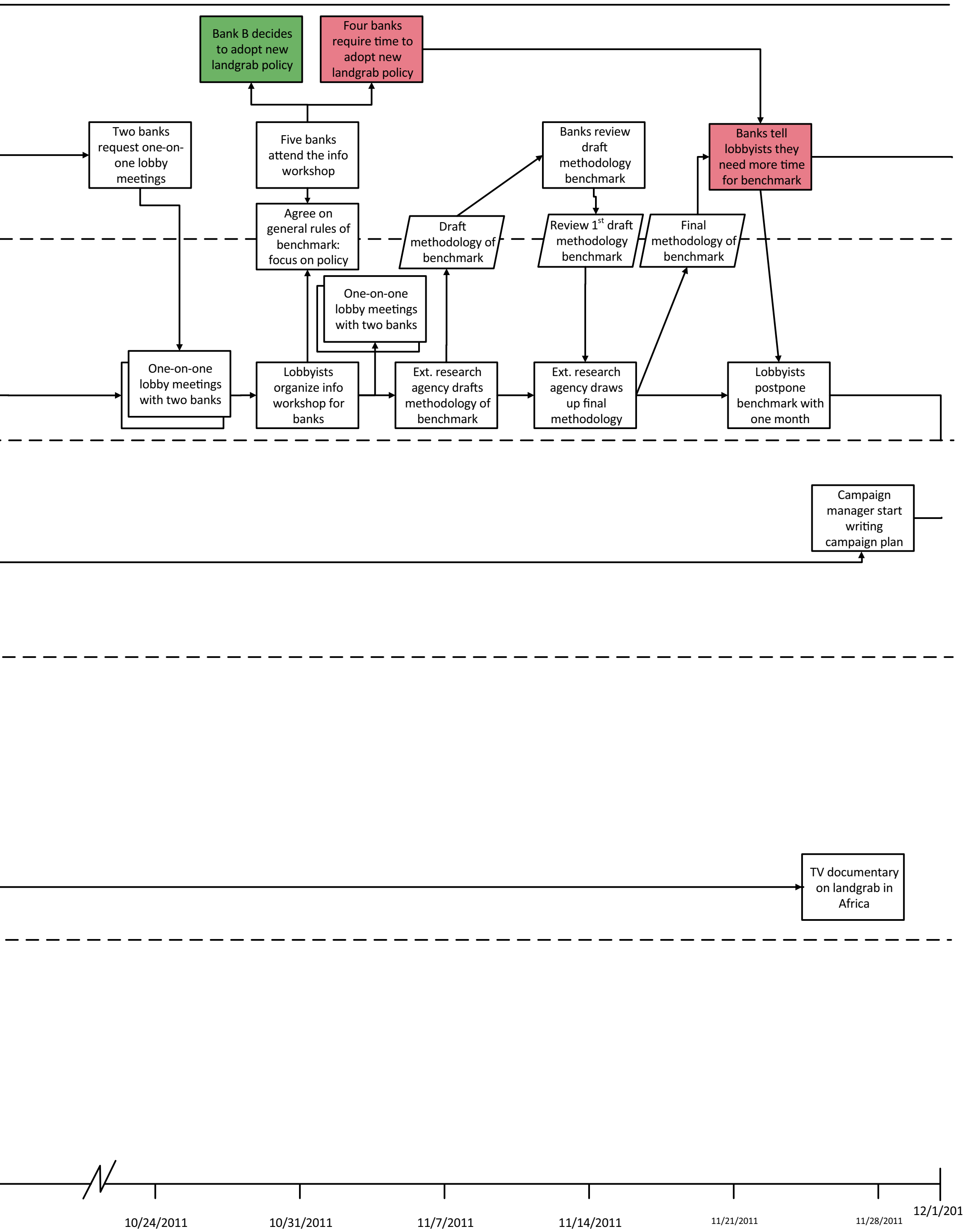
The backstage lobbying efforts dominated the first phase. The landgrabbing issue was introduced in a white paper written by lobbyists and board members in September 2011. This white paper articulated the activist group' demands regarding the landgrabbing issue: Informed consent from inhabitants when investors acquire land. The white paper did not mention the banks. A large national newspaper picked up on this publication, which led to two TV documentaries. After this publication, the activist group's board persuaded the lobbyists and external partners to use a benchmark as an instrument to assess landgrabbing in the financial industry. In turn, the lobbyists developed a plan and informed all the Dutch retail banks about the landgrab benchmark. This announcement triggered one-on-one lobby meetings and an information workshop in which the lobbyists informed five banks about the landgrabbing issue in the financial sector. During this meeting, the *definition of the situation* was jointly formulated. The lobbyists agreed with the banks to focus on the implementation of an anti-landgrab policy instead of highlighting landgrabbing cases.

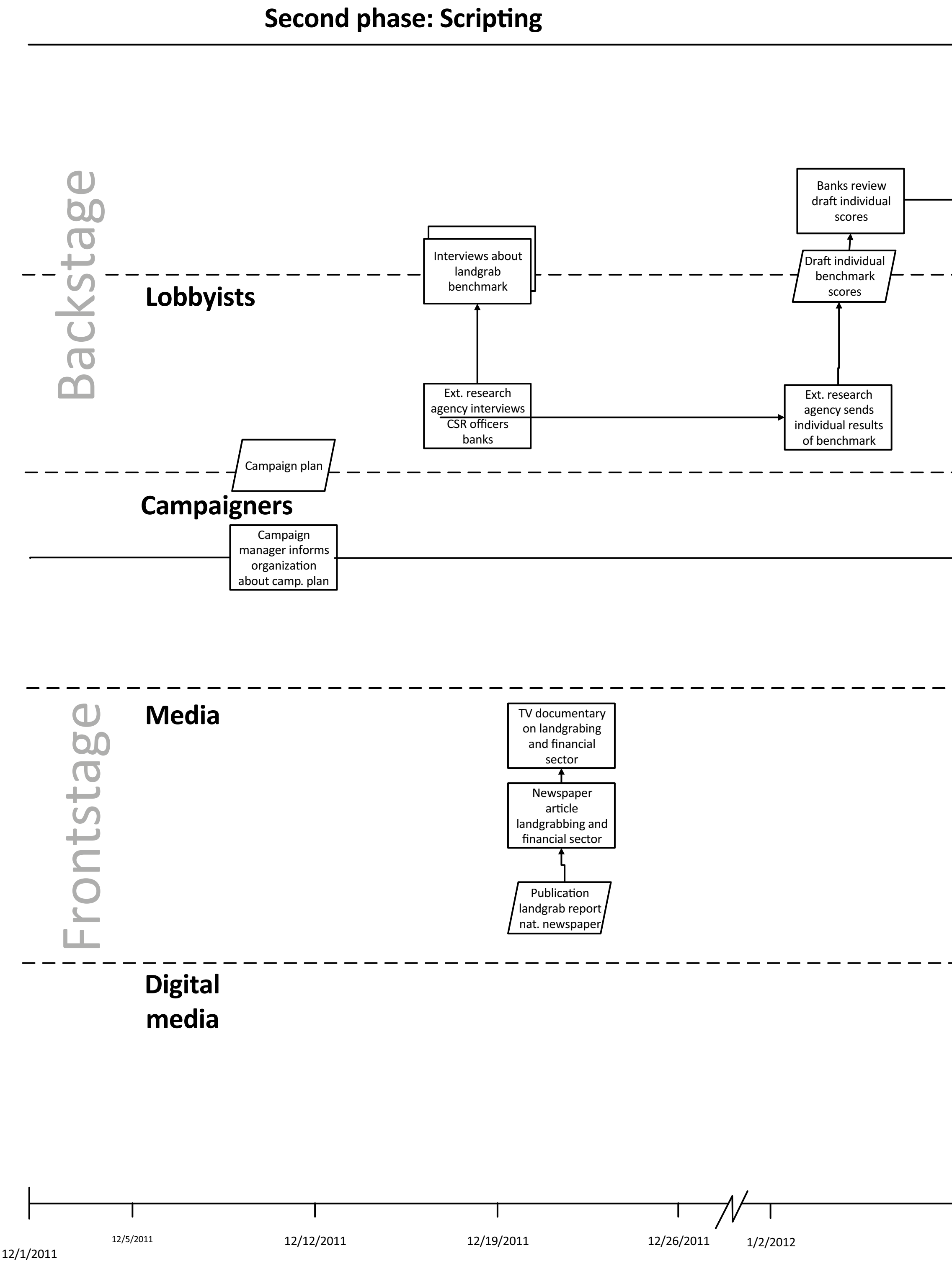
Bank A already complied fully with the activist group's demands. Bank B decided to change its investment policy directly after the workshop. The cooperative tone of the workshop continued when the lobbyists and banks jointly drafted the methodology of the landgrab benchmark. The lobbyists allowed the banks to review the methodology that an external research organization had drafted. During these interactions, the remaining banks indicated that the activist groups were indulging in over-demand and, hence, demanded more time to cooperate with the landgrab benchmark. After a consultation with the board and the external research agency, the lobbyists agreed to postpone the landgrab benchmark. In the meanwhile, the envisioned campaign manager developed a campaign plan.

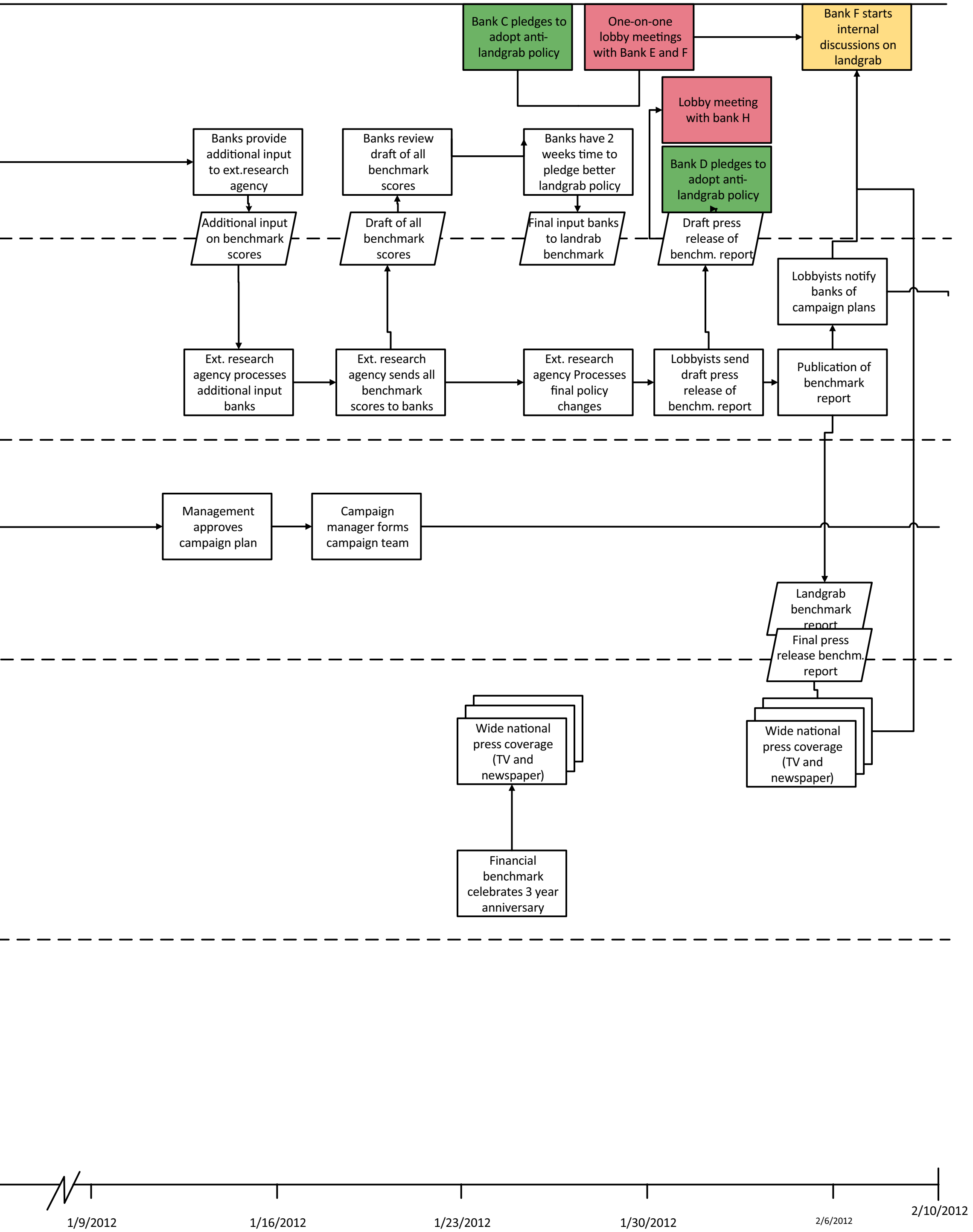
4.4.2 | **Phase 2: Scripting**

The backstage lobbying efforts also dominated the second phase of the influence strategy, while the P.R. officer entered the frontstage with the benchmark report publication. The external research agency started the research for the benchmark mid-December. Like the drafting of the methodology, the modus operandi was cooperative. After structured interviews, the banks received their individual benchmark scores, which they were allowed to review. After processing the input, the external research agency sent out an overview of all the benchmark scores. The lobbyists told the banks that if they promised to improve their anti-landgrab policy before the launch of the benchmark report, their score would be higher. The lobbyists hoped that this peer pressure would trigger a 'race to the top,' as firms might strive to equal the top performers' benchmark scores.


First phase: Framing
Backstage
Frontstage
Firms
Lobbyists
Campaigners
Media
Digital media
Bank A already complies to landgrab policy
Ethical benchmark partners approve use
Lobbyists develop plan for landgrab benchmark
Lobbyists inform firms about landgrab benchmark
Board decides to use ethical benchmark
Board activists approves landgrab campaign
Start drafting whitepaper on landgrabbing
Publication of whitepaper on landgrabbing
Landgrab whitepaper
National newspaper article on landgrabbing
TV report on landgrabbing
TV documentary on landgrab in Africa
9/1/2011
9/5/2011
9/12/2011
9/19/2011
9/26/2011
10/3/2011
10/10/2011
10/17/2011


Bank B decides to adopt new landgrab policy
Four banks require time to adopt new landgrab policy
Two banks request one-on-one lobby meetings
Five banks attend the info workshop
Banks review draft methodology benchmark
Banks tell lobbyists they need more time for benchmark
Agree on general rules of benchmark: focus on policy
Draft methodology of benchmark
Review 1st draft methodology benchmark
Final methodology of benchmark
One-on-one lobby meetings with two banks
One-on-one lobby meetings with two banks
Lobbyists organize info workshop for banks
Ext. research agency drafts methodology of benchmark
Ext. research agency draws up final methodology
Lobbyists postpone benchmark with one month
Campaign manager start writing campaign plan
TV documentary on landgrab in Africa
10/24/2011
10/31/2011
11/7/2011
11/14/2011
11/21/2011
11/28/2011
12/1/201


Second phase: Scripting
Backstage
Lobbyists
Interviews about landgrab benchmark
Ext. research agency interviews CSR officers banks
Banks review draft individual scores
Draft individual benchmark scores
Ext. research agency sends individual results of benchmark
Campaign plan
Campaigners
Campaign manager informs organization about camp. plan
Frontstage
Media
TV documentary on landgrabing and financial sector
Newspaper article landgrabbing and financial sector
Publication landgrab report nat. newspaper
Digital media
12/1/2011
12/5/2011
12/12/2011
12/19/2011
12/26/2011
1/2/2012


Bank C pledges to adopt anti-landgrab policy
One-on-one lobby meetings with Bank E and F
Bank F starts internal discussions on landgrab
Lobby meeting with bank H
Banks provide additional input to ext.research agency
Banks review draft of all benchmark scores
Banks have 2 weeks time to pledge better landgrab policy
Bank D pledges to adopt anti-landgrab policy
Additional input on benchmark scores
Draft of all benchmark scores
Final input banks to landrab benchmark
Draft press release of benchm. report
Lobbyists notify banks of campaign plans
Ext. research agency processes additional input banks
Ext. research agency sends all benchmark scores to banks
Ext. research agency Processes final policy changes
Lobbyists send draft press release of benchm. report
Publication of benchmark report
Management approves campaign plan
Campaign manager forms campaign team
Landgrab benchmark report
Final press release benchm. report
Wide national press coverage (TV and newspaper)
Wide national press coverage (TV and newspaper)
Financial benchmark celebrates 3 year anniversary
1/9/2012
1/16/2012
1/23/2012
1/30/2012
2/6/2012
2/10/2012

In the week before the official report launch, the lobbyists had many one-on-one lobby meetings with banks about the benchmark results. Bank C pledged to improve its anti-landgrab policy, while bank D responded to the draft press release of the benchmark report by pledging a policy change. Nevertheless, this pledge was too late to change the bank's scores in the final report. To compensate for this, the P.R. officer mentioned Bank D's pledge in the final press release that accompanied the benchmark report. This report attracted nation-wide media coverage targeted at the banks mentioned in the reports. The banks did not publicly respond to the benchmark report. Right after the report, the lobbyists informed the banks that were still reluctant to change their policy of their protest campaign. This notification put pressure on Bank F to discuss their investment policy with its investment fund. At the same time, the envisioned campaign manager finalized and communicated the campaign plan with the activist organization, including the lobbyists. The board approved the campaign plan and the campaign manager formed a campaign team two weeks before the launch of the benchmark report.

4.4.3 | **Phase 3: Staging**

The campaign efforts that led to the launch of the online campaign inviting banks to enter the frontstage dominated the third phase of the influence strategy. After the announcement of the protest campaign in the previous phase, the lobbyists sent the banks follow-up e-mails on how they should change their investment policy. This resulted in a series of one-on-one lobby meetings with banks F, H, and I. Bank G kept avoiding lobby meetings. At the same time, the lobbyists ordered the external research agency to map concrete cases of landgrabbing by the remaining banks. The lobbyists persuaded Bank E to pledge a policy change two weeks before the launch of the online campaign.

In the meanwhile, the activities within the activist group shifted to the campaign team. This team organized a kick-off meeting for mid-February 2012 to discuss the frame of the online campaign with the lobbyists and an external design agency. The design agency started to develop a draft campaign design after the kick-off, which the board rejected as it was considered too aggressive towards the banks, potentially jeopardizing the lobbying efforts. Hence, the banks' diagnostic frame was changed from landgrabbing suspects to landgrabbing witnesses. The campaign launch was consequently postponed by two weeks. After a major revision and review of the campaign frame and design, the board rejected the frame a second time. However, this time only a minor revision was required before the frame and design were finalized.

The campaign design included: 1) A central campaign website that functioned as a dashboard to track the campaign results, 2) instant Facebook and Twitter messages that linked to YouTube videos in which one of the targeted banks was asked to act as a witness in a fictional court, 3) instant e-mail messages that consumers could send to their bank, and 4) radio commercials aimed at attracting consumers to the campaign website. In the week before the launch (end of March), the designing of the campaign intensified. With the launch within arm's reach, the activist group's board informed Bank H about the launch, as the activist group had a partnership with this bank. The lobbyists informed banks F, G, and I about the campaign launch by means of a draft press release, which triggered responses from Bank F, and G. Bank F promised to continue discussions with its investment fund, and Bank G requested a one-on-one lobby meeting.

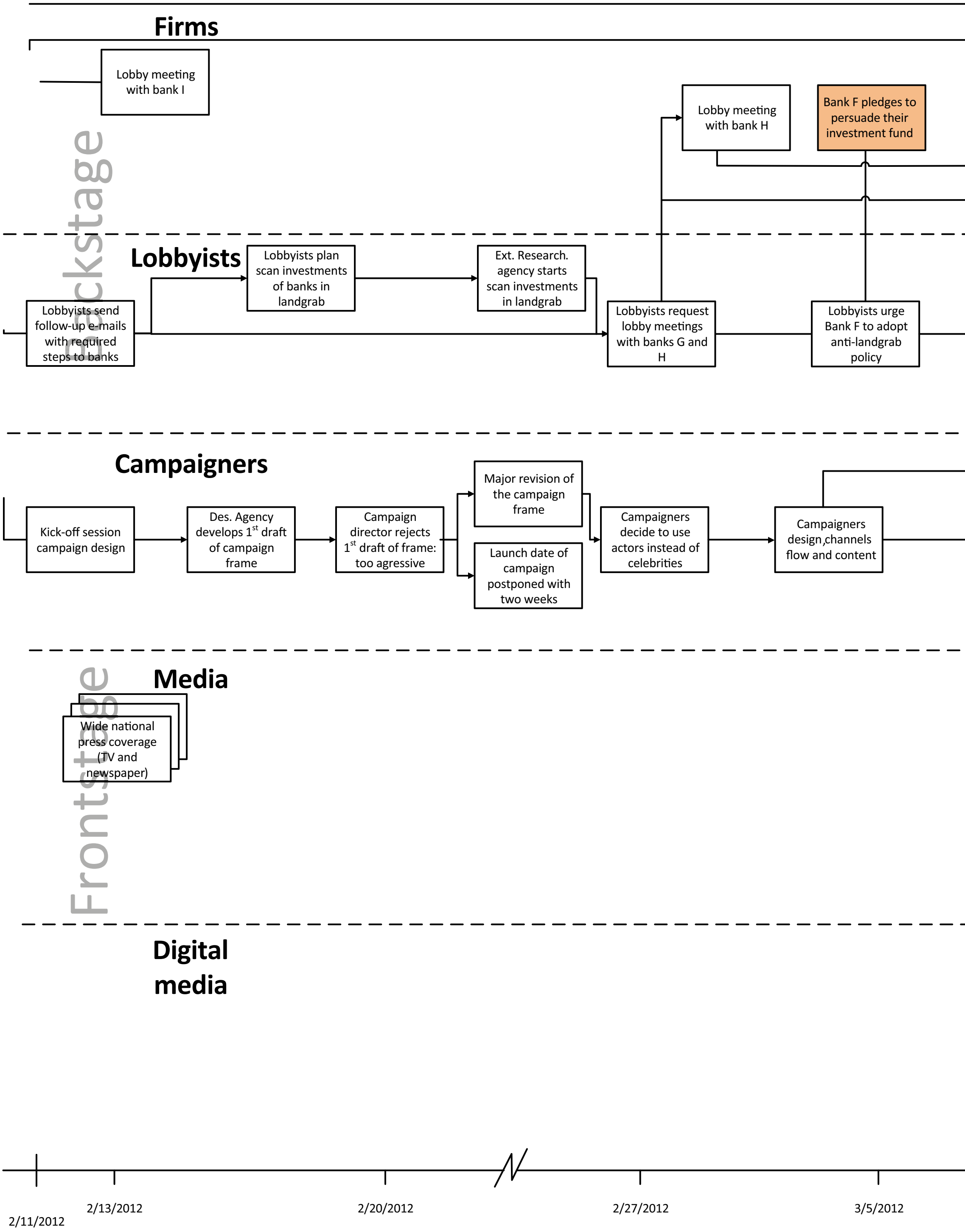
A few days later (at the end of March 2012), the online campaign was officially launched. The media coverage of the campaign was limited in comparison to the publication of the landgrab benchmark report. A renowned newspaper published an article about landgrabbing without mentioning the banks. Prior to the launch, journalists told the P.R. officer that the campaign frame did not add new facts to the benchmark report. However, both Twitter and Facebook peaked on the first day with respectively 36 tweets and 182 wall posts.

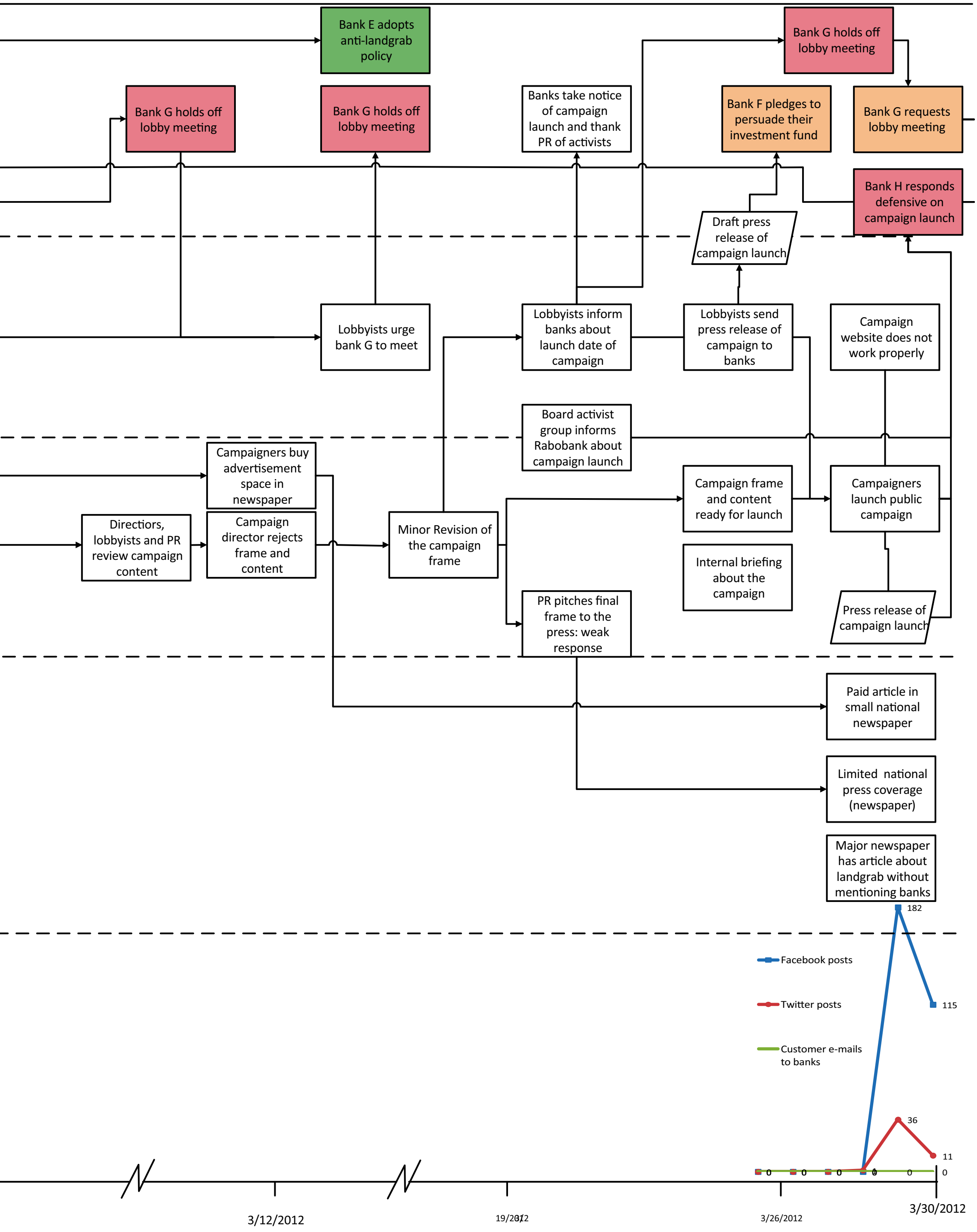
4.4.4 | **Phase 4: Performing**

The campaign efforts, which were slowly phased out and shifted towards lobbying activities at the end of the influence strategy process dominated the first half of the fourth phase. After its launch, the campaigners fixed initial problems on the campaign website, and optimized the campaign design performance. As part of the campaign, the campaigners sent a letter to the Dutch parliament to consider anti-landgrabbing legislation. The campaigners received support from Bank A, which published a weblog post and a tweet promoting the campaign. Bank H did not publicly respond to the campaigners, but did start answer consumer e-mails about the campaign when these e-mails peaked on April 3, 2012.

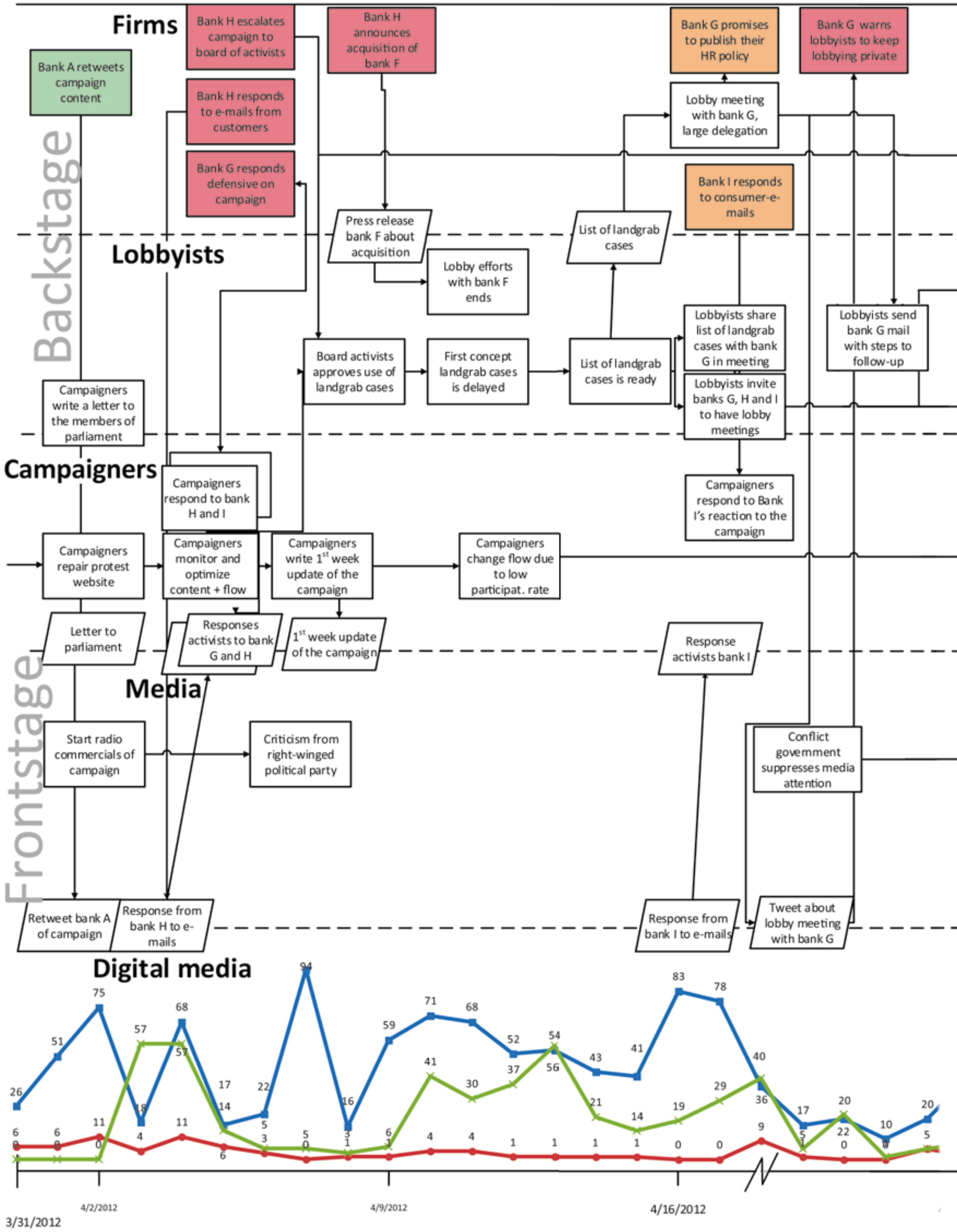
In its answer, Bank H condemned the campaign and labeled the campaign's frame suggestive and incorrect, as it claimed to be not involved in any concrete landgrabbing cases.

Third phase: Staging


Firms
Lobby meeting with bank I
Lobby meeting with bank H
Bank F pledges to persuade their investment fund
Backstage
Lobbyists
Lobbyists plan scan investments of banks in landgrab
Ext. Research. agency starts scan investments in landgrab
Lobbyists send follow-up e-mails with required steps to banks
Lobbyists request lobby meetings with banks G and H
Lobbyists urge Bank F to adopt anti-landgrab policy
Campaigners
Major revision of the campaign frame
Kick-off session campaign design
Des. Agency develops 1st draft of campaign frame
Campaign director rejects 1st draft of frame: too agressive
Launch date of campaign postponed with two weeks
Campaigners decide to use actors instead of celebrities
Campaigners design,channels flow and content
Frontstage
Media
Wide national press coverage (TV and newspaper)
Digital media
2/11/2012
2/13/2012
2/20/2012
2/27/2012
3/5/2012


Bank E adopts anti-landgrab policy
Bank G holds off lobby meeting
Bank G holds off lobby meeting
Bank G holds off lobby meeting
Banks take notice of campaign launch and thank PR of activists
Bank F pledges to persuade their investment fund
Bank G requests lobby meeting
Bank H responds defensive on campaign launch
Draft press release of campaign launch
Lobbyists urge bank G to meet
Lobbyists inform banks about launch date of campaign
Lobbyists send press release of campaign to banks
Campaign website does not work properly
Board activist group informs Rabobank about campaign launch
Campaigners buy advertisement space in newspaper
Directors, lobbyists and PR review campaign content
Campaign director rejects frame and content
Minor Revision of the campaign frame
Campaign frame and content ready for launch
Campaigners launch public campaign
Internal briefing about the campaign
PR pitches final frame to the press: weak response
Press release of campaign launch
Paid article in small national newspaper
Limited national press coverage (newspaper)
Major newspaper has article about landgrab without mentioning banks
182
115
36
11
0
0
0
0
1
0
0
Facebook posts
Twitter posts
Customer e-mails to banks
3/12/2012
19/2012
3/26/2012
3/30/2012

Fourth phase: Performing


Firms
Bank A retweets campaign content
Bank H escalates campaign to board of activists
Bank H responds to e-mails from customers
Bank G responds defensive on campaign
Bank H announces acquisition of bank F
Bank G promises to publish their HR policy
Bank G warns lobbyists to keep lobbying private
Lobby meeting with bank G, large delegation
Bank I responds to consumer-e-mails
Backstage
Lobbyists
Press release bank F about acquisition
Lobby efforts with bank F ends
List of landgrab cases
Board activists approves use of landgrab cases
First concept landgrab cases is delayed
List of landgrab cases is ready
Lobbyists share list of landgrab cases with bank G in meeting
Lobbyists invite banks G, H and I to have lobby meetings
Lobbyists send bank G mail with steps to follow-up
Campaigners write a letter to the members of parliament
Campaigners
Campaigners respond to bank H and I
Campaigners respond to Bank I's reaction to the campaign
Campaigners repair protest website
Campaigners monitor and optimize content + flow
Campaigners write 1st week update of the campaign
Campaigners change flow due to low participat. rate
Letter to parliament
Responses activists to bank G and H
1st week update of the campaign
Response activists bank I
Media
Frontstage
Start radio commercials of campaign
Criticism from right-winged political party
Conflict government suppresses media attention
Retweet bank A of campaign
Response from bank H to e-mails
Response from bank I to e-mails
Tweet about lobby meeting with bank G
Digital media
26
51
75
18
57
68
57
14
17
22
94
16
59
71
68
52
54
43
41
83
78
40
17
20
10
20
41
30
37
56
21
14
19
29
36
22
6
6
11
0
0
4
11
6
5
3
5
0
3
1
6
1
4
4
1
1
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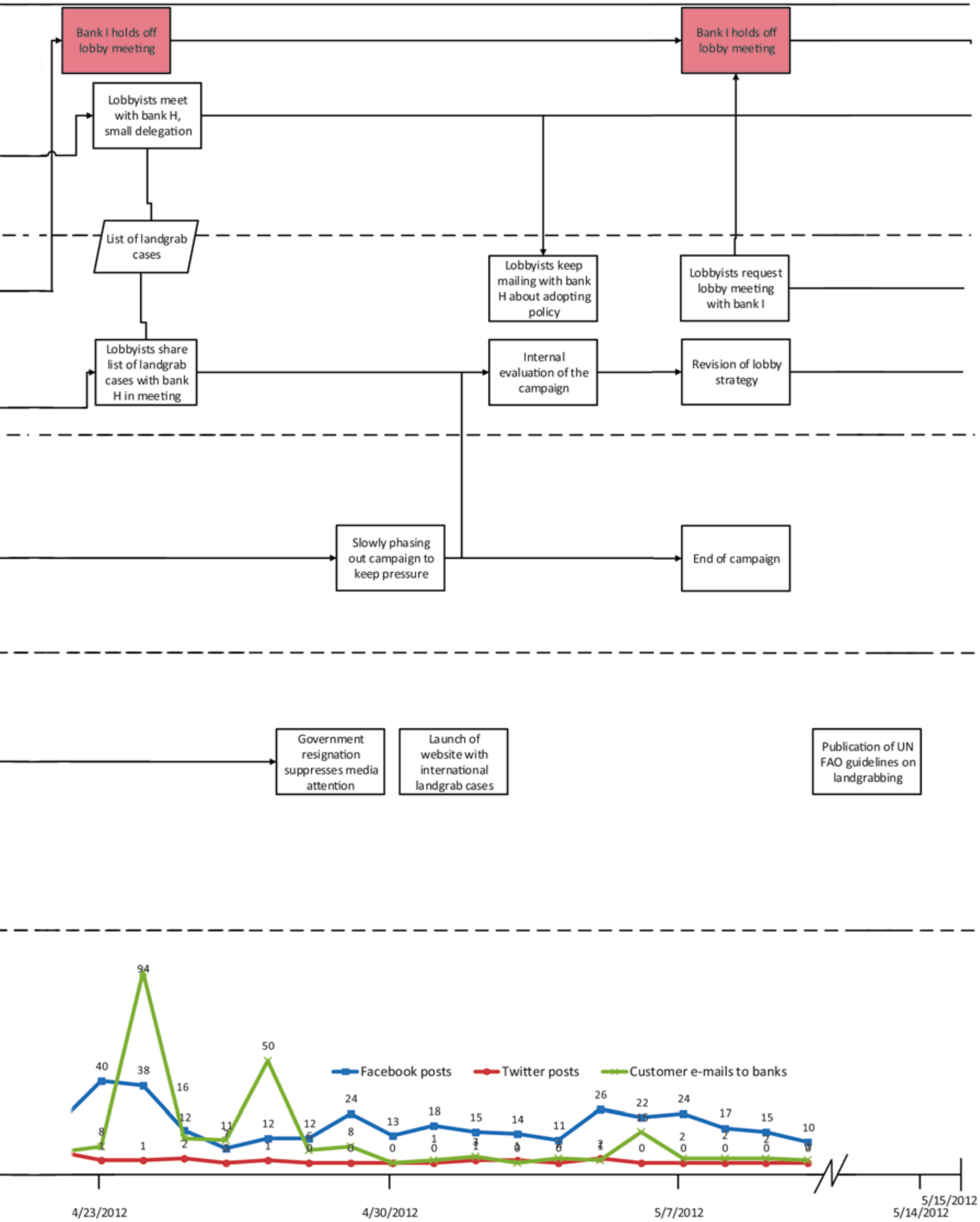
3/31/2012
4/2/2012
4/9/2012
4/16/2012


Bank I holds off lobby meeting
Bank I holds off lobby meeting
Lobbyists meet with bank H, small delegation
List of landgrab cases
Lobbyists keep mailing with bank H about adopting policy
Lobbyists request lobby meeting with bank I
Lobbyists share list of landgrab cases with bank H in meeting
Internal evaluation of the campaign
Revision of lobby strategy
Slowly phasing out campaign to keep pressure
End of campaign
Government resignation suppresses media attention
Launch of website with international landgrab cases
Publication of UN FAO guidelines on landgrabbing
Facebook posts
Twitter posts
Customer e-mails to banks
4/23/2012
4/30/2012
5/7/2012
5/14/2012
5/15/2012

In the backstage, Bank H escalated the campaign to the activist groups' board, believing the campaign endangered the relationship between it and the activist group danger. Furthermore, Bank H announced in the media that it had acquired Bank F, which transferred the lobbying efforts directed at this bank to Bank F. In the same week, Bank G's web care team responded defensively to the campaign's claims on social media. After the first week, the campaigners posted a campaign update on the campaign website. In mid-April, Bank I responded to campaign e-mails from its consumers. In its response, Bank I explicitly undermined the authority of the campaign's landgrab benchmark and claims. This bank indicated that it collaborated with other watchdog organizations, but aimed for transparency in its engagement activities. After responding to Bank I's claim, the campaigners slowly phased out the campaign.

By mid-May 2012, the campaign had attracted approximately 56,000 views on YouTube, 22,000 unique website views, and 2,000 consumer actions on Facebook, Twitter, and by e-mail. The campaign received limited attention from the mass media, which may have been due to the resignation of the Dutch government dominating the news during the campaign. In the backstage, the lobbyists received approval of the activist group's board to use a list of concrete landgrab cases in their lobbying efforts. They urged one-on-one lobby meetings with banks G, H, and I in order to present this list. First, they met with Bank G, which was cooperative and triggered a positive response. Bank G promised to be more transparent about their investment policy. As an experiment, lobbyists tweeted and posted a weblog about their meeting with Bank G, of which the bank disapproved. A week later, the lobbyists met with a small delegation of Bank H, aiming to discuss the relationship between the activist group and the bank rather than insist on a policy change. The lobbyists and campaigners jointly evaluated the influence process in mid-May.

4.5 | **Results: A Process Model of Frontstage and Backstage Tactics**

Drawing on the landgrabbing case study, we developed a process model that theorizes how the interaction between frontstage and backstage is used to elicit favorable firm responses. Table 4.2 provides a distilled chronological overview of the interactions and firm responses in each phase (framing, scripting, staging, and performing). Examining the banks' responses closer, we distinguished four banks clusters that resemble Roger's innovation adopter categories: 1) Innovators (Bank A and B) that adopt the desired policy without any public pressure, 2) early adopters (Banks C and D) that require pressure from a projected public event to comply, 3) an early/late majority (Banks E and F) that needs a public discrediting event and the projection of a second discrediting event to comply, and 4) laggards (Banks G, H, and I) that require a frontstage audience intervention to change their response strategy.

Figure 4.5 shows the influence process that the activist group used, which shifts incrementally from cooperative tactics (cooperation and research) in the framing phase to confrontational tactics (campaign aimed at symbolic damage) in the performing phase. This process resembles the suggestion by Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) that reformative activist groups employ more confrontational tactics if the influence process escalates. In the following paragraphs, we formulate propositions regarding the interaction between frontstage and backstage, as well as the result this has on the firm clusters in each phase.

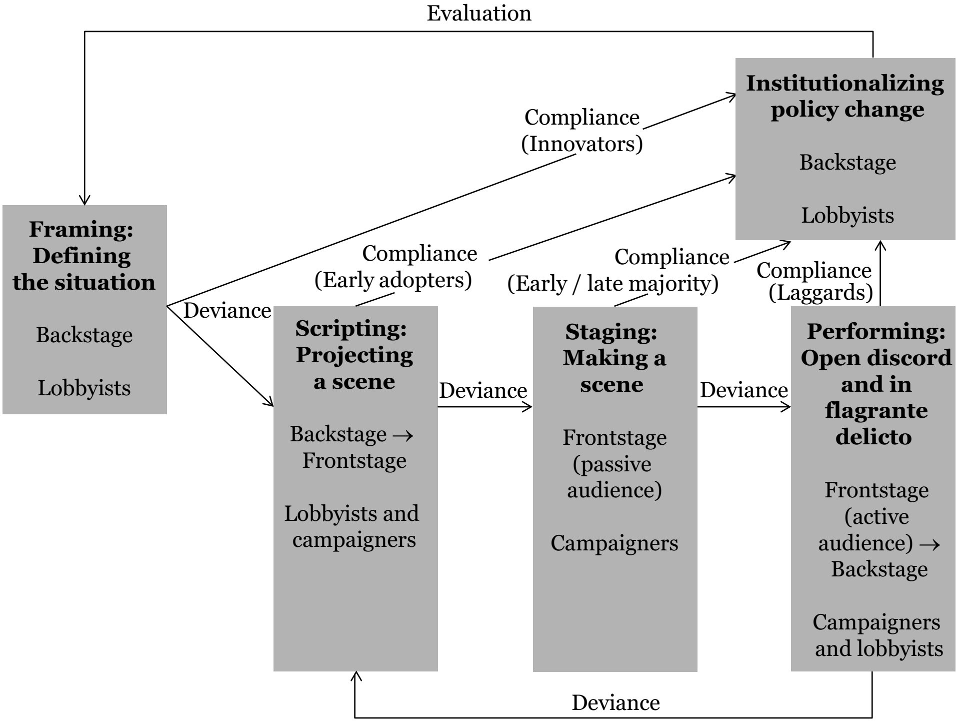

Evaluation
Institutionalizing policy change
Backstage
Lobbyists
Compliance (Innovators)
Framing: Defining the situation
Backstage
Lobbyists
Compliance (Early adopters)
Compliance (Early / late majority)
Compliance (Laggards)
Deviance
Scripting: Projecting a scene
Backstage → Frontstage
Lobbyists and campaigners
Deviance
Staging: Making a scene
Frontstage (passive audience)
Campaigners
Deviance
Performing: Open discord and in flagrante delicto
Frontstage (active audience) → Backstage
Campaigners and lobbyists
Deviance

Figure 4.5 | Process model of the influence process

Table 4.2 | Overview of organizational responses and backstage / frontage tactics employed by activist group

	Size	Ownership	Phase 1: Framing	Phase 2: Scripting	Phase 3: Staging	Phase 4: Performing
			October-December 2011	January-Mid February 2012	Mid-February-March 2012	April-Mid May 2012
Firms						
A	Medium	Private	**Acquiesce**: Fully complies with anti-landgrab policy at start of lobbying process.			**(Beyond) acquiesce:** Promotes activists' campaign on Twitter
B	Medium	Private	**Acquiesce:** Pledges to adopt anti-landgrab policy after information workshop			
C	Medium	Private	**Avoid:** No response to requests.	**Acquiesce:** Pledges to adopt anti-landgrab policy week before benchmark publication.		
D	Medium	Public	**Avoid:** Requires more time to adopt anti-landgrab policy.	**Acquiesce:** Pledges to adopt anti-landgrab policy day before benchmark publication.		
E	Small	Private	**Avoid:** Argues that small size makes landgrab issue less relevant.	**Compromise:** Discusses landgrab issue at a lobby meeting a week before benchmark publication.	**Acquiesce:** Pledges to adopt anti-landgrab policy a week before campaign launch	
F	Small	Private	**Avoid:** Argues that small size makes landgrab issue less relevant.	**Compromise:** Agrees to discuss anti-landgrab policy with its investment fund a week before benchmark publication.	**Compromise:** Continues discussion about anti-landgrab policy with investment fund.	**Avoid:** Lobby process transferred to bank H due to acquisition.
G	Large	Partly Private	**Avoid:** Requires more time to adopt anti-landgrab policy.	**Avoid:** Refuses invitations for a lobbying meeting.	**Avoid:** Refuses invitations for a lobbying meeting until launch of campaign.	**Compromise:** Agrees to more transparency about human rights policy concerning investments.

Table 4.2 | *(Continued)*

	Size	Ownership	Phase 1: Framing	Phase 2: Scripting	Phase 3: Staging	Phase 4: Performing
			October-December 2011	January-Mid February 2012	Mid-February-March 2012	April-Mid May 2012
Firms						
H	Large	Private	**Avoid:** Requires more time to adopt anti-landgrab policy.	**Compromise:** Discusses landgrab issue at a lobby meeting a week before benchmark publication.	**Avoid:** Indicates in a lobbying meeting that bank is not involved in landgrabbing and policy is not needed.	**Defy:** Needs renewal of relationship before discussion on anti-landgrab policy can start.
I	Large	Private	**Avoid:** No response to requests.	**Avoid:** Refuses invitations for a lobbying meeting.	**Avoid:** Holds back invitations for lobby meeting.	**Manipulate:** Publicly undermines authority of the landgrab benchmark.
Activist group						
Backstage: lobby activities			1) Publishing white paper 2) Organizing info workshop 3) Setting rules for lobbying process 4) One-on-one lobbying meetings 5) Jointly preparing methodology of landgrab benchmark	1) Hires external research agency to conduct benchmark 2) Supports external research agency in respect of benchmark 3) One-on-one lobbying meetings 4) Publication of benchmark 5) Announcement of campaign	1) Follow-up after report 2) Hires external research agency to scan landgrab cases 3) One-on-one lobbying meetings 4) Notification of campaign date	1) Develop responses to banks 2) Approve list of landgrab cases 3) One-on-one lobbying meetings regarding list of landgrab cases 4) Follow-up after meetings 5) Lobby evaluation
Frontstage: campaign activities			1) Development of campaign plan	1) Approval of campaign plan 2) Internal dissemination of campaign plan 3) Formation of campaign team	1) Kick-off frame development 2) Development of campaign design (frame, content, media) 3) Rejection of campaign frame 4) Revision of campaign design 5) Approval of campaign design 6) Campaign launch	1) Publish responses to banks 2) Send letter to parliament 3) Review and revise campaign design 4) Update campaign activity 5) Phasing out campaign 6) Campaign evaluation

Table 4.2 | *(Continued)*

Size	Ownership	Phase 1: Framing	Phase 2: Scripting	Phase 3: Staging	Phase 4: Performing
		October-December 2011	January-Mid February 2012	Mid-February-March 2012	April-Mid May 2012
Activist group					
Interplay between backstage and frontstage		No interplay between backstage and frontstage	**Frontstage → Backstage:** Lobbyists announce launch of campaign right after publication of report.	**Backstage → Frontstage:** Lobbyists temper campaign frame of banks from 'suspect' to 'witness' **Frontstage → Backstage:** Lobbyists announce launch of campaign at lobbying meetings	**Frontstage → Backstage**: Consumers send e-mails **Frontstage → Backstage:** Campaign targeted at bank H backfires on lobbyists and board of activists. **Backstage → Frontage:** Weblog and tweet about lobbying with bank G.
Media					
Traditional media attention		**Low** mass media attention, but not directed at banks.	**High** national mass media attention to banks.	**Medium** mass media attention during launch, but partly directed at banks.	**Low** national mass attention after launch, partly directed at banks.
Social media attention		**No** attention on social media.	**Low** attention on Twitter about publication of report.	**High** attention on Twitter, Facebook, and e-mails at launch.	**Medium** attention on Twitter, Facebook, and e-mails.
Dominant tactic (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007)		**Elite** participation **Symbolic gain:** Cooperation	**Elite** participation **Symbolic damage:** Research and negative publicity in media	**Elite** participation **Symbolic damage:** Research	**Mass** participation **Symbolic damage:** Radio, social media, and e-mail.

4.5.1 | **Defining the Situation Motivates Agreeable Firms and Constrains Frontstage Events**

The activist group started with a cooperative approach. Examples of this cooperation are the information workshop, agreement on the rules of the lobby efforts, and the joint drafting of the benchmark methodology. However, the activist group gradually changed its tactics towards inflicting symbolic damage on the firms that kept resisting (Bank F, G, H, and I). In an interview, one of the lobbyists stated that they wanted the banks to co-own the process. In terms of Goffman, the banks jointly defined the situation with the lobbyists in the first phase. This joint definition assisted the lobbying efforts in the first phases: A majority of the banks cooperated on the landgrab benchmark. However, the initial definition of the situation did affect the firm responses during the online campaign. First, the banks that did not actively participate (e.g. banks G and I) in the first phase did distance themselves from the landgrab benchmark and campaign results. Second, agreements made during the definition of the situation restricted the moral claim the activist performance could make frontstage. Banks H and I made moral claims during the campaign that traced back to the situation's initial definition, in which the activist lobbyists had agreed not to mention concrete landgrab cases. In their responses, both these banks indicated that the campaign did not mention concrete cases. Beyond this, Bank I, the bank of which the activist group is a customer, even felt the activist organization was being disloyal and escalated the campaign towards the activist group's board members. Hence, we formulate the following propositions:

> *Proposition 1a: The joint definition of the situation by the activists and firms in the backstage increases the likelihood that agreeable firms (innovators) will comply with the activist group's demands.*
>
> *Proposition 1b: The joint definition of the situation by the activists and firms in the backstage decreases the likelihood of laggard firms complying with the activist group's demands in response to a frontstage campaign.*

4.5.2 | **Projecting and Preventing a Scene Motivates Hesitant Firms**

The case study demonstrates that backstage lobbying efforts can benefit from the threat of discrediting the frontstage events. First, we find that the interactions with the lobbyists intensified in the week before the publication of the benchmark report, which results in two banks (C and D) pledging to adopt an anti-landgrab policy. As previous research suggested (King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; McDonnell & King, 2013), both banks had experienced reputational damage in the years before the landgrab campaign, which may have made them more sensitive to discrediting frontstage events. Furthermore, both banks had very low scores in the benchmark report, which could have resulted in new reputational damage. In terms of Goffman, their pledge may be seen as preventive measures to maintain face. Second, the lobbyists informed the banks of their online campaign. This knowledge of an impending discrediting event triggered Bank E to improve its anti-landgrab policy and increased the pressure on the remaining banks (F, G, H, and I). Specifically, the lobbyists explained the frame and organization of the campaign to these banks during lobbying meetings in the weeks before the frontstage launch. Figure 4.2 shows how both public events (report and campaign) triggered peaks in the organizational responses.

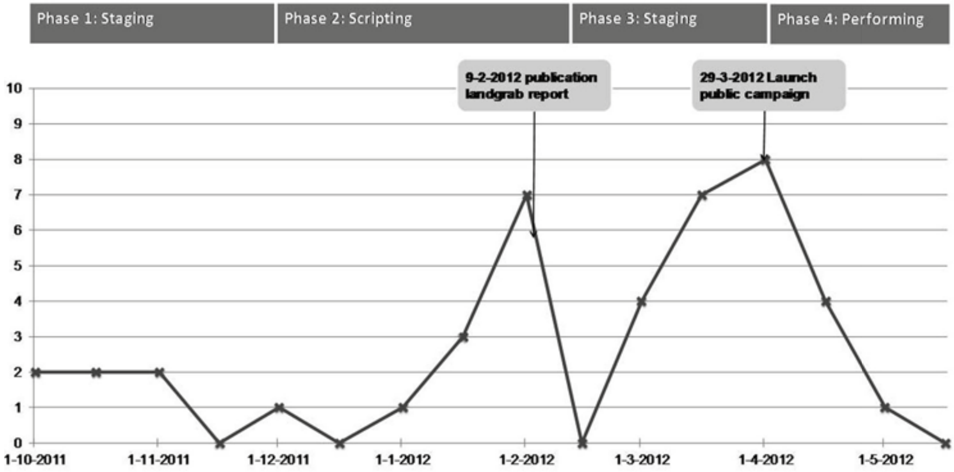


Figure 4.2 | Overview of number of organizational responses during the influence process

However, large banks (H and I) were less sensitive to the threat of a campaign. This could have several reasons: A leading bank's strong reputation could function as a buffer (McDonnell & King, 2013), or the large size of the banks may have diminished the perceived threat of a campaign from this activist organization. Hence, the case analysis provides some evidence in line with the proposition whereby the backstage threat of a frontstage campaign helps persuade firms sensitive to reputational damage. Hence, we formulate the following proposition:

> *Proposition 2: The threat of a discrediting frontstage performance that a future campaign pose increases the likelihood that early adopters comply with the activist group's demands in the backstage.*

4.5.3 | **Competing Frames Constrain the Effect of Making a Scene to Motivate Laggards**

The case study highlights the internal framing contest within the activist group when developing the campaign framing. The frame that the lobbyists defined together with the firms in the first phase – banks as witnesses of landgrabbing – competed with the frame that the campaigners developed in the scripting stage – banks as suspects of landgrabbing or even as landgrabbing criminals. This is a tension between a diagnostic frame, which defines the problem of landgrabbing, and a motivational frame, which needs to resonate with the audience (Snow & Benford, 1988).

The lobbyists' diagnostic frame fitted their cooperative tactic to maintain the relationships with the banks, whereas the campaigners' motivational frame needed to motivate mass consumer participation. The difference in frames resulted in two rejections of the campaign design in the designing phase and a suspension of the campaign launch. The final frame (e.g. banks as witnesses of landgrabbing), although factually correct, was not persuasive and simple enough to draw media attention, or large-scale engagement on digital media, as multiple interviewees and the (digital) media metrics indicated. The activist group suffered intra-organizational institutional complexity: It had to balance its relationships with the banks with the need to engage a large mass of supporters in the anti-landgrab campaign. Several interviewees stated that the compromised frame diminished the engagement of consumers and journalists, lowering the pressure on the four targets (banks F,G,H, and I) to acquiesce to the activist group's demands. The campaign launch delay also delayed the time between the benchmark report publication and the launch, which may have decreased the momentum of landgrabbing as a topic of interest for the mass media. In sum, the case supports the proposition that the frame decided upon through backstage cooperation limited the adversarial nature of the frontstage campaign. Hence, we formulate the following proposition:

> *Proposition 3: A cooperative frame in the backstage limits the adversarial nature of the frame on the frontstage, decreasing the likelihood that laggard firms will comply with the activist group's demands in response to a frontstage campaign.*

4.5.4 | **In Flagrante Delicto: The Damaging Effects When Backstage and Frontstage Meet**

Most of the time, the lobbyists informed banks when the activist group would enter the frontstage and perform for a public audience. The backstage and frontstage only met once: Consumers were able to peek into the backstage when the lobbyists reported on a lobbying meeting with Bank G on Twitter and on a weblog during the campaign. In line with the proposition, Bank G condemned this frontstage act and no further open lobbying efforts were made. However, this leakage did not affect Bank G's position in its negotiation with the lobbyists, but neither was it stimulated to acquiesce. This one instance is in line with our proposition that such a backstage and frontstage meeting decreases the likelihood that a targeted firm will acquiesces to activists' demands. Hence, we formulate the following proposition:

Proposition 4: A sudden and unauthorized leakage of information from the backstage to the frontstage decreases the likelihood that a laggard firms will comply with activists' backstage demands.

4.5.5 | **Open Discord: Online Interaction with Audience Amplifies Discrediting Campaign**

The frontstage campaign was designed to engage consumers to express their grievances to the banks. The central campaign website gave consumers information about the campaign progress and listed options for participating on social media and by e-mail. Interviewees and media metrics indicated that the campaign did not attract many participants. It was not the public messages on Twitter and Facebook, but the private and personalized e-mail messages from consumers to their banks that forced banks H and I to respond. This response, however, was not addressed to the activist groups, but to the consumers. The campaigners used e-mail contact from these consumers to respond to the banks on their campaign website. In this way, the digital media interactivity helped the activist group discuss the issue on the frontstage and trigger new lobby meetings.

The effect of an interactive audience would perhaps have been greater if the number of protest participants had been larger. The interviewees indicated that the firms' perception that they were losing control over the influence process caused the amplifying effect of open discord. Thus, while we find some support for proposition 5, the limited success of this case in mobilizing the public prevents us from concluding that the public's frontstage involvement increases the likelihood of a firm acquiescing to lobbyists' backstage demands. Hence, we formulate the following proposition:

Proposition 5: The frontstage involvement of an audience resonating with the campaign's frame of the situation, increases the likelihood that laggard firms will comply with activists' demands.

4.6 | **Discussion**

In this chapter, we studied how an activist group employs public and private tactics to instigate field-level change. To do so, we presented an in-depth process study of a large, reformative activist group that organized an online protest campaign, beside its lobby efforts, to persuade nine Dutch retail banks to adopt anti-landgrabbing measures in their investment policy.

4.6.1 | **Summary of Results and Discussion of Scientific Implications**

Based on Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of impression management and the case study, we developed a process model with six propositions on how the backstage and the frontstage interaction between activists and firm representatives influenced the firm responses. This process model includes four dramaturgical phases: framing, scripting, staging, and performing. The landgrab case demonstrates that the interplay between frontstage and backstage offers activist groups opportunities and risks in each phase. In the framing phase, lobbyists and firm representatives' joint definition of the situation may motivate agreeable firms to comply with the activist group's demands, but may weaken the campaigners' position regarding the later frontstage pressurizing of laggard firms. In the scripting phase, the promise of a public campaign and subsequent reputational damage (a discrediting performance in Goffman's terms) motivates hesitant firms to comply with the activist groups' demands. In the staging phase, the informal and cooperative tone of the backstage discussions may limit, and even conflict with, the formal and adversarial frontstage tone . As a consequence, large activist groups face competing frames within one influence strategy. The nuanced diagnostic frame of the lobbyists may conflict with the adversarial motivational frame that the campaigners develop. In the performing phase, the activist group invited the audience to interact with the laggard firms. Allowing consumers to suddenly, and without consent, peek into the backstage, for example, by leaking sensitive backstage information on Twitter, pressured firms to change their response strategy, albeit negatively in one case. Last, the landgrabbing case shows that digital media, such as the activist group's protest website and social media, allow the audience to enter the frontstage, open discord in terms of Goffman (1959), and to vent their grievance in public (e.g. on social media) and in private (e.g. e-mail). This open discord, especially e-mails sent to firms, assist the lobbyists in their frontstage discussions with firms.

This study contributes to the business ethics and organizational literature in four ways. First, our study contributes a dramaturgical perspective to the collation of influence tactics. Goffman's (1959) metaphor of a theatrical play helps scholars and practitioners understand the interplay between public and private interactions between activist groups and firms. In this way, our study adds to earlier studies on the use of impression management in respect of corporate social responsibility (Highhouse et al., 2009; McDonnell & King, 2013; Solomon et al., 2013). Second, our study highlights the dilemma resulting from the competing frames that large activist groups with both lobbyists and campaigners may experience. Instead of studying networks of activist groups that interact and may compete (Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010; Zietsma &

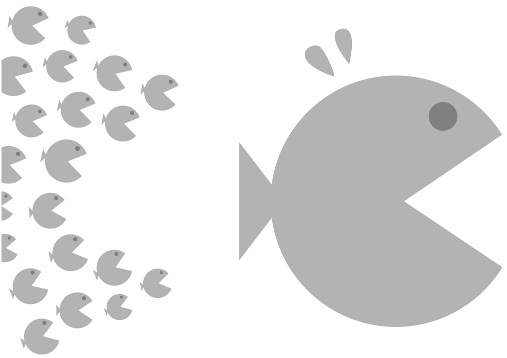
Lawrence, 2010; Zietsma & Winn, 2008) or cooperate (Van Wijk et al., 2013), the case study highlights how one activist group has to combine a nuanced frame for lobbying and an adversarial frame for campaigning into one influence strategy. Similar to the institutional complexity concept, we call this intra-organizational framing contest tactical complexity. In our case, there was no synthesis between the frames, but, as hybrid organizations, activist groups may find ways to combine the competing frames within their organization (Battilana & Dorado, 2010) or to collaborate with other activist groups to prevent tactical complexity in the same activist organization. Third, our study emphasizes the strategic sequencing of influence tactics rather than their current static frameworks (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). We show how a reformative activist group escalates its influence strategy to target firms with different levels of resistance. Last, our study contributes to the emerging body of literature on how activist groups use digital media to pressure incumbent firms (Bennett, 2003a; Carty, 2002; Castelló et al., 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). The case shows that online campaigns are embedded in a wider influence process that can include tactics that hamper online campaign effectiveness. Furthermore, part of the impact results from the projection of an online campaign and the fear of losing control when the audience starts controlling the frontstage campaign.

4.6.2 | **Practical Implications**

Our study has implications for activist groups and firms. First, large activist groups may use the insights from Goffman's impression management theory to develop better campaigns. The key question is how they can combine public and private tactics without internal conflicts, which will allow them to reap the benefits of the carrot (lobbying) and the stick (campaigning). As activist groups target firms increasingly, also on digital media, this study provides managers, communication, and firm CSR officers with important insights . The case study shows that firms need to be proactive and participate early on in reformative activist groups' influence process. In this way, they can co-shape the tone of the voice used and the rules of engagement. Last, firms need to carefully analyze activist groups' campaign history to assess the risk of a projected campaign.

4.6.3 | **Limitations and Future Research**

A single case study limits the external generalizability of the findings. Our case study includes only one industry, activist group, and cause. Future research should study the interplay of public and private tactics between multiple types of industries and activist groups. Similarly, our case study focuses on one protest cycle. However, it remains unclear how the anti-landgrabbing campaign contributes to the broader institutional change process in the banking industry. For example, did the public campaign's low participation rate weaken the activist group's efforts in the subsequent protest cycles? Future research should therefore study the sequence of protest cycles in an institutional field over a longer time frame (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Wijk et al., 2013; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Furthermore, the anti-landgrabbing campaign was seen as unsuccessful in terms of consumer engagement. Hence, we were unable to study the effects of large-scale public support for the campaign. As explained before, the projection of the campaign in the early stages of the influence process formed the greatest part of the effect. A closer analysis shows that the anti-landgrabbing campaign mainly attracted ideologically motivated supporters, while large-scale online campaigns may also attract supporters not interested in the cause (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Future research should therefore study the role of passive and active protest participants in influence processes.



Chapter 5

Activist versus Slacktivist: A Dual Path Model of Online Protest Mobilization[13]

Abstract

Protests aimed at changing firm behavior, increasingly make use of digital media to mobilize large numbers of participants, including those with only a passing interest in the protest cause. However, we know little about how protest organizers mobilize a wide range of protesters. This chapter investigates the effect of campaign design on those protesters willing to make an effort for the protest (activists), and protesters who are reluctant to make more than a token effort (slacktivists). In an experimental study, we assess two different motivational paths leading to protest participation, drawing on the cognitive sciences' Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM): A central path in which people delve into the protest arguments, and a peripheral path in which website design cues play a more important role. We contribute to the literature in five ways. First, we identify slacktivists based on their actual and perceived effort regarding protest participation. Second, we find that the design cues of the protest website do actually lead to slacktivists becoming engaged in a protest. Third, in line with ELM, we find that slacktivists are less receptive to the ideological claims of a campaign than activists are. Fourth, contrary to recent claims that slacktivists are motivated by their pursuit of social status, we find that their actions' public visibility inhibit them. Finally, we uncover a counter-intuitive effect that slacktivists, not activists, are more inclined to participate when they identify with the purported victims of a firm's disputed behavior. Finally, we offer practical insights for protest organizers and firms wishing to respond appropriately when they become the target of an online protest.

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[13] Co-authors are David Langley, Michel Erhenhard and Aard Groen. An earlier and abridged version of this chapter is published in the Best Paper Proceedings of the 2015 Academy of Management annual meeting, OCIS Division, Vancouver, Canada.

5.1 | Introduction

Prior research argues that consumer protests can damage a firm's reputation (Bartley & Child, 2011; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; Spar & Mure, 2003). Protest organizers who show they enjoy a high level of moral support are more successful at signaling the risk of reputational damage to firms, and are, therefore, more likely to achieve their goals (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King & Soule, 2007; Tilly, 2004). In the past decade, protest websites have become a preferred medium to gain such moral support by mobilizing masses of consumers to publicly question firms' disputed behavior (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Ward & Ostrom, 2006; Xia, 2013). Protest websites offer low-effort tactics, such as online petitions, that make it easy for many consumers to voice their opinion. The low threshold to participate in consumer protests may attract protesters who are less concerned with the protest cause and may be motivated by wishing to improve their social status (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Morozov, 2009). In contrast to activists, previous research suggests that so-called slacktivists tend to give publicly visible token support, such as wearing badges or posting slogans on their Facebook page, to make a good impression on their friends, rather than conscientiously supporting the underlying cause and providing a substantial contribution, such as monetary donations, or participating in street rallies (Kristofferson et al., 2014). Hence, critics advise protest organizers to avoid attracting slacktivists, or to at least help them become activists over time. This critical view of slacktivists assumes that protests require substantial interest from the protest participants in order to succeed and that the token support that slacktivists (as opposed to activists) offer is close to worthless (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Shulman, 2009; Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). In this chapter, we argue that, in an online situation, the token support of many slacktivists is highly valuable to protest organizers and can help them achieve their goals effectively. Online consumer protests with higher numbers of participants attract more attention from the mass media and investors. Through these stakeholders, the display of large-scale moral support helps protest organizers signal the risk of reputational damage to firms, and are, therefore, more likely to achieve their goals (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; King & Soule, 2007; Tilly, 2004). The motivation of individual participants may be irrelevant with regard to the protest effectiveness, as it is very difficult for firms and other stakeholders to evaluate the relative contribution of each type of protest participant. Consequently, the mobilization of slacktivists may be an important success factor for online consumer protests that target firms (Veil, Reno, Freihaut, & Oldham, 2014).

Nevertheless, we know little about how protest organizers can motivate slacktivists to participate with their low-effort protests or, indeed, how this may differ from truly committed participants. Hence, it is important for scholars to elucidate how slacktivists, contrary to activists, engage with protest websites. From the perspective of the protest organizers, it is important to know how the design of protest websites encourages consumer participation, and if they need to offer slacktivists and activists different design cues and information. Consequently, our research question is: *"What is the effect of campaign design on slacktivists' motivation to participate in low-effort consumer protest?"* We use the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to hypothesize the differences in the mobilization process. Following ELM, we expect that activists pay more attention to a protest's arguments, and that slacktivists are more receptive to a campaign's peripheral design cues, while elaborating the arguments less.

This research makes several contributions to consumer protest research. First, we use latent class analysis to distinguish between activists and slacktivists, based on the actual effort they make regarding the protest website, and their perception of the effort required to participate. Second, contrary to the dominant understanding that true commitment to protest participation is a requirement for protest engagement, we find that slacktivists can actually become engaged in the protest campaign through the protest website design cues. In other words, not only are slacktivists not as uninterested as some scholars suggest, but they are more responsive to the protest website design than activists are. Third, in line with ELM, we find that slacktivists are less receptive to the ideological or efficacy claims of a campaign than activists are. Fourth, despite scholars' recent claims that slacktivists are motivated to join a protest, because it allows them to highlight their good deeds (Kristofferson et al., 2014), we find that the more they perceive the protest as being open to public scrutiny, the less likely they are to participate. Finally, we uncover counter-intuitive effects that *slacktivists*, not activists, are more inclined to participate when they identify with the purported victims of a firm's alleged wrongdoing. Practically, this chapter provides protest organizers with guidelines on how to effectively address slacktivists by means of their protest website design and message. In their role as institutional entrepreneurs, or when organizing corporate social responsibility campaigns, firms may also want to apply the guidelines to mobilize stakeholders more effectively. Additionally, insights into how protest targeting firms works may help targeted firms develop more effective response strategies.

5.2 | **Theory**

5.2.1 | **Theoretical Background**

There is ongoing scholarly interest in the strategies and tactics that protest organizers employ to change firm behavior (Davis, 2005; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Dubuisson-

Quellier, 2013; King & Pearce, 2010). Protest organizers' tactics vary in terms of the efforts they require from the participants (Klandermans, 2004). Specifically, low-effort tactics, such as petitions or letters, aim to mobilize large numbers of consumers to publicly display their disapproval with firm behavior (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Such protests aim at inflicting symbolic damage by tarnishing the reputation, or the moral authority, of the targeted firm. These low-effort protests aim to mobilize as many participants as possible, and are less concerned with the comprehensiveness of the information they make available, choosing instead to frame the topic in a manner which appeals to a wide audience. This protest tactic is based on a 'game of numbers', as the effectiveness of these protests depend on large numbers of protesters rather than lasting commitment

In the last decade, digital media (e.g. websites and social media) have become popular tools for activist groups wishing to organize protests targeted at firms (Bennett, 2003a; Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Ward & Ostrom, 2006; Xia, 2013). Protests which succeed in attracting large numbers of participants help protest organizers by drawing mass media and investor attention, which gives them a powerful position with respect to the targeted firms (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Earl, Soule, & McCarthy, 2003; Luders, 2006). Consequently, media strategies play an important role in mobilizing protest participants (Gamson, 2004). Despite the popularity of social media, protest websites remain important digital media for protest organizers to engage large groups of participants (Den Bakker & Hellsten, 2013). This form of protest mobilization targeted at firms and their brands by means of digital media has been called online business protest, or anti-brand websites (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Ward & Ostrom, 2006).

Digital media, however, do not allow protest organizers to transmit the same amount of social information to potential participants as face-to-face mobilization does. Hence, the use of digital media may decrease protest organizer's control over the mobilization process, making it a two-edged sword (Postmes & Brunsting, 2002; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). On the one hand, websites offer protest organizers low-cost, mass interactivity irrespective of time and place. On the other hand, the low effort of an online protest, such as a petition, may attract participants who are actually not involved in this protest's cause. Consequently, some scholars argue that low-effort protest has blurred the movement membership concept (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Earl & Kimport, 2009; Eaton, 2010; Tatarchevskiy, 2011). For example, are participants who sign an online petition members of a social movement, or are they one-time sympathizers who simply want to impress their friends? (Kristofferson et al., 2014). Scholars and opinion makers pejoratively call these occasional participants 'slacktivists,' a combination of the words slacker and activist (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Morozov, 2009).

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the different definitions of slacktivists in SSCI-indexed journals (Fatkin & Lansdown, 2015; Harlow & Guo, 2014; Kristofferson et al., 2014; McCafferty, 2011; Saxton & Wang, 2013; Veil et al., 2014; Vitak et al., 2011).

Table 5.1 | Overview of slacktivism definitions in journal articles

Authors	Year	Journal	Definition or description
Vitak et al.	2011	Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking	Participation in Internet-based forms of political participation that has little to no real-world impact. (Based on Morozov, 2009)
McCafferty	2011	Communications of the ACM	People who are happy to click a "like" button about a cause and may make other nominal, supportive gestures, but are hardly inspired with the kind of emotional fire that forces a shift in public perception.
Breindl	2013	Information, Communication & Society	Low-effort citizen input which do not contribute significantly to the policy process but have negative consequences for overall citizen engagement.
Kristofferson, White & Peloza	2014	Journal of Consumer Research	A willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change.
Saxton and Wang	2014	Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	Actions that involve minimal personal effort.
Harlow & Guo	2014	Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication	Ease with which people can participate in online activism prompts doubts as to the dedication of these participants, and the value of their actions. (based on Morozov, 2009)
Penney	2015	Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication	Unwilling to get their hands dirty and make the effort required to actually achieve these goals.
Fatkin & Lansdown	2015	Computers in Human Behavior	Lazy and ineffective form of online activism. (based on Morozov, 2009)

Several definitions refer to Morozov's criticism (2009) of low-effort online protests, which stresses the low effort such participants are willing to make and the inability of such minor support to help online protests achieve their goals. Other definitions refer to the motivation of slacktivists, such as that they lack emotional attachment to the cause, or care more about their social status than the cause. However, various motives may drive people to act like slacktivists. The main trait behind slacktivism in all the definitions is a lack of willingness to expend significant effort or time on a protest. Hence, we propose a new definition based on the effort they make for protest participation rather than the outcome or motivation: *Slacktivists are those participants in protest campaigns who expend minimal effort and time.*

Elaboration Likelihood Model. A large body of research points at a dual process model of decision making and persuasion (Achtziger & Alós-Ferrer, 2013; Elsbach & Elofson, 2000; Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Taggart & Robey, 1981). Decision makers who allocate limited cognitive capacity to a decision, also termed bounded rationality, employ a number of simplifying and efficient heuristics (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996). They consider, for example, only the salient cues when grounding their decisions. The ELM is a dual path model of persuasion and is widely applied to explain that citizens, consumers, and managers process issue-related messages differently (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Examples in management and information systems research are the adoption of electronic health records (Angst & Agarwal, 2009), the experience of interactivity in advertisements (Yuping Liu & Shrum, 2009), and the packaging of decision-making messages (Elsbach & Elofson, 2000). The main idea of the ELM is that motivated people will follow a central information processing path, during which they deeply process the message arguments. They allocate considerable cognitive effort, such as attention, to process message-related arguments. This process is called high elaboration. On the other hand, in a low elaboration process, unmotivated people will follow a peripheral information processing path, during which they tend to follow salient, or available, cues and do not delve deeply into the the message arguments. These peripheral cues can be the source credibility (e.g. The New York Times or celebrity endorsement), process-related cues (e.g. guidelines), language (e.g. comprehensiveness), or the sensory attractiveness of the source (e.g. visuals). We follow the ELM to hypothesize the differences in activists' and slacktivists' mobilization process.

5.2.2 | **A Dual Path Model of Online Protest Mobilization: Activists versus Slacktivists**

Model overview. Figure 5.1 presents our process model of online protest mobilization. Following the mobilization process of Klandermans (2004), the campaign design cues engage the participants, which drives their motivation, and, finally, their intention to participate. Both activists and slacktivists experience the same steps when they come into contact with a protest campaign and decide whether or not to participate. However, the ELM theory proposes that the two groups process the information differently. We expect that these differences are apparent in two of the three steps of the online protest mobilization model. In the first step, the effect of campaign design cues on engagement, activists elaborate the details of the protest and peripheral cues influence them less than slacktivists are. In the second step, we do not expect activists and slacktivists to differ regarding the effect of engagement on their protest motivation. When they are engaged (or not) this leads to higher (lower) motivation for both groups. However, we do expect differences in the third step, the effect of motivations on their intention to participate. Activists carefully weigh up the evidence, which triggers various possible motivations, causing them to decide whether or not to participate. On the other hand, slacktivists, using the low elaboration process, decide whether or not to participate based on heuristics and cues rather than on content-based motivations. As such, we propose hypotheses for the differences between activists and slacktivists in the first and third steps in the process model of online protest mobilization.

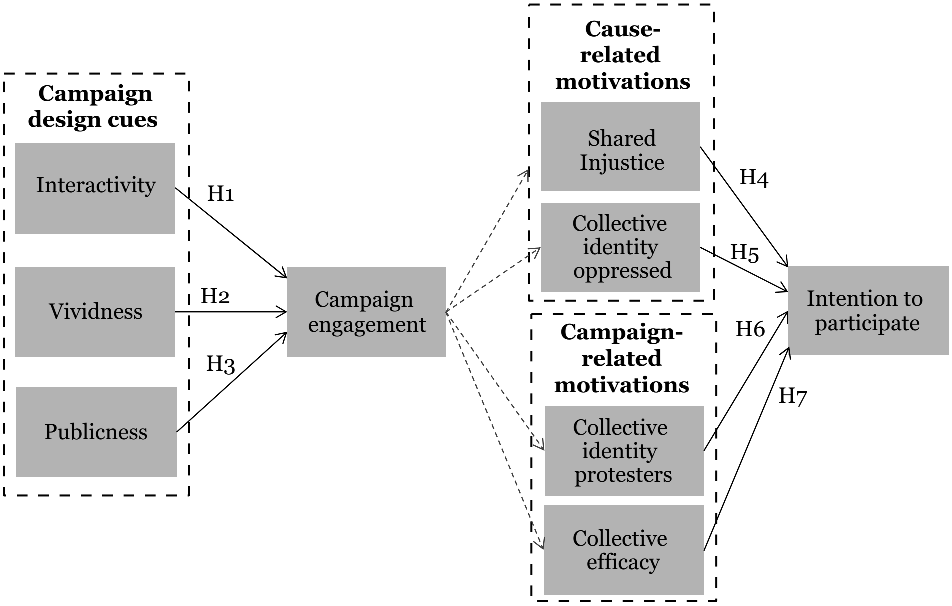
Campaign design cues
Interactivity
Vividness
Publicness
H1
H2
H3
Campaign engagement
Cause-related motivations
Shared Injustice
Collective identity oppressed
Campaign-related motivations
Collective identity protesters
Collective efficacy
H4
H5
H6
H7
Intention to participate

Figure 5.1 | Conceptual model and hypotheses

The Effect of Campaign Design on Campaign Engagement. Mobilization is the market function of protest organization (Klandermans, 2004). Similar to advertising, protest organizers need to effectively communicate their protests to many potential sympathizers at the same time. Hence, an effective protest website design is important to persuade as many participants as possible to participate. Barry and Fulmer (2004) and Potosky (2008) synthesized organizational communication research on the social design properties of digital communication, such as protest campaign websites. They introduced three distinctive properties: interactivity, vividness, and publicness. Interactivity refers to *"the pace of* [the] *mutual or reciprocal exchange between communicating parties"* (Potosky, 2008, p. 636). Interactivity includes both the direction, control, and responsiveness of communication between the sender and the transmitter (Song & Zinkhan, 2008). Furthermore, interactivity entails the degree of control communicators can exert over the communication process. Highly interactive communication is bidirectional, and allows both communicators to control the communication process (Liu & Shrum, 2002). Responsiveness delineates the immediacy of feedback during the communication process (Barry & Fulmer, 2004). Vividness "*captures aspects of the use of communication media related to the presence and transmission of social information"* (Barry & Fulmer, 2004 p. 275). This communication property indicates the level of social cues (verbal, visual, and textual) that the website affords. A website with a high level of vividness, for example, with face-to-face chatting, allows for the exchange of a collective identity and social relation cues (Walther, 1995). Last, the degree of publicness delineates the degree to which the communication channel allows other parties than the two communicators to monitor, or intercept, messages on the medium (Barry & Fulmer, 2004; Bateman, Pike, & Butler, 2011). Websites can differ in their degree of publicness, for example, social networking websites allow users to adjust the degree of publicness from only friends to fully public communication. Media choice theories predict that the attributes of campaign design affect organizational influence processes (Barry & Fulmer, 2004). However, more empirical research is required to examine how these campaign design differences affect protest mobilization (González-Bailón et al., 2011).

We argue that the type of protest participant, activist and slacktivist, moderates how campaign design affects protest mobilization. Specifically, following our synthesis of definitions of the term slacktivist, above, we expect slacktivists to take less time to process the information of an online consumer protest, which makes slacktivists more receptive to the peripheral design cues to become engaged in a protest. In line with Kristofferson et al. (2014), since the issue-related arguments of a protest motivate slacktivists less, they instead focus on the social information that the campaign design cues (interactivity, vividness, and publicness) provide. In an experiment on the role of interactivity in online advertisements, Liu and Shrum (2009) showed that unmotivated consumers may not engage in extensive interaction with a website, but that the presence of interactivity as a peripheral cue can lead to more positive attitudes towards online advertisements. Furthermore, the social information communicated through a campaign design may signal social proof of the protest popularity, and boost the self-esteem of slacktivists (Klein et al., 2004). Last, in several consumer experiments, Kristofferson et al. (2014) demonstrated that publicness may appeal to slacktivists, as they want to impress their friends. Hence, we propose that:

> *H1: The interactivity of a campaign design influences activists' engagement with an online campaign less positively than that of slacktivists.*
>
> *H2: The vividness of a campaign design influences activists' engagement with an online campaign less positively than that of slacktivists.*
>
> *H3: The publicness of a campaign design influences activists' engagement with an online campaign less positively than that of slacktivists.*

The Effect of Protester Motivations on Likelihood to Participate. Previous research on protest mobilization identified three key fundamental motivations to participate in a protest: injustice, collective identity, and collective efficacy (Klandermans, 2004; Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). First, injustice is a shared emotion that includes both affective (emotions, such as anger) and cognitive perceptions (ideology) of an unfair situation (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Injustice covers the ideological motivation to join a protest when potential participants compare the cause with their personal values (Klandermans, 2004). Second, collective identity is a sense of belonging together that emerges from common attributes, experiences, and external labels (King, 2008b). Collective identity gives people a place or category in society (Simon et al., 1998). According to Van Zomeren et al. (2008), two types of identity are relevant for protest mobilization. First, the potential participants identify with the oppressed group that faces the unfair situation, a form of identity we label in this study as identification with the oppressed. Second, potential participants can also identify with the protesters. Klein et al. (2004) found that protest participants identify with protesters to boost their self-esteem or to avoid feeling guilty. Consequently, in line with Kristofferson et al. (2014), consumers may have social motivations for identifying with the protesters, while not being interested in the cause. In many protests, the protesters and oppressed group are not the same, as protesters might represent the cause of a low-empowered group. For example, large NGOs mostly organize protests for oppressed people in other countries. Last, collective efficacy refers to the shared belief that one's group is capable of resolving its grievances through collective action (Bandura, 2000). This is an economic calculation that origins from the Resource Mobilization theory. Sen et al. (2001) found that consumer boycotts are more likely to attract participants when consumers expect the boycotts to be successful regarding changing the targeted firm's behavior.

We divide the three above mentioned motivations into two groups, cause-related and campaign-related motivations, whereby we divide collective identity into two parts as described above. Both injustice and identification with the oppressed are cause-related motivations for joining a protest. Identification with the protesters and collective efficacy are campaign-related motivations. Van Zomeren et al. (2008) integrated the results of 180 quantitative studies on these three motivations of protest mobilization in the Social identity Model of Collective Action. Their meta-analysis shows that these motivations have moderate to strong effect sizes on the intention to participate in a protest, with collective identity being the strongest predictor of participation. Braunsberger and Buckler (2011) investigated consumers' motivations to boycott Canadian seafood to protest against seal hunting. In their netnographic study of this online boycott, they found that most of the participants took part to boost their personal self-esteem (71%), to change the behavior of the targeted firms (70%), and vent their anger (56%).

Following the central information processing path of the ELM, we hypothesize that slacktivists are less motivated by both the cause-related and the campaign-related arguments than activists are. Specifically, as activists will process the information on the protest website more deeply, they will create stronger perceptions of the injustice, collective identity, and collective efficacy of the protest. Hence, we hypothesize:

H4: The perception of injustice influences the likelihood of activists participating more positively than that of slacktivists.

H5: Identification with the oppressed group influences the likelihood of activists participating more positively than that of slacktivists.

H6: Identification with the protesters influences the likelihood of activists participating more positively than that of slacktivists.

H7: The perception of collective efficacy influences the likelihood of activists participating more positively than that of slacktivists.

5.3 | **Methods**

We test our hypotheses in an internet experiment, using a fictional, but realistic, online consumer protest campaign. The participants interacted with a campaign website that presented a petition against hotel slavery in South European hotels. Afterwards, we asked the participants to communicate their perceptions and likelihood of joining the online petition. The experimental design was between subjects, with randomized assignment to each treatment group.

5.3.1 | **Sample**

In total, 183 participants (54% women) took part in an ex-ante manipulation check, and 333 different participants (55% women) participated in the main experiment. The participants were Dutch and their ages ranged from 18 to 87 (with a mean of 44.5) in the manipulation check, and from 18 to 80 (with a mean of 44.1) in the main experiment. More background information about the main experiment's participants can be found in the results section. We hired a commercial survey panel to recruit participants who had at least some experience with websites. Furthermore, the participants received a small financial compensation from the questionnaire panel for their participation. None of the participants was highly familiar with the experimental materials (e.g. hotel slavery in South-European hotels). We measured their familiarity with two items regarding their personal gain from the campaign based on the instrumentality scale of Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans and Van Dijk (2009).

5.3.2 | **Manipulations**

We designed an archetypical scenario of an online consumer protest following the 'most commonly listed method' (Highhouse, 2009). First, we conducted a frequency analysis of 110 online consumer protests randomly retrieved from the LexisNexis newspaper database over a time period of four months to identify the most common type of protesters, target industry, and cause. The results show that the most common type of protesters is a group of concerned consumers (31.8% of all cases) in the Travel & Leisure industry (16.4%) protesting against human rights violation (16.4%). Second, we wrote three scenarios based on these features and the cases found in the newspaper database. Next, faculty (n = 13) rated these scenarios in terms of how much it affected them, the credibility, and the comprehensiveness. We selected the scenario with the highest overall score as the scenario used for the experiment's campaign website.

The next step in the manipulation design was to operationalize the independent variables (interactivity, vividness, and publicness) as website features. First, we created a long list of 62 website features based on previous research (Song & Zinkhan, 2008; Voorveld, Neijens, & Smit, 2011). Second, we asked faculty members (n = 13) to code this long list in terms of the independent variables: interactivity, vividness, and publicness. We involved faculty members as they are acquainted with the subject. Third, we followed Anderson and Gerbing's (1991) procedure for substantive validity to select two website features for publicness and vividness, and two features for each component of interactivity. The features with the highest substantive validity among the raters appear in Table 5.2. The last step of the manipulation development was the actual design of the conditions. A professional website designer used the selected scenario and website features as functional requirements. This design process was iterative: Three versions of the campaign website were developed and tested with faculty members (n = 13) in respect of the ease of use, affect, comprehensiveness, and credibility. We provide screenshots of the protest websites in the appendices.

Table 5.2 | Overview substantive validity of website features

Campaign design cue	Website feature	Proportion of agreement among raters
Responsiveness	Time-to-load indicator	**1.000**
User control	Customization of campaign message	**0.923**
Responsiveness	Speed choice	**0.846**
User control	Color customization	**0.846**
Two-way communication	Chatting	**0.769**
User control	Language customization	**0.769**
User control	Flash customization	**0.769**
User control	News customization	**0.769**
Two-way communication	Form for protesters	**0.692**
Two-way communication	Survey of protesters	**0.692**
User control	Set homepage	**0.692**
Vividness	Multimedia	**0.692**
Two-way communication	Comments	**0.692**
Vividness	Voice message	**0.615**
Vividness	Welcome video	**0.615**
Vividness	Video endorsements	**0.615**
Publicness	Profiles of protesters	**0.538**
Publicness	Social thermometer of protest	**0.538**

To assess if the designed treatment conditions differ significantly regarding the intended independent variables (interactivity, vividness, and publicness), we conducted an ex-ante manipulation check. The same commercial survey panel randomly invited participants to evaluate one version of the protest website each by means of an online questionnaire. After an introduction and brief instructions, the participants interacted with the protest website. Immediately after the protest website, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on the interactivity, vividness, and publicness of the website. Furthermore, we asked questions about possible confounding variables (ease of use, product involvement, website quality, web browser used, and internet experience), which were based on Fortin and Dholakia (2005).

5.3.3 | **Procedure**

We sent e-mail invitations to randomly selected participants indicating our interest in their evaluation of an online consumer protest. The questionnaire software and different conditions of the protest website were externally hosted. In a natural setting for online questionnaires, the participants accessed the experiment via their own PC or laptop from their own premises. After a welcome screen, they received brief instructions about the experiment. They were told that they should imagine that the protest website they would see had been sent by a friend or family member. Next, the participants randomly received one of the eight treatment conditions and interacted with the protest website. On the protest website, organizers call on consumers to sign a petition to pressurize a fictional, but realistic, hotel booking website to stop booking South-European hotels with oppressive working conditions amounting to slavery. Immediately after the manipulation, we asked the participants to fill out a questionnaire about their evaluation of the protest website and their willingness to participate in the protest campaign. They also answered a number of questions about their background. Next, a debriefing explained the fictiveness of the protest website. Last, to check the credibility of the experiment, we asked the participants if they would participate in the protest if it were real. This measure is significantly correlated ($p < .001$) with their intention to participate before the briefing.

5.3.4 | **Measures**

Independent Variables. The participants' interactivity perceptions were measured in the manipulation check with an 11-item scale ($\alpha = 0.81$) covering three dimensions of interactivity (user control, direction of communication, and responsiveness). These items were based on Van Noort et al.'s (2012) and Song and Zinkhan's (2008) interactivity scales. Second, we used Fortin and Dholakia's (2005) vividness scale to measure the participants' sensory experience. This scale includes four items and had a Cronbach's α of 0.77. Third, we used five items ($\alpha = 0.70$) from the publicness scale developed by Bateman et al. (2011) to measure how public the interaction on the protest website was. Last, we measured campaign engagement as a valence check (ten items, $\alpha = 0.92$), the general attitude towards the website (two items, $\alpha = 0.87$), and ease of use (three items, 0.75) as confounding variables. The participants responded to all the items on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

Dependent Variables. The questionnaire contained reflective, multi-item measures of campaign engagement, the four motivations to join the protest, and intention to participate, as well as demographic (gender, age, and education) and control variables (online protest experience, political efficacy, and campaign engagement). The participants responded to all the items on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). In addition, we measured the time the participants needed to complete the experiment, which is one of the objective measures that enable us to separate slacktivists from activists (see grouping variable). We used factor analysis to adapt existing scales (see Appendix G for list of items resulting from this analysis). Table 5.3 in the results section provides an overview of the reliability scores of the focal variables' scales. All the items were translated into Dutch by means of forward translation and backward translation.

To assess the campaign engagement, we adapted five items from the Product Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1994). This scale is frequently used in marketing and information systems research to measure consumers' engagement with advertisements. We used a four-item scale covering the cognitive and affective aspect of injustice to assess how the participants perceived the injustice of the protest,. The items were based on the injustice scale developed by Van Stekelenburg, Klanderman,s and van Dijk (2009). As explained in the theory section, we divided collective identity into two types of identity: identification with the oppressed and identification with the protesters. Both types of identification included two items about the cognitive aspect of identification (self-categorization) and two items on the affective aspect of identification. The items were based on Cameron (2004) and Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1997). We measured collective efficacy with a three-item scale adapted from Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, and van Dijk (2009), and Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk (1999). To assess the participants' intention to participate in the protest, we used a summated scale of two items based on Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, and Van Dijk (2009).

Control Variables. Consumers vary in their general belief in whether democratic institutions, such as the right to protest, can make a difference to their own situation. Political efficacy, as this variable is known, may affect protest participation by altering respondents' perception of collective efficacy (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996). To assess political efficacy, we used a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.70$) adapted from Kelly and Breinlinger (1996). Last, we asked demographic questions (age, gender, and education level) and their experience regarding booking a South-European hotel during the previous five years.

Grouping Variables. We distinguished between activists and slacktivists based on their perceived and actual efforts, which are indicators of how likely it is that the participants would withdraw from protests which require substantial effort. First, we expect slacktivists to perceive participation in the campaign as more effortful than activists. Second, we expect slacktivists to actually take less time to participate in the protest campaign than activists. Perceived effort (α = 0.85) was measured with two questionnaire items after the presentation of the manipulation (Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, & Van Dijk, 2009). We measured the respondents' actual effort, with the experiment software recording the time taken to participate. To avoid arbitrary approaches, such as median split (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2011), we conducted Latent Class Analysis (LCA) with the Mplus 6.2 software package to categorize the respondents into two distinct classes, which resulted in the classification of 201 activists and 132 slacktivists, with an entropy of 0.83. Table 5.4 in the results section provides descriptives of the two classes.

5.3.5 | **Missing Values**

Our dataset contains 3.1% missing values. The main reasons for these missing values are that some respondents skipped questions and/or did not finish the questionnaire. Following the procedure of Hair et al. (2011), we removed all the respondents with more than 15% missing values, and used regression-based multiple imputation to replace the remaining missing data. Multiple imputation is a reliable way of dealing with missing experimental data and widely recommended rather than deletion, or mean replacement, of missing values (Fichman & Cummings, 2003; Roth, Switzer, & Switzer, 1999). We conducted 20 runs to increase the amount of variance incorporated in the estimates, thereby making our tests more conservative.

5.4 | **Results**

5.4.1 | **Manipulation and Confounding Check**

As suggested by Perdue and Summers (1986), we used a full factorial MANOVA and MANCOVA analysis to test if the manipulations (interactivity, vividness, and publicness) are perceived as intended. Following their procedure, we assessed the main effects, effect sizes, interaction effects, and possible spurious effects due ot confounding variables. The multivariate tests indicate that the manipulations have very significant main effects on the perception of interactivity ($F_{(3,173)} = 26.97$, $p = .000$), vividness ($F_{(3,173)} = 11.23$, $p = .000$), and publicness ($F_{(3,173)} = 9.30$, $p = .000$). The effect sizes (η^2) of the manipulations are 0.31 for interactivity, 0.16 for vividness, and 0.17 for publicness. The univariate and Tukey post-hoc tests show that each manipulation loads on the intended measurement of the independent variable (perceived interactivity, perceived vividness, and perceived publicness). Furthermore, there are no significant interaction effects between the manipulations, indicating high discriminant validity, with the exception of a very small interaction between interactivity and vividness ($F_{(3,173)}$ = 2.859, *p* = .055*)*. However, this effect remains below the significance level of .05. Last, we checked if the effects are stable after inclusion of the confounding variables (age, gender, education level, website quality, ease of use, and product involvement). This test confirms that the confounding variables of the manipulation check do not diminish the significance of the conditions. In sum, we can conclude that the respondents perceived the manipulations as intended by the operationalization.

5.4.2 | **Measurement model**

Reliability, Validity, and Common Method Variance. Table 5.3 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, reliability estimates (between parentheses), and correlation coefficients of all the variables. The means, standard deviations, and reliability estimates of the three independent variables (interactivity, vividness, and publicness) are taken from the manipulation check. The reliability of all the scales is satisfactory, ranging from a Cronbach's α of 0.70 (Publicness) to 0.91 (Campaign engagement). Similarly, the composite reliability scores are also sufficient, ranging from 0.87 (Intention to participate) to 0.93 (Campaign engagement).

We assessed the convergent validity of the measurement model by calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). The AVE values of the endogenous variables are above the threshold value of 0.50, ranging from 0.55 for intention to participate to 0.73 for identity with protesters. To further assess the discriminant validity of our measures, we used the Fornell-Larcker criterium for discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This criterion requires that the AVE of two variables exceed the squared correlation between these variables. This test confirms that all the measurements have sufficient discriminant validity.

To avoid common method variance, we separated the measurement of the independent variables (ex-ante manipulation check) from the measurement of the dependent variables (main experiment). Despite this methodological separation in the design, common method variance could still affect the relations in our model. Hence, we conducted an additional Harman's single-factor analysis to rule out the existence of common methods variance. We forced all the items to load on a single factor in an exploratory factor analysis that used an unrotated principal component factor analysis (Sattler, Völckner, Riediger, & Ringle, 2010). The single factor accounts for 30% of the covariance among the variables, which is below the 50% threshold that could signal common method variance.

Table 5.3 | Overview of means, standard deviations, reliability estimates (Cronbach's α, between parentheses), and correlations

	Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Interactivity (IDV)†	3.28	0.61	(0.81)								
2	Vividness (IDV)†	2.73	0.73	-.021	(0.77)							
3	Publicness (IDV)†	3.05	0.66	.051	.036	(0.70)						
4	Campaign engagement	3.28	0.74	.002	.117*	-.115*	(0.91)					
5	Injustice	3.66	0.67	-.021	.111*	.010	.607**	(0.85)				
6	Identity with oppressed	2.12	0.68	.016	.025	-.048	.391**	.302	(0.77)			
7	Identity with protesters	2.82	0.84	.032	.063	-.040	.692**	.569**	.526**	(0.88)		
8	Collective efficacy	3.21	0.77	.071	.096	-.045	.658**	.554**	.384**	.625**	(0.80)	
9	Intention to participate	2.58	1.02	-.010	.071	-.085	.642**	.488**	.381**	.703**	.569**	(0.70)

$N = 333$ for DVs. †$N = 183$ for IDVs. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach's alpha. The values of the independent variables are perceived measures from the manipulation check.
** $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$*

Descriptive Statistics. Table 5.4 provides descriptive statistics of the two classes that result from the LCA, activists and slacktivists, and ANOVA tests to compare these two classes.

Table 5.4 | Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of activists and slacktivists

	Activists (mean, SD)	**Slacktivists (mean, SD)**	**Total (mean, SD)**	**ANOVA: F (df) value and p value**
Number of participants	201	132	333	
Online protest experience during past year	None: 50% Once: 27% 2-4 times:20 % 5 times or more: 3%	None:58 % Once: 22% 2-4 times: 18% 5 times or more: 2%	None: 54% Once: 25% 2-4 times: 19% 5 times or more: 2%	$F_{(1,331)} = 1.76$ $p = 0.186$
Time (m:s)	10:11 (6:17)	8:34 (4:58)	9:33 (5:44)	$F_{(1,331)} = 44.09$ $p = .014^{*}$
Effort	1.94 (0.48)	3.27 (0.56)	2.47 (0.83)	$F_{(1,331)} = 527.167$ $p = .000^{***}$
Intention to Participate	2.66 (1.07)	2.46 (0.94)	2.58 (1.02)	$F_{(1,331)} = 3.01$ $p = .084^{\dagger}$
Age (years)	44	44	44	$F_{(1,308)} = 0.07$ $p = .931$
Gender	43% male, 57% female	48% male, 52% female	45% male, 55% female	$F_{(1,308)} = .613$ $p = .434$
Educational level (% higher educated)	34% bachelor level or higher	56% bachelor level or higher	43% bachelor level or higer	$F_{(1,308)} = 15.569$ $p = .000^{***}$
Political Efficacy	3.41 (0.71)	3.32 (0.71)	3.38 (0.71)	$F_{(1,331)} = 1.507$ $p = .221$
Product Involvement (How many times did you book a South-European hotel in the past 5 years?)	None: 66% Once: 10% 2-5 times: 19% 6 or more times: 5%	None: 64% Once: 13% 2-5 times: 17% 6 or more times: 6%	None: 65% Once: 11.5% 2-5 times: 18% 6 or more times: 5.5%	$F_{(1,331)} = 0.02$ $p = .892$

N is reported in the first row. † *$p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$*

Apart from significant differences between the actual ($F_{(1,331)} = 44.09$, $p = .014$) and perceived effort ($F_{(1,331)} = 527.167$. $p < .001$), the descriptive statistics show that the slacktivists group's educational level is lower ($F_{(1,308)} = 15.57$, $p < 0.001$) than that of the activists. This is in line with social movement research's earlier findings that educational level influences active movement membership (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Furthermore, slacktivists' intention to participate is slightly lower ($F_{(1,331)} = 3.01$, $p < .1$). Activists and slacktivists do not differ significantly on past protest experience, which rules out a potential experience bias or learning effect.

5.4.3 | **Structural Model**

Hypothesis Testing. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been increasingly applied to analyze complex experimental set-ups (Bagozzi, Yi, & Singh, 1991; Mackenzie, 2001). SEM has many advantages over the traditional MANOVA analysis by providing better control over measurement errors and the possibility to test complex models. We test our conceptual model with Partial Least Squares (PLS) SEM for three reasons: First, PLS-SEM makes fewer assumptions regarding the data distribution, or scale of measurement (Streukens, Wetzels, Daryanto, & de Ruyter, 2010). In our case, our data violates the assumption of multivariate normality, which the Doornik-Hansen test indicated ($p < 0.05$). Second, PLS-SEM suits the complex models better (Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012). Third, our research includes single item dichotomous variables due to the experimental set-up. We estimate our model with the SmartPLS 3.0 software, (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). To test if the two groups (activists and slacktivists) differ significantly in the protest mobilization process, we conducted the nonparametric PLS-MGA procedure (Sarstedt, Henseler, & Ringle, 2011). The path coefficients and t-values are generated by means of a bootstrapping procedure with 500 subsamples of 333 cases each. The structural path model in SmartPLS contains four stages: three dichotomous exogenous variables (interactivity, vividness, and publicness), one mediating endogenous latent construct (campaign engagement), four endogenous constructs for the motivations (injustice, identity with oppressed, identity with protesters, and collective efficacy), and one outcome construct (intention to participate).

To rule out multicollinearity, we calculated the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of each variable of the measurement model and find that this ranges from 1 to 2.56, well below the VIF threshold value of 5 set by Hair et al. (2013). The VIF values of the structural model range from 1 to 3.63 and are therefore also below the VIF threshold value. Hence, we can rule out the risk of multicollinearity. In line with the manipulation check, no interaction effects were found between the campaign design cues in the PLS analysis.

The PLS results, including the path coefficients, t-values, significance, explained variances of both groups, and the *p*-value of Henseler's MGA procedure to test differences when both groups show a statistically significant effect, appear in Table 5.5.

The campaign design cues show two significant results. Only the relation between the interactivity of the campaign and the campaign engagement is not significant for both activists ($\beta = -.03$, *n.s.*) and slacktivists ($\beta = .08$, *n.s.*). Hypothesis 1 is therefore not supported. We do find a significant link between vividness and campaign engagement ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$) for slacktivists, but not for activists, which supports Hypothesis 2. Besides this, the link between publicness and campaign engagement is slightly significant ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .1$) for slacktivists, but not for activists. Counter to the assumption that slacktivists require public communication for impression management (Kristofferson et al., 2014), this relation is negative: The higher the publicness of the campaign design, the less engaged slacktivists are.

Furthermore, we find significant differences between activists and slacktivists in their motivations to join the protest. First, the link between injustice and intention to participate is only significant for activists ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$), which supports Hypothesis 4. In contrast to injustice, slacktivists' decision to join the protest is positively influenced by their identification with the oppressed group (in our case, the slaves) ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), whereas activists showed no significant link between identity with the oppressed and intention to participate. Hence, we have reversed support for Hypothesis 5. Following Hypothesis 6, identification with the protesters was a more important reason for activists to participate ($\beta = .53$, $p < .000$) than for slacktivists ($\beta = .45$, $p < .000$). Henseler's PLS-MGA analysis, however, rejects the significance of the difference between activists and slacktivists. Consequently, there is only partial evidence in support of Hypothesis 5a. Similarly, the link between collective efficacy and intention to participate is only significant for activists ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$), which is in line with Hypothesis 7. Taken together, our findings that *slacktivist's* participation in a protest is more strongly influenced by their identification with the oppressed is counter-intuitive and deserves further research.

Table 5.5 | **PLS-MGA results and effect sizes**

			Group 1: Activists		Group 2: Slacktivists		MGA test
	Path from	**To**	**Path coefficient (t value)**	***p value***	**Path coefficient (t value)**	***p value***	**p value**
1	Interactivity	Campaign engagement	-0.0288 (0.664)	0.507	0.0812 (1.1854)	0.2364	
2	Vividness	Campaign engagement	0.0927 (1.5996)	0.1103	0.1654 (2.0307)	0.0428 *	
3	Publicness	Campaign engagement	-0.0991 (1.6033)	0.1095	-0.1511 (1.9258)	0.0547 †	
4	Injustice	Intention to participate	0.1412 (2.1664)	0.0308 *	0.0957 (1.1635)	0.2452	
5	Identity with oppressed	Intention to participate	-0.0721 (1.3367)	0.1819	0.1559 (2.1970)	0.0285 *	
6	Identity with protesters	Intention to participate	0.5272 (6.2358)	0.000 ***	0.4493 (4.5134)	0.000 ***	0.9037†
7	Collective efficacy	Intention to participate	0.2149 (2.7624)	0.0059 **	0.1202 (1.7186)	0.0863 †	

Explained variance

Variable	**R^2 Activists**	**R^2 Slacktivists**
Campaign engagement	0.017	0.062
Injustice	0.46	0.42
Identity with oppressed	0.207	0.22
Identity with protesters	0.512	0.42
Collective efficacy	0.49	0.35
Intention to participate	0.57	0.50

N = 201 for activists and N=132 for slacktivsts, see Table 5.4 for descriptive statistics.
Bootstrapped in SmartPLS 3.0 with 500 subsamples
*† p < .1, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Variance Explained. The lower half of Table 5.5 lists the variance as explained by our theoretical model. The peripheral design cues (interactivity, vividness, and publicness), explain 1.7% and 6.2% of the variance of activists' and slacktivists' campaign engagement. Furthermore, the explained variance of the other endogenous variables are, based on Cohen's guidelines, moderate (identity with oppressed) to very high (intention to participate) (Hair et al., 2013). In contrast to covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM does not provide Goodness of Fit indicators to evaluate the structural path. Nonetheless, we followed the blindfolding procedure in SmartPLS, which uses cross-validated redundancy, Q^2, to assess the predictive value of the model (Hair et al., 2013). An omission distance of 7 and 333 cases were used as parameters. The results show that all the endogenous variables have a Q^2 value above 0, indicating that the structural path model holds predictive value for all the endogenous variables, except for the activists' variable campaign engagement, which is in line with what we would expect from H1-3.

5.5 | **Discussion**

With our study, we aimed to examine the differences in how activists and slacktivists process an online protest targeted at a firm. Specifically, we developed a conceptual model based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and hypothesized that activists elaborate the protest-related arguments (injustice, collective identity, and collective efficacy) more, whereas slacktivists are engaged by means of peripheral design cues (interactivity, vividness, and publicness). Following earlier research on slacktivist behavior, we reasoned that design cues reveal more social information of the other participants, which could instigate social proof and impression management mechanisms in slacktivists (Kristofferson et al., 2014). We tested our model empirically by conducting an online experiment, in which eight conditions (2x2x2) of the design cues of a low-effort protest website were presented to 333 participants, after which they evaluated the website. Thereafter, based on latent class analysis, we divided the participants into two groups, activists and slacktivists, based on their actual and perceived efforts, and compare their mobilization process.

5.5.1 | Summary of Results and Discussion of Scientific Implications

Table 5.6 summarizes the empirical support we found for our hypotheses.

Table 5.6 | Summary of empirical evidence for hypotheses

Number	Hypothesis	Empirical evidence for hypothesis
1	Interactivity → campaign engagement higher in terms of slacktivists	Not supported
2	Vividness → campaign engagement higher in terms of slacktivists	Supported
3	Publicness → campaign engagement higher in terms of slacktivists	Reversed effect: slacktivists are more influenced by the publicness of the campaign design. The direction, however, is negative.
4	Injustice → intention to participate higher in terms of activists	Supported
5	Collective identity with oppressed → intention to participate higher in terms of activists	Reversed effect: slacktivists, not activists, are motivated to participate by identity with the oppressed.
6	Collective identity with protesters → intention to participate higher in terms of activists	Partly supported: activists take identification with protesters more into account, but not significantly in Henseler's MGA test.
7	Collective efficacy → intention to participate higher in terms of activists	Supported

Our results demonstrate that slacktivists are indeed more receptive to the peripheral design cues of a protest website than activists. Overall, the peripheral design cues explain more variance in the campaign engagement construct in terms of slacktivists than activists. However, the relations are more complex than in our conceptual model. First, the interactivity (direction, control and responsiveness of communication) of the protest website does not signficantly affect campaign engagement. As other researchers have suggested, interactivity may require more elaboration to affect perceptions than low-effort protest tactics require (Voorveld et al., 2011). In line with the ELM, the vividness of the protest website influences campaign engagement positively in terms of slacktivists, but not activists. In contrast to earlier theory on slacktivists that suggests their chief motivation is the visibility of their participation to their friends (Kristoffersen et al., 2014), we find that the perceived publicness of the protest website influenced slactivists' campaign engagement negatively|. This provides evidence that impression management is not a central mechanism for slacktivists to become engaged. Whereas the publicness of the website does not significantly influence activists concerned with the content of the protest, slacktivists may be more aware of being surveilled by others, resulting in lower campaign engagement. Future research needs to elucidate the ways in which publicness influences protest participants.

Furthermore, our results regarding the central information processing path of the ELM offer notable insights. As expected, activists seem to elaborate the injustice that the protest presents and the collective efficacy of the protest campaign more. Added to this, their identification with other protesters taking part influences activists more strongly than slacktivists are. However, counter to our expectations, slacktivists' identification with the oppressed influences their decision to participate, which is not the case for activists. In line with the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), all protest participants may identify with the protest, but in different ways. Activists going into the details of the protest may feel connected to the protest topic and the injustice it highlights. Added to this, activists may be concerned with the real chances that the protest may succeed in changing a firm's purported behavior, as reflected in our finding, their perception of the collective efficacy of the campaign drives these participants' behavior. Slacktivists, however, who only peripherally process the protest information, may identify less with the content of the protest and be less concerned with its chances of success. Our findings show that slacktivists are more motivated to join by identification with the oppressed group. This interesting result could point towards the idea that slacktivists mainly want to participate when the cause of a protest highlights an emotive issue which stimulates an emotional response, as in the plight of people working under deplorable, slave-like conditions.

Our study contributes to theory development in several other ways. First, previous research has predominantly focused on the motivation for participating in high-effort consumer protests, such as boycotts (Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011; Klein et al., 2004), with participants paying a high price by foregoing something they want. However, digital communication enables low-effort protests on a massive scale, witnessed by the vast growth in online protest tactics aimed at firms.[14] Our study contributes to the understanding of this increasing number of low-effort protest forms. Second, our study provides a process and holistic perspective on protest mobilization, taking the key motivations of protest participation into account. We use the widely tested ELM to hypothesize and test relations in the mobilization process. According to Klandermans (2004), previous research has mainly concentrated on one or two protest motivations, and thus lacks a balance between the various motivations. By taking the range of motivations into account in this study, we are able to study protesters' motivational profiles. Third, we used latent class analysis to distinguish between activists and slacktivists. This analysis was based on the *actual effort* measured by the time the respondents allocated to the protest, and the *perceived effort* to join online protests. This approach assists future research in operationalizing slacktivist behavior (Kristofferson et al., 2014; Warren et al., 2014). Last, we assess the influence of campaign design cues on the mobilization process, which answers earlier calls for research on the influence of digital communication affordances on protest mobilization (González-Bailón et al., 2011). Our results show that website design is important, but that participants may process campaign design cues differently.

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[14] See the report of the Social Media Marketing University, http://socialmediaimpact.com/brands_social_media_complaints, accessed on 5 January, 2015.

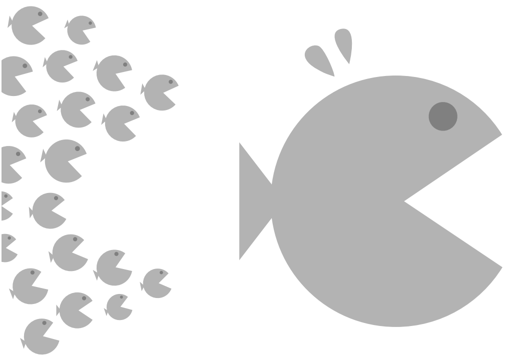
5.5.2 | **Practical Implications**

The organization of low-effort protests, such as online petitions, helps protest organizers mobilize many consumers for their cause in order to persuade firms to change their egregious behavior. In this online game of numbers, we argue that slacktivists are as important as intrinsically motivated participants with regard to ensuring a campaign has mass support. The results show that slacktivists require a different campaign strategy than activists. First, protest organizers should make an effort with the vividness and publicness of the campaign. In contrast to earlier research suggestions (Kristofferson et al., 2014), protest organizers may offer anonymous participation to attract slacktivists. However, such a strategy may lead to new problems related to the campaign legitimacy if the media and other stakeholders do not regard anonymous participants as authentic participants. Second, our results suggest that slacktivists are more likely to participate if they identity with the oppressed group and with other protesters. Hence, protest organizers should emphasize cultural cues, such as symbols, images, and stories, to instigate identification with the protesters, and provide vivid information about the oppressed group to instigate identification with the oppressed group.

Our results also have practical implications for firms. First, firms are increasingly targeted by online protests and need to respond appropriately. Our results show how their customers are induced to vent their anger about firms' egregious behavior. Second, firms could use our results to advance their corporate social responsibility campaigns, as they increasingly organize cause-related marketing campaigns that motivate consumers to behave pro-socially (Lii & Lee, 2012).

5.5.3 | **Limitations and Future Research**

Although we designed the manipulations of the experiment carefully, the conclusions may not be fully externally generalizable. First, it remains a controlled experiment that presents a credible, but fictive, scenario. Second, as we wanted to isolate protest characteristics, but not the campaign design, the results are mostly generalizable to similar low-effort consumer protests. Future research could conduct field experiments in natural settings to test the results of this experiment. We decided to focus on protest websites, as they are currently the most common digital channel to communicate a protest (Kingston & Stam, 2013) and remain important types of digital media for activist groups (De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013). However, as protest organizers' use of social media (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) is rapidly increasing (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012), future research could focus on the mobilization process on different social media. Since social media often have an open network structure that includes many influencers (e.g. media and weblogs), the diffusion process of protests on social media could differ from the type of protest website in this study (González-Bailón et al., 2011). Third, current research has developed an overview of protest organizers' digital repertoire of protest tactics. Future research could compare the mobilization process of different tactics, ranging from the time and effort required from the participants. Last, we used well-known antecedents of protest participation (injustice, collective identity, and collective efficacy) as dependent variables in our study. However, it is possible to consider alternative motivations (e.g. hedonic or even sadistic motivations). Nevertheless, the findings of this study show that there are a number of motivational differences between activists and slacktivists.



Chapter 6

The Effect of Online Protests and Mitigating Responses on Firms’ Financial and Brand Value[15]

Abstract

Protests that target firms’ socially irresponsible behavior are increasingly organized via digital media, pressuring firms to change their policy and practices. This study uses two methods to investigate the effects that online protests and mitigating firm responses have on their shareholders’ and consumers’ evaluation. The first method is a financial analysis that includes an event study which measures the effect of online protest on the target firm’s share price, as well as an investigation of the boundary effects of protest characteristics. The second method is an online experiment that assesses the effect of an online protest campaign on consumers’ image and purchase intention, as well as any mitigating effects that the firm’s response may have. Contrary to recent studies suggesting that consumer participation in online protests is only token support without any substantive effects, our results show that online protest do hurt. Firms can expect to suffer financial, reputational, and sales damage when an online protest mobilizes consumers successfully. We also show that online protests are more likely to take firms by surprise than offline protests. Firms can worsen or reduce their damage, depending on how they respond. We find that although firms may repair the damage to consumers’ purchase intentions, negative effects on a brand image are harder to rectify. The results have valuable implications for practitioners who organize online protests and the managers faced with the task of responding.

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[15] Co-authors are David Langley and Tobias Hornig. This chapter is under review at a journal. Earlier versions were presented at the Marketing Science conference 2012 in Boston (US), EMAC conference 2013 in Istanbul (Turkey), and the European Business Ethics Network conference 2015 in Istanbul (Turkey).

6.1 | Introduction

Two large energy suppliers, RWE and Vattenvall, planned to build new coal-fired power stations in the North of the Netherlands. After an unsuccessful lobby against these environmentally unfriendly power plants, the activist group Greenpeace started an online protest at the end of 2010 and posted spoof movies, imitating the well-known commercials of the RWE and Vattenvall brands (respectively operating locally under the names Essent and Nuon). Additionally, the Greenpeace website and social media urged consumers to switch to a competitive supplier if these energy suppliers did not cancel their plans. The spoof commercials were watched 50,000 times in the first two weeks of the campaign, amplifying the buzz on social media. Nuon responded first (within four days) by posting a message on its website and on Twitter, in which it urged Greenpeace to stop its campaign or face the legal consequences. One day later, Essent posted a message on its website, in which it explained to consumers why it planned to build a coal-fired plant. While Essent stopped its online response after this post, Nuon started an online forum, on which consumers were able to discuss its plans. A few months later, Nuon decided to partly comply with Greenpeace's request and changed from a coal-fired plant to a less environmentally unfriendly gas-fired plant. Essent still continued its plans, however, ignoring the online protest. This example raises the question: Do such online protests have a real impact? And which firm responded to the online protest the best in terms of limiting damage to its reputation and the its financial value?

An increasing body of research indicates that the public display of consumers' disapproval of a firm's socially irresponsible behavior can severely damage its reputation (Bartley & Child, 2011; King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; Spar & Mure, 2003). Hence, protests may motivate firms to improve their corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy and practices (King, 2008; King & Soule, 2007; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). The effect of protests on corporate decision makers is often mediated by feedback from stakeholders who are important for the targeted firm (Vasi & King, 2012). Activist groups thus often aim to influence stakeholders inside and outside the organizational boundaries, who in turn pressure the targeted firm to behave more socially responsible (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007). Shareholders, as insider stakeholders, are sensitive to protest's negative publicity and may disinvest if they expect the protest to affect the share price or future cash flows (Groening & Kanuri, 2013; Mackey, Mackey, & Barney, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012). Protests may also affect consumers' image of the firm and its associated brands, their purchase intention, and may mobilize consumers to join the online protest campaign (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009).

Currently, digital media, such as social media and websites, offer activist groups and consumers an efficient platform to organize such protests by exchanging information about the firms' corporate social responsibility (CSR) performance and uniting consumers with a negative attitude against a firm to voice their disapproval (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Kozinets, 1999; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Xia, 2013). Digital media are important channels to communicate with targeted firms and their stakeholders about social issues (Castelló et al., 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Palazzo & Basu, 2007; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). In practice, the number of online protests targeting firms increases (Xia, 2013). In most cases, online protest aim to tarnish such firms' brand image, or disrupt their revenue by decreasing consumers' purchase intention. For example, in 2011, the activist campaign 'Bank Transfer Day' motivated an estimated 610,000 US bank consumers to move their savings from high street banks to credit unions and building societies[16]. At targeted firms' side, CSR managers need to better understand how online protest affect their firms' and brands' value in order to manage unexpected situations efficiently. Literature suggests that online protests may require a significant adaptation of a firm's stakeholder management capabilities, with the focus being less on the *one-way* communication of CSR and more on the *two-way*, or *networked*, dialogue with the activist groups and their supporters (Castelló, Etter, & Årup Nielsen, 2015; Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013).

While extant research demonstrates the impact of *offline* protests targeted at firms (Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011; Chavis & Leslie, 2009; Friedman, 1999; John & Klein, 2003; Klein et al., 2004; Koku et al., 1997; Neilson, 2010; Schmelzer, 2010; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009), we know little about the effects of *online* protests on firm and brand value (Koku, 2012), and about how firms should respond to mitigate the potential damage (Xia, 2013). Although CSR managers are increasingly aware of the power of the internet to inform stakeholders about their CSR policy and practices (Palazzo & Basu, 2007), activist group requests are often not dealt with effectively[17]. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of online protest on shareholders' and consumers' evaluation, as well as the interventions that the targeted firm undertakes when it becomes the target of a protest. Our research question is: "*To what extent do online protests decrease shareholders' and consumers' evaluation of the targeted firm, and how do responses from the targeted firm mitigate damage due to the online protests?*"

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[16] See e.g. http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/27/us-bank-transfer-idUSTRE80Q1TU20120127/, accessed on May 12, 2015

[17] See, e.g. http://socialmediainfluence.com/2010/10/05/social-media-screw-ups-a-history/ for a list of cases

Inspired by Aguilera et al.'s (2007) categorization of insider (shareholders) and outsider CSR stakeholders, we develop a conceptual model with nine hypotheses about the effect of online protests on the evaluation of shareholders and consumers, and the mitigating effects that firm response strategies may have on the potential damage due to online protest. We employ two methods to test our hypotheses. First, we present a financial analysis that includes an event study (n = 116) which examines the effect of online protests on the targeted firms' share price, and a regression analysis that assesses the boundary effects of the protest characteristics. We compare our findings with earlier event studies of offline protests (King & Soule, 2007; Koku, 2012). Second, we conduct an online experiment (n = 201) to study the effects of an online protests on consumers' image of a targeted firm, their purchase intention, and the mitigating effects, if any, of the targeted firm's response. The results of these two approaches adds to our understanding an online protest's effects. It also provides practitioners with actionable insights into the importance of online protests and the ways that stakeholder evaluations are influenced.

Our study contributes to theory in three ways. First, our assessment of the impact of online protests contributes to the discussions on the effectiveness of low-effort protest (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Second, we study the effects of protests on the evaluation of shareholders and consumers, rather than the policy outcome. Following Aguiler et al. (2007), we show how activist groups target firms' stakeholders on an organizational level (shareholders and consumers). Last, we contribute to theory on how firms respond to protest (Eesley & Lenox, 2006; King, 2008a; Xia, 2013; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009) by examining the mitigating effects that firm responses have.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, we describe insights derived from different literatures, which provides a basis for understanding online protests. Based on the findings from stakeholder theory, social movement theory, and consumer marketing, we develop a conceptual model that describes the effects of online protests on shareholders and consumers. We then describe the financial analysis and the online experiment, including a description of the data sample, estimation issues, and a discussion of the results. We conclude the paper with a summary of the key findings, their implications for scholars and practitioners, highlight some of our study's limitations, and propose future research avenues.

6.2 | **Theory**

In this section, we provide a concise overview of the current literature on the effects of online protests and develop a conceptual model with nine hypotheses. Our model builds on Aguilera et al.'s (2007) multi-level framework of CSR stakeholders and previous research on the effect of offline protests.

6.2.1 | **Theoretical Background**

Although the impact of protest on firms is difficult to measure (Bartley & Child, 2011; Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly, 1999; King & Soule, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012), the effect of such actions has been assessed in a number of studies which generally focus on offline protests. Bartley and Child (2011) examine the effects of anti-sweatshop protests on consumer and shareholder evaluations: reputation, sales, and share prices. Their results show that protests can decrease the corporate social responsibility (CSR) ratings and lower the share prices. The effect of the investigated protests on sales and reputation depended, however, on the type of firm and the protest intensity. First, these protests only decreased the sales of highly specialized and recognizable firms, such as Nike and Guess. Second, only highly intense protests tarnished the reputation of firms with a good reputation. Eesley and Lenox (2006) examine the influence of protest characteristics on the likelihood of firm response. They find that powerful protesters with a legitimate request are more likely to elicit a firm response, while the urgency of the request does not have a significant effect on the firm response. The legitimacy of the protesters, as well as the right tactic aimed at the specific stakeholder group, influences firm response positively.

Other studies focus on the effects of offline protests on a specific stakeholder. First, firms that have experienced a drop in reputational standing are more vulnerable and, therefore, more likely to respond positively to protesters' requests (King, 2008a). Second, Chavis and Leslie (2009) demonstrate that calls to boycott French wine in the US during the war in Iraq did indeed result in significantly lower weekly sales. In contrast to this finding, the effects of consumer boycotts on keeping the retail prices low of products perceived as unfairly priced and thus attacking the firm revenue, are limited (Tyran & Engelmann, 2005). Third, most studies on the effects of offline protests use the financial value of the firm as the outcome variable. The effects on financial value when stakeholder support turns into stakeholder activism are mixed. In an event study, King and Soule (2007) demonstrate that protests influence a firm's financial performance negatively when measured as a short-term abnormal variance in the share price. Similarly, Luo (2007) confirms this finding in an analysis of the airline industry: High levels of negative consumer complaints harm share price returns. In a later study, however, Vasi and King (2012) test this relation for long-term effects. In an analysis of stakeholder activism targeted at more than 200 US firms between 2004 and 2008, they find that protests did not increase firms' perceived environmental risk, and consequently did not affect their financial performance in the long term. Shareholders' perception of protests may mediate their effect on the financial value of the targeted firms: An analysis of corporate social events which have either positive or negative effects on other stakeholders shows that shareholders may react positively to events that other stakeholders, such as protesters, perceive as negative (Groening & Kanuri, 2013).

CSR scholars have argued that the analysis of how firms and activist groups use digital media, such as social media, to engage consumers in firms' CSR efforts is an important direction for future research (Castelló et al., 2013; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). However, there is little scientific evidence of online protests affecting consumers' evaluation of a targeted firm: Only four articles have investigated this relation to date.

The first is an experimental study by Krishnamurthy and Kucuk (2009) which demonstrates that the number of protest websites related to a specific brand is positively related to the brand's visibility. Thus, stronger brands are more likely to attract protest websites. Furthermore, this study shows that firms with a high number of protest websites experienced a decrease in brand value between 2004 and 2005. Second, Van Noort and Willemsen (2012) focus on the effect of webcare interventions on consumer evaluations of a brand after consumers have made an online complaint. They find that appropriate firm reactions can attenuate damage to consumers' brand evaluations. Third, Xia (2013) finds that a response which indicates openness to online consumer criticism leads to a better perception of the firm and the related product quality than a defensive response. This effect is mediated by the perceived appropriateness of the response, which depends on the consumers' relationship with the firm: The more loyal the consumer, the less inappropriate a defensive response is perceived to be. Fourth and final, in an event analysis of 500 multinational corporations in China, Zhang and Luo (2013) show that an online campaign, combined with the political opportunity structure arising in the aftermath of a disaster, can pressure firms to donate money for aid. This 'pressurizing effect' was only significant, however, for firms that did not donate money prior to the online campaign.

6.2.2 | **Conceptual Model and Hypotheses**

Our conceptual model is based on the organizational level of the Multilevel Theory of Social Change (Aguilera et al., 2007). This hierarchical model includes stakeholders who influence CSR on the individual level (employees), organizational level (shareholders, managers and consumers), national level (governments), and transnational level (NGOs). The stakeholders on the organizational level are split into *insider* and *outsider* stakeholders. Insider stakeholders, such as managers and shareholders, have the most direct power over CSR decisions, as they negotiate directly in the decision-making politics within a firm. Outsider stakeholder groups, such as consumers, put pressure on the insider stakeholders through voice (complaints or protest) or exit (refraining from consumption) (Hirschman, 1970).

Stakeholders on each level pressure firms to engage in CSR activities and may interact while doing so. For example, the influence of transnational stakeholders, such as activist groups, is often mediated by stakeholders on the organizational level. Our study specifically examines this interaction between the (trans)national level and the organizational level. We contribute to this theory by applying it in the context of online protests and by testing the influence of activist groups that operate on a transnational level on the perception of firms' insider and outsider stakeholders. Figure 6.1 shows our conceptual model and hypotheses. We develop the hypotheses in the paragraphs below.

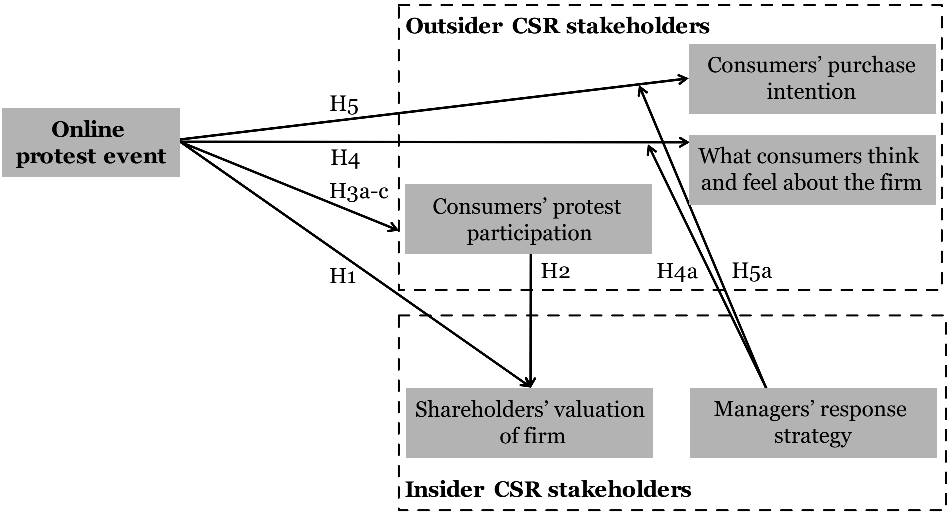

Outsider CSR stakeholders
Consumers' purchase intention
What consumers think and feel about the firm
Online protest event
H5
H4
H3a-c
Consumers' protest participation
H1
H2
H4a
H5a
Shareholders' valuation of firm
Managers' response strategy
Insider CSR stakeholders

Figure 6.1 | Conceptual Model based on Aguilera et al.'s (2007) Multilevel Theory of Social Change

The Effect of Online Protests on Share Value. An online protest provides shareholders with information about possible socially irresponsible behavior by a firm, which may result in social pressure to disinvest in the targeted firm, as well as concerns about the firm's future cash flows. We assume that shareholders update their beliefs about the future firm performance, i.e. its revenues and costs, when they become aware of an online protest. It might take some time for an online protest movement to gain momentum before shareholders notice the protest, but from that moment the stock markets reflect the shareholders' expectations regarding the future sales and profitability, whereby any changes in these expectations are immediately reflected in the current share prices (King & Soule, 2007).

In an event study by Koku (2012), however, no significant effect is found concerning the stock market reaction to online protests. Koku, however, questions the generalizability of his findings and we believe there are three possible explanations for the lack of effect: First, the study was based on a small sample size (n = 63). Second, the protests included in the study were all calls to boycott, which require more effort from the protest participants than protests only aimed at changing consumers' attitude. Third, individuals initiated all the protests as opposed to formal protest groups, which have more resources to mobilize consumers behind their cause, organizing them. As such, the literature is inconclusive on whether or not protests via online channels affect the targeted share value as traditional offline protests would do.

International opinion leaders, such as Evgeny Morozov (2009) and Malcolm Gladwell (Gladwell, 2010), promote the view that expectations of the change that could be brought about by mobilizing the masses via the internet have been overestimated. Their viewpoint is mainly focused on political change, while the mobilization process may differ in respect of protests aimed at hurting individual firms. In recent years, shareholders have made increasing use of online channels to gather market-relevant information (O'Connor, 2013). We therefore expect online protests will have an effect on shareholder expectations of a targeted firm's future cash flow. Thus, adding to King and Soule's (2007) findings regarding the offline situation, we expect online protests will also negatively affect the targeted firm's share price. This leads to our first hypothesis:

H1: Online protests have a negative effect on the price of a firm.

Protest Size. Previous research identifies protest size as an important factor in changing firm behavior and potentially having financial consequences for a targeted firm (Bartley & Child, 2011; Earl et al., 2003; Luders, 2006; Tilly, 2004). Online protests which succeed in attracting large numbers of participants help activist groups draw investors' and traditional media's attention, which puts the activist group in a powerful position with respect to the targeted firms. In contrast to previous studies, King and Soule (2007) do not find a significant relationship between protest size and share price. However, they indicate that their dataset is limited to protests aimed at US firms, which may bias their results, as US firms tend to be less stakeholder-centric than European firms. In the online situation, the mobilization of a large number of participants may draw the attention of various stakeholders, including shareholders. Therefore, despite the mixed results to date, we expect online protests with a higher number of participants to have a stronger negative effect on a firm's share price. We thus propose:

> *H2: Online protests with a higher number of participants have a stronger negative effect on the share price of a firm than smaller protests.*

Protest Legitimacy. Besides the question of whether there is an effect on the share price of a firm under attack, it is important to investigate the conditions under which such an effect occurs. Building on the above theoretical development section, we hypothesize that Eesley and Lenox's (2006) protests characteristics affect protest size. We first expect the large-scale mobilization of consumers to join an online protest requires an organized and credible activist group (Anduiza et al., 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber et al., 2005). Well established NGOs may enjoy high legitimacy and have generally built large supporter bases of ethical consumers, giving them the capability for mass mobilization (De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Tatarchevskiy, 2011; Van den Broek, Ehrenhard, Langley, & Groen, 2012; Whelan et al., 2013). On the other hand, individuals lack such legitimacy and are less able to mobilize large numbers of consumers than NGOs. Therefore, we propose:

> *H3a: The number of participants in online protests targeted at a firm depends on the legitimacy of the protest initiator.*

Second, we do not see any reason for the legitimacy of the protestors' request to have a different effect in the online setting than it has been shown to have in offline protests. When protests are product related and appeal predominantly to the firm's consumer base, they are more likely to appeal less to the general public than value-related issues, such as CSR issues, do (Swimberghe, Flurry, & Parker, 2011). Therefore, in line with Eesley and Lenox (2006), we propose:

> *H3b: High legitimacy protest requests relating to widely relevant value-related issues result in higher protest participation than protest requests relating to narrower product-specific issues.*

Third, we expect the urgency of the request, in other words the time-frame of a protest's demand, to have an effect on consumer participation in a protest. Given the short media attention span, consumers may prefer to participate in protests urgently demanding a change in a firm's current behavior. Eesley and Lenox (2006) do not find that a very urgent request affects firm responses, but did not assess such a request's effect on protest participation. We thus propose:

H3c: Urgent protest requests calling for the cessation of the current firm behavior result in higher protest participation than protests against a firm's planned future behavior.

The Effect of Online Protests on Consumers' Image. Following the Multilevel Theory of Social Change (Aguilera et al,, 2007), the pressure on CSR policy and practices also depends on consumers' perceptions and behavior with respect to the firm (Chavis & Leslie, 2009; Morrison, 1979). First, an online protest can affect consumers by negatively affecting their attitude towards the firm. We assume that online protests aiming to highlight and change undesired corporate behavior have a cognitive effect on the way consumers exposed to the protest perceive the firm. In other words, the way that consumers think and feel about a targeted firm will become more negative after their exposure to protest (King, 2008b; King & Soule, 2007). Technological convenience and social connectedness are two online mechanisms that increase exposure to a protest in order for it to reach a large number of consumers (Kucuk & Krishnamurthy, 2007). First, the technological convenience of the internet makes wide-reaching communication more affordable and easier, offering protesters an efficient structure to mobilize consumers for protests targeted at firms (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Kozinets, 1999; Kucuk & Krishnamurthy, 2007). Second, the social connectedness and interactivity of the internet stimulates the formation of online communities and encourages consumers to spread information concerning the protest (Castelló et al., 2013; Kristofferson et al., 2014; Kucuk & Krishnamurthy, 2007).

This mass interactivity enables consumers to personalize the frames that activist groups offer (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). Both the technological convenience and social connectedness help online communities reach a broader audience than is possible in an offline setting, allowing them to reach out to consumers who normally would not be exposed. The effect of online negative information on consumer attitude has been well studied in relation to consumers sharing their negative experiences about firms, i.e. negative electronic word-of-mouth (negative eWOM) (Eberle, Berens, & Li, 2013) These authors find that negative eWOM has a stronger effect than positive eWOM, indicating that bad news about a firm somehow stands out and influences how consumers feel about the firm in question. Similarly, we expect organized online protests to affect consumers' evaluation of such a firm, which leads to our third hypothesis:

H4: Exposure to an online protest negatively affects consumers' image of a firm.

Moderating Effect of Firm Response on Image. The firm, however, is not powerless when faced with an online protest and a number of options are open to them. First, a pro-social communication strategy prior to a protest might prevent, or mitigate, its negative effects (McDonnell & King, 2013; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009). We assume that any negative effects after a protest will be mitigated if the firm implements an adequate response strategy. Traditionally, the literature suggests that conceding to a protest signals a sense of responsibility toward consumers, which will result in positive consumer perceptions (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Conlon & Murray, 1996). Subsequent research shows that this relation is not that simple (Huang, 2006; Lee & Song, 2010; Xia, 2013).

A response strategy's effectiveness depends on the firm's control over the protest issue, as well as the protest's level of evidence (Huang, 2006). By conceding to a protest when consumers (other than the protesters) do not perceive the protest as justified may harm a firm's reputation (Lee & Song, 2010). Furthermore, the strength of the consumer's relationship with the firm moderates the effect of an online protest (Xia, 2013): The stronger consumers' relationship with a firm, the more they will tolerate a defensive response strategy.

We propose four response strategies that vary in their degree of compliance with a protest request (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Conlon & Murray, 1996; Oliver, 1991): 1) moving with (conceding to the protest), 2) moving toward (accommodating dialogue with the protesters to justify firm behavior), 3) moving against (denying and counteracting the protest), and 4) moving away (ignoring the protest). As the former two positive response strategies denote a higher responsiveness to the wishes of the protesters than the latter two strategies (Xia, 2013), we propose that:

> *H4a: The firm's response to a protest moderates the negative effect that an online protest has on consumers' perception of that firm, because the closer the firm moves toward the protest objectives, the weaker the negative effect is.*

The Effect of Online Protests on Purchase Intention. Second, an online protest can affect consumers as outsider stakeholders by reducing their purchase intention, which implies that online protests need to influence consumers, besides the previously described exposure, in order for them to forego buying the products or services of the targeted firm. However, evidence of this effect is limited in an online setting. Cheung and Thadani (2012) call for further research into the relationship between the online sharing of information about firms and consumer purchase intentions. Following research on the offline setting (Bartley & Child, 2011), we propose:

> *H5: Exposure to an online protest negatively affects consumers' intention to purchase the targeted firm's products.*

Moderating Effect of Firm Response on Purchase Intention. Similar to the effect on consumers' perceptions of the firm, we assume that any negative effects a protest may have on consumers' purchase intention will be mitigated if the firm implements a response strategy that is closer to the wishes of the protesters (Xia, 2013):

> *H5a: The firm's response to a protest moderates the negative effect that an online protest has on consumers' purchase intentions, because the closer the firm moves toward the protest objectives, the weaker the negative effect is.*

6.2.3 | **Approach**

This study consists of two empirical studies that, jointly, investigate the impact of online protests on firm value. This impact can occur through a change in shareholders' perceived value of the firm, or through a change in how consumers think and feel about the firm, and in their purchase intention. As shown in Figure 6.1, these different effects combine to determine the overall impact of online protests on insider and outsider stakeholders of the firm. In the first part of our analysis, we study the effect of actual online protests on shareholders' perceived value of the firm under attack. We analyze 116 online protests aimed at publicly traded companies, which took place between 1998 and 2011. As share prices reflect current expectations about the future firm value, our analysis allows us to assess the extent to which shareholders expect consumer protest to affect the future firm cash flows and, hence, to be value relevant (Fama, 1970). We carry out an event study to investigate the financial damage that the activist groups' actions inflicted on the firms (McWilliams & Siegel, 1997). In the second part of our analysis, we assess the effect of an online protest on consumers' evaluations of a targeted firm. We do this in an online experimental setting (n=201) and measure the negative effect of an online protest on how consumers think and feel about the firm, as well as on their purchase intention. By including the firm's response to the protest as a treatment, we assess the mitigating effects that the compliance strategies outlined above may have.

6.3 | **Financial Analysis**

In this section, we investigate the effects of online protests targeted at firms in terms of the financial impact they have on these firms. Given that an online protest may change shareholders' expectations about the future firm performance (King & Soule, 2007; Rappaport, 1987), the onset of an online protest can be immediately translated into an adjustment of the firm's market value (Fama, 1970). We assume that online protest campaigns provide capital markets with new information. First, online protests are an effective and low cost tool with which to make egregious corporate behavior publicly visible. Second, the nature of the internet offers consumers an easy and convenient way to participate in a social movement against undesired corporate behavior. In turn, increased participation in an online protest targeted at firms makes a decline in sales more likely. Consequently, as more people follow the protest and revise their feelings about the attacked company, the more likely shareholders are to adjust their risk estimations of the firm's future cash flows. Third, when an online protest reaches a certain threshold in the number of supporters, it can draw the attention of traditional (financial) media that shareholders follow. Consequently, the new information about the firm reaches the capital markets, which may lead to a reevaluation of the firm's share price. Such mainstream attention for a protest based on purported irresponsible behavior has extra costs, the total amount of which depends on the response strategy the company chooses. A positive reaction to the protests might lead to the payment of compensation, or the abandonment of lucrative business opportunities. On the other hand, when a firm does not react, or even counter-attacks, shareholders may expect such strategies to provoke penalties, or long-term litigation, for which financial provisions will have to be made, once again affecting the expectations of the future cash flows (Zadek, 2007).

6.3.1 | **Data Description**

We built a database of 164 cases of online protest targeted at publicly traded companies during the period 1998 to 2011. Table 6.1 presents the distribution of protests in various countries during this time.

Table 6.1 | Distribution of all protests from 1998-2011 used in the event study

	Country						
Year	**UK**	**US**	**AUS**	**FRA**	**GER**	**OTHER**[*]	**Total**
< 2007	7	4	3	0	0	4	18
2007	2	1	1	4	0	4	12
2008	4	1	2	3	0	2	12
2009	11	3	3	2	0	1	20
2010	18	5	5	5	3	10	46
2011	14	17	10	3	4	8	56
Total	56	31	24	17	7	29	164

[*] *Includes Spain, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, among others.*

All the cases were identified with the help of the LexusNexus media database and the Google search engine, using a combination of keywords such as *online, protest, boycott, petition,* and *action,* as well as the names of all companies currently listed on various important global stock exchanges. Additional cases were found by searching a number of popular social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) for references to these companies and related protests. We excluded 48 observations with confounding events occurring before or after the event period. Confounding events are share-price-influencing events that occur at about the same time as the focal event (McKnight, Lowrie, & Coles, 2002), which we identified from news sources before and at the time of the protests. Examples of confounding events were, for example, scandals, the declaration of dividends, changes in the key board members, and earning announcements. We used daily stock returns and returns of the benchmark index of Thomson Financial Datastream and Thomson Worldscope to obtain a measure for expected returns. We calculated the cumulative average abnormal returns (CAAR) for use in the financial analysis.

6.3.2 | **Event Study Results**

We applied an event study of abnormal returns to examine the value relevance of a protest for shareholders (H1). The application of an event study methodology has gained wide acceptance across different disciplines, such as accounting research (Hossain & Marks, 2005), marketing research (Aggarwal, Dai, & Walden, 2006; Koku, 2012; Koku et al., 1997; Sorescu, Shankar, & Kushwaha, 2007), and information system research (Dos Santos, Peffers, & Maurer, 1993). The rationale for an event study is that, given market efficiency, perfect information, and the rationality of shareholders (Fama, 1991), the relevance of an event is measureable in terms of abnormal returns, i.e. a stock return that deviates from its expected value. Expectations about daily returns of common stocks are usually best described by the Market Model (Brown & Warner, 1985), which is a statistical model based on the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) and relates the return of a given stock *i* to the return of the benchmark portfolio *m* at time *t*:

$$E(R_{it}) = \alpha_i + \beta_i R_{mt} \qquad \text{(eq.1)}$$

where

$E(R_{it})$ = expected stock return of firm *i* on day *t*

R_{mt} = returns on the market portfolio on day *t*

α_i, β_i = parameter estimates obtained from the regression of R_{it} on R_{mt}

The problem that we try to solve by using an event study is that we do not know what would have happened in the absence of an online protest. Therefore, we construct a synthetic comparison observation based on the CAPM model. This model describes what would have happened in the absence of a protest by relating the return of a given stock to the return of the market. The benchmark portfolio is the standard market portfolio as provided by Fama-French data sets. This is a typical approach and includes US-listed firms. There is no contamination of the market outcome by the negative news, as the model is predicted for each firm before the event, or before bad news has been made known, i.e. we calculate the beta during the observation period and then subsequently use it to calculate the expected return during the event period. The difference between actual and expected return then defines the abnormal return. Any deviation in the realized return from the return that the model predicted, is attributed to the online protest. This allows the general effect of online protests on stock value to be assessed across a number of protests.

We use an observation period of 239 days to obtain the regression parameters for the expected return for each event, following the approach of King and Soule (2007), who examine the influence of offline protests on the financial performance of US companies in the period 1962 to 1990. In order to avoid the event potentially influencing the estimation, the estimation window ends 30 days prior to the event. We measure the abnormal return attributable to the protest as the difference between the actual and the expected return of the share of firm *i* at time *t*:

$$AR_{it} = R_{it} + E(R_{it}) = R_{it} - (\hat{\alpha}_i + \hat{\beta}_i R_{mt}) \qquad \text{(eq. 2)}$$

Using a sample of *N* protests, we calculate the mean effect of all the protests as the average of the abnormal returns across all the protests at time *t*:

$$AR_t = \tfrac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} AR_{it} \qquad \text{(eq. 3)}$$

However, it is unrealistic to only assume a significant effect on the day of the protest itself. Information about the protest may leak to shareholders in advance, or it may need time to disseminate its message to a wide audience (King & Soule, 2007). Consequently, the observation of abnormal returns during a window around the launch of the protest is more appropriate. Consequently, we aggregate the daily abnormal returns during the period [$-t_1$, t_2] into a cumulative average abnormal return:

$$CAAR_{[-t_1,t_2]} = \sum_{t=-t_1}^{t_2} AR_t \qquad \text{(eq. 4)}$$

The statistical significance of the cumulative average abnormal return is tested, whereby we assume normally-distributed error terms and use the following test statistic:

$$Z_{CAAR} = \frac{CAAR_{[-t1,t2]}}{s_{CAAR}} \qquad \text{(eq. 5)}$$

$$S_{CAAR} = \frac{CAAR_{[-t1,t2]}}{\sqrt{N}} \sqrt{\frac{1}{N-1} \sum_{i-1}^{N} \left(\sum_{t=-t_1}^{t_2} AR_{it} - CAAR_{[-t_1,t_2]}\right.} \qquad \text{(eq. 6)}$$

We calculate the CAAR for a range of event windows and found that a symmetric window of 11 days has the highest Z-value (-4.72), which is the most significant event window (Brown & Warner, 1985). Hence, the estimation period starts five days prior to the day the online protest started and ends five days after this. We obtained a cumulative average abnormal return of -.84%, which is similar to the results of King and Soule (2007). This finding contrasts with the results of the event analysis by Koku (2012), in which 63 boycotts were found to have had no significant effect on the stock return. The difference in findings could result from the larger sample size of our study, our scope, which includes 'naming and shaming' campaigns instead of only boycotts, and our inclusion of protests started by stakeholders rather than individuals. Table 6.2 provides more details of the event analysis results.

Table 6.2 | Daily average return of a [-5,+5] window around the event data in respect of 116 online protest campaigns targeting publicly listed companies from 1998 to 2011.

Day(s)	**Cumulative average abnormal return (%)**	**Z-value**	**Frequency of Negative Returns (%)**
[-5,+5]	-0.838	-4.788 ***	63.56
-5	0.019	0.193	52.54
-4	0.020	0.223	50.85
-3	-0.030	-0.305	56.78
-2	0.030	0.284	53.39
-1	-0.133	-1.163	50.85
0	0.094	0.989	50.00
1	-0.069	-0.746	53.39
2	-0.223	-2.164 **	54.24
3	-0.058	-0.464	47.46
4	-0.200	-1.885 *	54.24
5	-0.287	-2.351 **	55.93

*n = 116, * p < 0.10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01*

These findings conflict with the generally held opinion that participation in online protests is simply a token gesture, slacktivism rather than real activism, and that it does not amount to meaningful support (Kristofferson et al., 2014). Our results show that online slacktivism, although requiring very little effort from each participant, can indeed add up to a tangible contribution to the cause and result in significant damage to the target firm.

We find a difference in the distribution of the daily average returns that has not been reported before. Whereas shareholders anticipate offline protests (King & Soule, 2007; Koku et al., 1997), we find that the share value does not change abnormally prior to the online protest date, indicating that online attacks on firms are more likely to take firms (and shareholders) by surprise. The first significant negative abnormal return is found on day two, which reaches its lowest value five days after the protests started. This suggests that it takes some time before shareholders become aware of an online protest and are faced with its full impact, which may be due to the word-of-mouth diffusion process inherent in the way social media is used. We thus confirm our hypothesis (H1) and find that online protests have a negative influence on the financial value of a firm, although, in relation to the start date of the protest, this effect is later than the effect of offline protests. An online protest may give no advanced warning about the day when consumers are called to action. Such an online attack grows, as it were, under the radar before reaching a critical mass, which then attracts the attention of the press. Suddenly, the firm becomes aware of the angry mob and is expected to react immediately, without having the time to develop a well thought-out response strategy. This surprise effect can make online protests more threatening for firms than offline protests, because they are generally not given advanced warning (e.g. via lobbying) and may be pressurized by journalists and other stakeholders to react quickly.

6.3.3 | **Regression Results**

In order to test for Hypothesis H2, we regressed the cumulative abnormal return during the event window on protest participation. We further included protest characteristics as defined by Eesley and Lenox (2006), namely the legitimacy of the protest organization, the legitimacy of the protest request, and the urgency of the request. Second, we controlled for the number of social media channels used, because a firm attacked from multiple fronts may suffer more damage than one attacked from a single social media platform (Castelló et al., 2013). Third, we operationalized the control variable firm size with the total sales (Eesley & Lenox, 2006). The estimation equation for the cumulative abnormal returns of firm *j* during the event window for protest *i*, is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} CAAR_{ij} &= \gamma_0 + \gamma_1\, NGO_{ij} + \gamma_2 Company_{ij} + \gamma_3\, Cause_{ij} + \gamma_4\, Urgency_{ij} + \\ &\gamma_5\, Social\ Media_{ij} + \gamma_6\, Firm\ Size_{ij} + \gamma_7\, Participation_{ij} + \eta_{ij} \end{aligned} \qquad \text{(eq. 7)}$$

with , $\eta \sim N(0, \sigma^2_{ij})$,

where

$CAAR_{ij}$: Cumulative abnormal return for firm j during protest i

NGO_{ij}: Dummy variable taking the value 1 if protest i against firm j has been organized by an NGO, 0 if not

$Company_{ij}$: Dummy variable taking the value 1 if protest i against firm j has been organized by a company, 0 if not

$Cause_{ij}$: Dummy variable talking the value 1 if the claim of protest i against firm j is value-related, 0 if the claim of protest is product-related

$Urgency_{ij}$: Dummy variable taking the value 1 if protest i against firm j relates to current firm behavior, 0 if it relates to the firm's future plans

$SocialMedia_{ij}$: Number of social media channels used by protest i against firm j

$Firm\ Size_{ij}$: Total sales of parent firm j attacked by protest i

$Participation_{ij}$: Number of explicit consumer actions, including online petition signatures, Facebook likes, YouTube views, etc.

γ : Parameters to be estimated

η, σ^2_{ij} : Error term and variance

With participation as a focal driver of shareholders' evaluation of a protest, we eventually specified equation 8 to test our hypotheses H3a-H3c, i.e. the drivers for joining a protest. We used a log-log transformation to ensure that the participation rate remains positive when predicted. We additionally controlled for the capabilities and resources of the protest group and the targeted firm by means of the number of social media channels used in the protest, as well as the total sales of the firm in the year of the protest. The estimation equation is defined as follows:

$$\ln(Participation)_i = \delta_0 + \delta_1 NGO_i + \delta_2 Company_i + \delta_3 Cause_i + \delta_4 Urgency_i + \delta_5 \ln(Social\ Media)_i + \delta_6\ Firm\ Size_i + \zeta_i \qquad \text{(eq. 8)}$$

with $\zeta \sim N(0, \sigma^2_{ij})$,

where

δ: Parameters to be estimated

ζ, σ^2_i: Error term and variance

and all other terms as previously defined.

Table 6.3 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations. Table 6.4 summarizes the regression results. The first column of Table 6.4 presents the estimation results of equation 7. The effective number of observation is 109 and the explained variance is 0.113. This is largely in line with other event studies in this field, for example, that of King and Soule (2007) in respect of offline protests. The

F-value is 5.97 ($p < .001$), indicating this model's high validity. Protest participation has a significant effect (δ_7= 0.000, $p < .001$) on the share price and, hence, confirms Hypothesis 2. We do not find a significant relationship between firms with more sales being generally less exposed to risk (δ_6= 0.000, $p < .001$) (Fama & French, 1992). Last, protests organized by rival firms have a significant (δ_2= .0260, $p < 0.05$) effect on protest participation.

Table 6.3 | Overview of means, standard deviations, and correlations

	Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	CAAR	-0.01	0.04	1								
2	Participation	60784	336277	0.21†	1							
3	NGO	0.38	0.49	-0.09	-0.09	1						
4	Individual	0.55	0.50	0.02	0.06	-0.86 ***	1					
5	Company	0.07	0.26	0.14	0.05	-0.22 **	-0.31 **	1				
6	Cause	0.83	0.37	-0.09	0.08	-0.32 ***	0.34	-0.06	1			
7	Urgency	0.73	0.44	0.13	0.09	-0.13	0.08 ***	0.09	-0.16 **	1		
8	Social media	1.08	0.81	-0.07	0.07	0.01	-0.04	0.06	-0.07	0.06	1	
9	Firm size (in 100,000 $)	38249	48671	0.09	0.05	-0.01	0.02	-0.02	0.06	-0.02	-0.13	1

*N = 116. † p < .1, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 6.4 | Regression coefficients of the effects of participation on cumulative abnormal returns and protest characteristics on participation.

	Model 1 (H2)		**Model 2 (H3a-c)**	
Regression on:	Cumulative abnormal return		Participation	
	Coefficient (Standard error)		Coefficient (Standard error)	
Constant	0.000	(0.015)	4.772	(0.746)***
Group legitimacy				
Individuals	Baseline		Baseline	
NGOs	0.008	(0.008)	1.612	(0.521)**
Companies	0.026	(0.013)*	2.575	(0.739)**
Request legitimacy				
Product-related claim	Baseline		Baseline	
Value-related claim	-0.009	(0.013)	1.117	(0.488)*
Request urgency	0.011	(0.009)	0.018	(0.594)
No. digital channels	-0.003	(0.003)	1.628	(0.573)*
Firm size1)	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)*
Participation1)	0.000	(0.000)***		
R^2	0.113		0.269	
Adj. R^2	0.056		0.134	
F-value	5.97***		9.08***	
N	109		116	

*Ns are reported in the last row. * p < .05; ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

1) For reading convenience, these coefficients are multiplied by 100,000

The second column of Table 6.4 shows the results of equation 8. The effective number of observation is 116. The R^2 (0.267) and the *F*-value (9.08) indicate a high goodness-of-fit. Except for protest urgency, all the coefficients are significant and show the expected sign. Consequently, protests organized by NGOs and other companies do indeed generate higher levels of participation than protests organized by individuals (respectively δ_1= 1.612 and δ_2= 2.575, both *p* < .01). Moreover, protests generate higher attention and reach if organized for value-related rather than product-related reasons (δ_3= 1.117, *p* < .05). Last, we find a significant correlation between firm size in terms of sales and protest participation (δ_6= 0.000, *p* < .05). Further, the number of social media channels does increase an online protest's reach (δ_5= 1.628, *p* < .01).

To test the robustness of our findings, we conducted Ramsay's RESET test in Stata to check for omitted variable bias. This test was negative for both equations, which suggests that no important variables were omitted in the regression analyses. Last, we tested both equations for cohort effects, as protests take place in different years. The inclusion of the year in which an online protest took place had no significant effect on the analyses.

6.4 | **Experimental Study**

6.4.1 | **Design and Sample**

The purpose of the experiment is to test the effect of an online protest on what consumers' image of a firm, on consumers' purchase intention, and how these effects are mitigated by the firm's response to the protest. The firm's response is one of the four strategies described above (Clemens & Douglas, 2005; Conlon & Murray, 1996; Oliver, 1991), which we label moving with (i.e. compliance), moving toward (e.g. entering into a discussion), moving against (e.g. counter attack), and moving away (i.e. ignoring the protest). In order to test these effects, a one-factor between-subjects experimental design was used. The experimental factor was the attack-response condition with six levels: zero measurement, moving with, moving toward, moving against, moving away, and attack only. Moving away differs from the attack only condition, as, in the former, the participants saw the protest website followed by an online news item in which the firm was described as not being available for comment. In the latter condition, the participants saw only the protest website. Therefore, in the 'moving away' condition, consumers may assume the firm has ethically questionable reasons for explicitly refusing to comment on the protest or may, for example, have something to hide. On the other hand, consumers may be more likely to reserve judgment if they believe that the firm is not yet aware of the protest, as in the attack only condition.

In discussions with a leading expert on corporate crisis communication, we were advised that the consumer food industry is one of the most volatile in terms of consumer protests. We selected milk as the consumer product to target in an experimental protest campaign, as this is a common repeat-purchase product that does not generally elicit high consumer involvement, which could otherwise influence the results. A total of 201 participants, recruited by a marketing research bureau that offered them a small financial reward for taking part, completed the study. The participants were selected on the basis that they are responsible for purchasing milk and their regular milk consumption. The sample group, of which 58% was male, was between 18 and 80 years of age (*M* = 50,05; *SD* = 14.99). Only 2.5% of the participants was vegetarian, who may have a higher than average interest in animal welfare issues, which is relevant for this experiment. The participants were sent an email that included a link to the study website. They took part via their own computers and were randomly assigned to one of the attack-response conditions.

6.4.2 | **Procedure**

The experiment was executed via an online application and started with a short introduction that indicated how long the experiment would take. Each participant was asked which milk brand s\he purchases, and in the remainder of the experiment that specific brand was used as the target of the attack. We do not control for all firm-related concepts, such as brand loyalty, because the participants indicated their preferred brand, thus limiting the variation in respect of brand loyalty. Additionally, because the participants were randomly assigned to the conditions, any differences would be averaged. Those who do not purchase milk were excluded from taking part in the study.

The procedure differed per condition. For the zero measurement, the participants had to fill out a questionnaire about the firm producing their chosen brand. In the attack only condition, the participants saw a mock website of a well-known and generally well-respected environmental NGO with a message that the firm producing their chosen brand harms the environment. The attack was based on existing protests against the use of raw materials from palm plantations, which lead to the destruction of the rainforest. In the mock protest, the claim was that the milk producer procured cattle food containing palm kernels, thereby contributing to the destruction of rainforest, as natural forest is cleared to plant palm trees. These participants then filled out the same questionnaire as in the zero measurement condition. In the other four conditions – the four different firm response strategies – the participants saw the same attack and subsequently an online news item describing the online protest, as well as a statement from the targeted firm comprising one of the response strategies. The participants in these conditions the filled out the questionnaire again. At the end of the questionnaire, all the participants received debriefing information that the protest was not real, was only for research purposes, and the firm in question's positive environmental performance was highlighted.

6.4.3 |**Measures**

Independent Variables. Manipulation: As shown above, there were six different manipulations: zero measurement vs. moving with vs. moving toward vs. moving against vs. moving away vs. attack only. The four strategies were manipulated by means of an online news item. The attack was manipulated by the message on the NGO's website. There was also a zero measurement group with no manipulation, which was the control group. The text of the manipulation is attached as an appendix.

Dependent Variables. In this study, there are four dependent variables, three relating to what consumers think and feel about the firm (attitude toward the firm, product and service quality, and environmental image), and one relating to consumers' purchase intention. First 20 commonly used items were measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale to determine the attitude toward the firm (Aaker, 1997; Jamieson & Bass, 1989). Some items were reversed scored to prevent bias. Confirmatory factor analysis initially showed a two-factor model in which 19 of the 20 items loaded on one factor. The item expensive/inexpensive did not load on the same factor and was omitted from the set of items. Reliability analysis showed a Cronbach's α of .97 for the remaining items. Second, the short form of the consumer-based corporate reputation scale was used to determine the image (Walsh, Beatty, & Shiu, 2009). Two of the original five factors were used: *product and service quality*, and *environmental image*, each consisting of three items measured on a seven-point scale. The latter factor was adapted to remove items relating to social, rather than environmental, responsibility, because our experimental design included a protest attack based on environmental grounds. We checked the scale using a factor analysis which identified both factors with reliability α of .85 and .83. Last, consumers' purchase intention was measured with one seven-point item ascertaining the extent to which the participants were sure that they would buy the chosen product if they were in a supermarket at that moment and needed milk.

Control Variables. The general willingness of consumers to take part in protests was controlled for by measuring the trait action willingness, by asking if they had joined an anti-firm protest during the last year (with multiple answer options, as well as a 'yes, other…' option). This data was transformed into a dichotomous variable (the trait action willingness yes/no) for the analysis.

6.4.4 | **Results**

A manipulation check (n = 70), using items adapted from Clemens and Douglas (2005), showed that consumers' perception of each response strategy differed significantly: moving with ($F = 30.88$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .58$), Moving towards ($F = 18.03$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .45$), Moving against ($F = 4.31$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$), and Moving away ($F = 3.98$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$). All manipulations passed Levene's test for homogeneity ($p < .10$). We separated the manipulation from the main experiment to avoid homogeneity.

Examining the results of the main experiment, an ANOVA shows a main effect of the experimental condition on the participants' attitude toward the firm ($F(5,191) = 7.18$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$), thus confirming Hypothesis H4. A Tukey post-hoc analysis shows significant contrasts between the zero measurement and all the other levels of the condition (see Table 6.5), signifying that all the manipulations had a negative effect on consumers' attitude toward the firm. Furthermore, the difference between the attack and moving away conditions showed significance, whereby the moving away strategy resulted in an even worse attitude toward the firm than the attack only condition. This result shows that however the firm responds, the negative effect of the protest on consumers' attitude toward the firm remains. Consequently, Hypothesis 4a is not supported. On the contrary, Table 6.5a shows that when a firm moves away by explicitly refusing to comment on the protest, the negative effect of the protest is exacerbated. The control variable, the trait action willingness, shows no significance (main effect ($F(1,191) = 2.309$, $p = .130$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$) or interaction effect (($F(5,191) = .661$, $p = .654$, partial $\eta^2 = .017$)), indicating that previous involvement in protests does not affect attitude toward the firm.

In respect of the effects of the protest campaign on the two image constructs (product and service quality, and environmental image), a MANOVA shows a main effect of the experimental condition ($F(15,569) = 2.40$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$). Once again, no significant results are found for the control variable and the trait action willingness. The univariate results show that the experimental condition has a significant effect on the firm image regarding quality ($F(5,193) = 4.41$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$), and environment ($F(5,193) = 5.81$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$). In respect of the firm image concerning product and service quality, the contrasts between the strategy moving away and moving toward, as well as the zero measurement, are significant (see Table 6.5b). The moving away strategy results in a more negative image concerning quality than the moving toward strategy and the zero measurement; this is a similar result to that described above regarding the attitude toward the firm. In respect of the firm image concerning the environment, the contrasts between the zero measurement and moving with, moving against, moving away, and the attack only condition are significant, as is the contrast between moving away and moving toward conditions (see Table 6.5c). With the exception of moving toward, all the conditions have a more negative effect on the image concerning the environment than the zero measurement has. Furthermore, moving away also has a more negative effect on environmental image than moving toward does. Together, these results support Hypothesis H4, showing that online protests damage how consumers perceive a firm. Nevertheless, they do not firmly support Hypothesis H4a, as the firm's response does not mitigate this negative effect. Again, however, the effect of the firm response differs: If the firm moves away from the protest by explicitly refusing to comment on it, then the negative effect of the protest is increased.

Table 6.5 | Effects of firm response on (a) Attitude toward firm, (b) image (product and service quality), (c) image (environment), and (d) purchase Intention.

Dependent	**Condition**	**Mean *(SD)***	**Condition**	**Mean *(SD)***	***p***
(a) Attitude toward the firm	Zero measurement	5.60 (1.12)	Moving with	4.51 (1.42)	0.003 ***
			Moving toward	4.68 (1.07)	0.006 ***
			Moving against	4.41 (1.18)	< 0.001 ***
			Moving away	3.96 (0.85)	< 0.001 ***
			Attack	4.78 (1.06)	0.026 **
	Attack	4.78 (1.06)	Moving with	4.51 (1.42)	0.940
			Moving toward	4.68 (1.07)	0.999
			Moving against	4.41 (1.18)	0.754
			Moving away	3.96 (0.85)	0.030 **
			Zero measurement	5.60 (1.12)	0.026 **
(b) Image (product and service quality)	Moving away	4.32 (0.87)	Moving with	4.96 (1.03)	0.119
			Moving toward	5.05 (0.78)	0.017 **
			Moving against	4.84 (0.96)	0.220
			Moving away	4.79 (1.17)	0.323
			Zero measurement	5.31 (1.02)	< 0.001 ***

Table 6.5 | *(Continued)*

Dependent	**Condition**	**Mean *(SD)***	**Condition**	**Mean *(SD)***	***p***
c) Image (environment)	Zero measurement	4.66 (0.87)	Moving with	3.83 (1.20)	0.047 **
			Moving toward	4.24 (1.03)	0.107
			Moving against	3.76 (1.34)	0.009 ***
			Moving away	3.44 (1.08)	< 0.001 ***
			Attack	3.90 (1.01)	0.049 **
	Moving away	3.44 (1.08)	Moving with	3.38 (1.20)	0.174
			Moving toward	4.24 (1.02)	0.024 **
			Moving against	3.76 (1.34)	0.215
			Attack	3.90 (1.01)	0.073 *
			Zero measurement	4.66 (0.87)	< 0.001 ***
(d) Purchase intention	Zero measurement	4.94 (1.97)	Moving with	3.88 (2.22)	0.266
			Moving toward	3.78 (1.90)	0.100
			Moving against	3.20 (1.80)	0.002 ***
			Moving away	3.24 (1.75)	0.002 ***
			Attack	3.17 (1.86)	0.002 ***
	Attack	3.17 (1.86)	Moving with	3.88 (2.22)	0.713
			Moving toward	3.78 (1.90)	0.747
			Moving against	3.20 (1.80)	1.000
			Moving away	3.24 (1.75)	1.000
			Zero measurement	4.94 (1.97))	0.002 ***

N=201. $^{*}p < 0.10$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$

Looking at the effects of the online protest campaign on the participants' purchase intention, we find support for Hypothesis H5. The ANOVA shows a significant main effect of the experimental condition ($F(5,193) = 3.35, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$), showing that respondents exposed to the protest were less likely to purchase the product than the control group. A Tukey post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between the zero measurement and the moving away strategy, the moving against strategy, and the attack only condition (see Table 6.5d). This is wholly in line with Hypothesis H5a: If the firm moves with the protest by complying with its request, or moves toward it by entering into a discussion, the negative effect of the protest on consumers' purchase intentions is attenuated. In this case, we also found that the control variable and the trait action willingness have an effect on the purchase intention ($F(1,193) = 4.57$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$). Those participants who had joined some kind of action during the last year had a lower purchase intention ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.79$) than those without the trait action willingness ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 2.02$).

6.5 | **Discussion**

In this chapter, we examined the effects of online protests on stakeholder evaluations of the targeted firm. Instead of assessing the impact of protests on a single performance indicator, we studied the impact of protests on both shareholders and consumers. Additionally, we explored the boundary conditions of protest characteristics and assess the mitigating effects of firm responses on online protest. Empirically, we focused on online protests targeted at firms that use digital media, such as social media, and we propose that such protests will negatively influence shareholders' and consumers' evaluation of the firm. We found that online protests do affect these primary stakeholders. Firms, however, are not powerless when attacked. This study makes a further contribution by assessing the effects of the firm's response to the protest and whether certain response strategies mitigate or exacerbate the effects of an online protest.

6.5.1 | **Summary of Findings and Scientific Implications**

The results of this study show that low-effort participation in protests, called 'slacktivism' (Kristofferson et al., 2014), can also function as a meaningful form of protest support. Even though individual contributions do not require a significant effort or cost, their combined clicks add to the critical mass of the protest, attracting the attention of the targeted firm and the press. Owing to the nature of online campaigns, the sum of many small contributions by online slacktivists, which are visible to all, may be more than the huge efforts of a relatively small core group of serious activists. In this study of the effect of online protests on firms' financial value, we find that shareholders' expectations are affected by protests that cause the share price of targeted firms to drop (H1). This finding is in line with earlier event studies on the effect of offline protests on financial value (Bartley & Child, 2011; King & Soule, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012) and deviates from Koku's (2012) tentative conclusion that online protests may not affect firm value. Again, all observations with confounding activity that could also have affected the share price were removed from the sample. The time it takes for online protests to influence firm value in this way is an important factor that differs from offline protests. Whereas offline protests are usually announced before the actual event takes place (King & Soule, 2007) to allow supporters to join in, online protests may take firms and markets by complete surprise. This finding stresses the importance of firms being vigilant and monitoring online consumer discussions (Castelló et al., 2013; Palazzo & Basu, 2007; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan et al., 2013).

The event study shows that protests have no effect on firm value prior to the date the online protest is launched. Shareholders may be unaware of a protest before the launch as the related information needs some time to diffuse throughout the online community. Added to this, the full reach of a protest and its ability to mobilize a large number of supporters are often far from clear at the outset. Our findings suggest that there is either a delay before shareholders become aware of a protest, or that they postpone their reaction to see if the protest gathers support.

The regression analysis shows that the size of the protest participation influences the financial value of the targeted firm negatively (H2). As a contribution to earlier mixed findings regarding the effect of protest size on the firm value (Earl, Martin, McCarthy, & Soule, 2004; Earl et al., 2003; King & Soule, 2007; Luders, 2006), we show that consumer participation in an online protest is an antecedent of the effect that a protest has on firms' financial value. Furthermore, we explore Eesley and Lenox's (2006) boundary conditions (H3a-c) to explain participation in online protests. Protest legitimacy and request legitimacy do increase the size of a protest in terms of participation. Despite optimistic claims about the democratizing effect of digital media (Anduiza et al., 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), our findings show that NGOs and companies are still better able to mobilize protest participants than individuals are. Our findings regarding the urgency of the request that the protest organizers make, are in line with those of Eesley and Lenox (2006) regarding the offline situation, but does not support our Hypothesis H3c, as the request urgency did not lead to an increase in the protest participation in our study. This means that when activist groups specify a deadline for the targeted firm in their protest demands, it does not increase potential participants' motivation to join the protest.

In the experimental study, in support of our fourth hypothesis (H4), we find that how consumers perceive a firm is indeed negatively affected by exposure to an online protest campaign. Based on consumer evaluations in response to four firm response strategies, we find support for Hypothesis H4a, which posits that the closer the firm moves toward the wishes of the protest, the weaker this negative effect is. However, none of the firm response strategies can prevent damage to the firm's reputation; even if the firm were to comply fully with the request of the activist group, consumers evaluations of the firm would still be damaged. This finding seems to modify the earlier confirmation that a pro-social communication strategy following a protest might prevent, or mitigate, its negative effects (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Conlon & Murray, 1996; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009). While a firm's reputation is damaged no matter what response strategy it adopts, our results show that a firm can exacerbate the problem if it adopts a 'moving away' strategy and explicitly refuses to comment on the protest. In this case, the consumers' attitude towards the firm becomes even more negative. In addition, we have found that the 'moving away' strategy has a negative effect on consumers' evaluations of the quality of the firm's products, and that all response strategies, other than complying, carry a negative effect in terms of the firm's environmental image.

We also find that, in line with H5, consumers' actions are affected. After being exposed to an online protest, consumers are less likely to buy the relevant firm's products. This result follows Cheung and Thadani's (2012) call for research on the link between the electronic sharing of information about brands and purchase intention. Furthermore, we find that the two response strategies through which the firm moves closer to the wishes of the protest, thus moving with, i.e. complying with the request, and moving toward, i.e. engaging in a dialogue with the community, do mitigate the damage to sales that the protest inflicts (supporting H5a). When a company does not respond, or reacts with a counter attack strategy, consumers' intention to purchase that firm's products remains damaged (H5a). In this instance, this effect is even stronger for consumers with a history of participating in similar protests. This finding confirms that a pro-social communication strategy following a protest can prevent or mitigate the protest's negative effects by signaling a sense of responsibility for consumers (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Conlon & Murray, 1996).

Our findings contribute to CSR literature in three ways: First, our finding combines earlier studies on the effect of protests on shareholder evaluation (Bartley & Child, 2011; King, 2008a; King & Soule, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012) and consumer evaluation (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Conlon & Murray, 1996; Huang, 2006; Lee & Song, 2010; Xia, 2013). This combination of insider and outsider CSR stakeholders' evaluation is important, as shareholders tend to pressure firms on the basis of short-term instrumental motives and consumers may find ethical motives more important (Aguilera et al., 2007; Mackey et al., 2007). This means firms face the dilemma of needing to balance their response to their stakeholders with potentially conflicting interests. Second, we contribute to the Multilevel Theory of Social Change (Aguilera et al., 2007) by studying the dynamics between insider (managers) and outsider (consumers) stakeholders, and the inter-level relation between activist groups and consumers. Last, we contribute to the ongoing discussion on the use of digital media, such as social media, to engage consumers in CSR from the perspective of both activist groups and firms (Castelló et al., 2013; Eberle et al., 2013; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013; Palazzo & Basu, 2007; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan et al., 2013).

6.5.2 | **Practical implications**

Our research provides activist groups with insights into how to improve their chances of influencing firm behavior. Furthermore, we have provided commercial managers with useful results that can help them optimize their response when they become the focus of an online protest. New strategies and tactics for conflicts played out on the online arena are continually being discovered and improved (Whelan et al., 2013). We specifically contribute four practically applicable findings for protest organizers. In the first place, we confirm that online protests can be worthwhile, as they can affect firms by changing the mindset of consumers to view the firm in a less positive light, by influencing their purchase intentions, and also by decreasing the share value of the firm. In the second place, our findings suggest that protest groups do well to provide firms with an exit strategy by helping them enter into a discussion to find a mutually agreeable solution. Our experimental findings suggest that a win-win solution is possible, while our event study findings suggest that activists have a window of opportunity in which the firm is acutely aware of the market's perception of its future risk. In the third place, we suggest that protest organizers make good use of social media channels to mobilize the masses, as this gives them power in the new online situation. Lastly, the knowledge that the targeted firms are less able to predict online protests can add an element of surprise to protests, which is good news for those wishing to take punitive action against a firm's perceived socially irresponsible behavior.

For CSR and corporate communication managers faced with protests from external stakeholders, our first finding is that they should prevent protests whenever possible. We have shown that online protests affect a firm negatively in a number of ways, in some ways regardless of the firm's reaction. The idea that all news is good news, suggesting that protests can actually be good for a firm as they draw attention to it and provide an opportunity for a firm to highlight its good performance, may be incorrect, as our findings do not support this stance (Eberle et al., 2013). In our experimental study, we show that even a well-known firm suffers if they are a target of an online protest campaign. Our results suggest that doing nothing, while hoping the storm will pass, is the worst possible response, as it exacerbates the damage done by the online protest.

Our second contribution for managers is that they should invest in the development of a proactive online stakeholder strategy: Not one simply based on webcare, which answers the complaints of disgruntled individual consumers, but one which helps managers enter into a discussion with consumer communities and concerned groups, and take their wishes seriously. This may mean changes throughout the firm so that it can prepare and adapt business practices when necessary. A third recommendation for managers is that they should undergo training in response strategies. As online protests are highly likely to take the firm by surprise, there is no time for lengthy discussions or response optimization at the onset of a crisis. Managers at all levels of the organization need to know in advance how to approach the online discussion with protesters.

6.5.3 | **Limitations and Future Research**

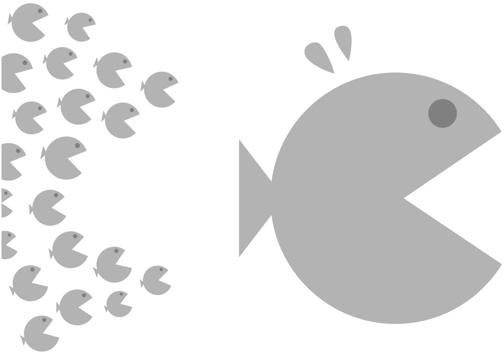
In addition to our findings, we highlight a number of our study's limitations, which also present opportunities for future research. The rapidly growing number and increasing sophistication of online protests make this field a challenge to study. The trial-and-error processes being played out at the grassroots level are ahead of the scientific community at the moment. In the coming months and years, a certain degree of maturity and best practices should emerge, and those planning protest campaigns, as well as those confronted by them, will increasingly expect academics to provide guidance on what works best.

The idea that there need not be a link between the effort a protest's supporters make and the protest's effect on the target firm is a yet to be tested change that the online environment has brought about. Kristofferson, White, and Peloza (Kristofferson et al., 2014) discuss the difference between token support and meaningful support, whereby meaningful support is postulated as requiring a significant effort from a participant and as a prerequisite for bringing about change. However, we argue that this no longer holds in respect of online channels. Merely retweeting a message, or watching a short protest video, thus adding to the views counter, adds to a protest's critical mass and helps attract the target firm and the press's attention. The media dynamics in the online setting, such as how the protest frames its demand, or the relationship between the perceived validity of the protest's claim and the critical mass needed to force a firm to react, or to change its behavior, are related to this viewpoint.

In this study, the conceptualization of firm responses to protests follows Oliver's (1991) pivotal typology of strategic responses. There are, however, many other dimensions of firm responses that are promising, such as whether firms communicate their response to individual consumers, for example, via directed tweets from a webcare team (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012), or to the public at large via, for example, press releases. Another potential avenue regarding response strategies is how firms use impression management techniques to protect their reputation (McDonnell & King, 2013).

Another limitation is the difficulty of accessing data on the impact that firms have experienced and on the strategies they have employed. We have therefore chosen to assess a wide range of cases, whereby we were unable to delve into each case in great depth. In-depth case studies, such as process studies, would complement our quantitative study. In this way, future research may contribute to the call for more process research on the outcome of social movements (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Wijk et al., 2013). Another limitation is the inability of our approach to capture the full richness of online protest. Although our study captures more of the real world complexity of protest targeted at firms and subsequent firm reactions, it does not fully assess the multiple rounds of action and reaction that often occur when a serious protest is initiated (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010; Zietsma & Winn, 2008). As described in the example in the introduction, the campaign by Greenpeace aimed at preventing two energy firms from building coal-fired power stations in the Netherlands exhibits a number of interaction rounds, as well as a combination of offline and online channels. Future research is therefore needed to better understand the full intricacies of online protests and their effects on firms. In addition, our study assessed the short-term effects of online protests. Future research may focus on the long term effects, for example, the lasting stigmas, of the stakeholder evolution.

Last, how activist groups' activities and stakeholder feedback actually cause corporate decision makers to change their policy or practices remains unclear. First, the availability of online sources and data science tools may help social movement scholars scale-up their impact assessment and better track the impact of protest over time and on multiple levels, from short-term stakeholder perceptions to the institutionalization of new norms in an industry's routines. Second, we urge researchers to study how corporate decision makers are influenced on an individual level, and how changes in their perception result in a response to protest. As suggested by King (2008b), research could track the influence of protest over different stages of policy development: From putting an issue on the corporate agenda to changing the implementation of CSR strategies. This would contribute to the call for more research on the effect of protest on corporate policy-making (Davis, 2005; King, 2008b; Vasi & King, 2012).



Chapter 7

General Discussion

I opened this dissertation with the arcticready.com case as a recent example of an online protest that targets a firm. The activist groups Greenpeace and Yes Men! launched a fake website in 2012 that copied Shell's corporate 'Let's Go!' campaign to hamper the oil giant's plans for oil exploration in the Arctic sea. This protest website encouraged consumers to create and share ironic campaign slogans within the original advertisement's design. In a brief time period, this campaign attracted more than two million views and published over 6,000 fake Shell advertisements on the internet. The arcticready.com case is no exception. Currently, an increasing number of firms face pressure from protest campaigns organized on digital media channels, such as Twitter or Facebook. Beside increasing the risks to the targeted firms' reputation, online protest enables activist groups, firms, and policymakers to engage millions of consumers in dialogues about what is considered socially acceptable in markets. Research on the organization and outcomes of online protests targeting firms could increase our understanding of this new online dialogue and help make it more effective, open, and constructive.

Organizational scholars have so far paid limited attention to the use of digital media to organize protest campaigns targeted at firms (Bennett, 2003a; Carty, 2002; Castelló et al., 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Martin & Kracher, 2008), despite its practical relevance and timeliness. Hence, in this dissertation I present research on the organization and outcomes of online protests targeting firms. The main research question is *"How does online protest that requires little participation effort pressure* *firms into socially responsible behavior?”* Or put simply: When does slacktivism targeting firms really matter? To answer this question, this dissertation studies how the use of digital media affects activist groups’ strategic orientation, tactical mix, campaign design and mobilization, as well as, ultimately, their impact on targeted firms.

In this chapter, I summarize the main findings and answer the research questions, discuss academic contributions from my studies, and describe the practical implications for activist groups, firms, and policymakers. I also reflect on a number of general limitations of the research described in this dissertation and provide directions for future research. Last, I conclude this dissertation with a reflection on the main research question.

7.1 | **Research Findings and Theoretical Contributions**

Following the structure of my dissertation, I first present the findings of the systematic literature review on the role of digital media in protest mobilization. This review guided my decision regarding the focus of the empirical chapters on strategic orientation, tactical mix, and campaign design and mobilization. Last, I present the findings and scientific implications of the protest outcomes study.

7.1.1 | **Systematic Literature Review: The Role of Digital Media in Protest Organization**

The research question in the second chapter of this dissertation was “*Why does the use of digital media enable or constrain the mobilization of participation in protests?* This question was addressed in chapter two by systematically reviewing the literature on the effects of digital media on protest mobilization. This review grounded my decision to study the effect of digital media on activist groups’ strategic orientation, their tactical mix, and campaign design in the empirical studies.

There are two important findings on the organizational level. First, the literature review shows that the effect of digital media may go beyond the digitalization of protest tactics. The use of digital media drive the emergence of activist groups that are resource-poor, flexible, informal, and entrepreneurial in their organizational structure and culture. These ‘dotcauses’ may be constrained by a lack of offline visibility and protest experience, which may decrease their salience as stakeholders (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Clark & Themudo, 2006). Dotcauses rely more on online interpersonal networks as mobilizing structures to engage large groups of sympathizers. These social networks play a role on the local (e.g. between friends) and the global level (e.g. between press offices and consumers). Second, I find support in the literature for the many-to-many interactivity and the public nature of digital media enabling transnational collective action networks in which activist groups share a collective identity. In this way, local activist groups may elevate their local cause to a global level. The swift formation of multiple collective identities for corporate issues may increase the dynamics and complexity of a firm's stakeholder environment, increasing the number and heterogeneity of the stakeholder demands (Castelló et al., 2013; Day, 2011).

I highlight three findings on the tactical level. First, digital media may provide activist groups with alternative ways to attract the general public's attention. The literature suggests that when an online campaign attracts a vast amount of attention on social media, the mass media are likely to report this. However, this cross-over effect may be exaggerated: Traditional media remain a highly influential mass communication channel, with their editors and journalists acting as important gatekeepers. Second, digital media may shift the relationship between activist groups and (potential) participants. Many activist groups offer low-cost protest opportunities that require just a click, or the sending of a pre-prepared e-mail message. Merely watching a protest video is a form of protest membership, as the number of views are seen as a measure of grassroots support. Last, a tactical limitation of digital channels for mass participation is that they do not afford internet-based activist groups the possibility of a high degree of interactivity with their participants, because large-scale interactivity would increase the need for resources and resource control. High levels of interactivity may make activists leaders and their followers achieving consensus on the tactical choices more difficult.

The review shows how digital media affect the way potential participants engage with protest campaigns. First, the important question of whether digital media are capable of replacing face-to-face contact in terms of protest diffusion still remains unanswered. When the bandwidth available for transmitting social cues increases (e.g. from text to video), digital media may become a more effective channel to share a cause's injustice with protest participants. However, other researchers find that diminished social cues may boost shared grievances. Second, public and interactive digital media may help like-minded people quickly find one another and create large collective identities. Research suggests that sympathizers often connect and maintain multiple protest identities spanning multiple activist groups. Multiple identities maintained via digital media may be weak, leading to slacktivism, which means that the participants are only willing to provide token support (e.g. signing petition) for a protest, but not more substantial support (e.g. donations) when asked. Last, digital media may help activist groups instantly report the protest size and success stories to potential participants, which may provide them with social proof of how much effect a protest can have on firms.

7.1.2 | **The Organization of Online Protests Targeting Firms**

Strategic Orientation. The central research question in the third chapter of this dissertation was *"How do activist groups combine online protests targeting firms and entrepreneurship to pursue sustainable change?"* This question was addressed by means of a case study of eight online dotcauses. Social movement and social entrepreneurship literatures appear to have developed quite independently, but may provide each other with valuable insights (Alvord et al., 2004; Mair & Martí, 2006; Simms & Robinson, 2008). Hence, I studied the strategic orientation, activities, and organizational dilemmas from both a social movement and social entrepreneurship perspective.

First, I find that most cases do combine social entrepreneurship activities with activism activities, leading to entrepreneurial activists that recognize and exploit political opportunities, need to take risks, improvise with resources, and maintain highly flexible strategies. Specifically, I recognize two hybrid forms that add to previous typologies of social entrepreneurs and activists (Martin & Osberg, 2007; Zahra et al., 2009): 1) online entrepreneurs who use activism to change markets, for example, campaigning for micro-credits for marginal groups, and 2) online activist groups that adopt entrepreneurial leadership, for example, recognizing and exploiting opportunities, risk taking, and creativity in their resources use.

Second, I find that dotcauses struggle with the combination of a market and a social logic: Are they commercial entrepreneurs who need to collaborate with incumbent firms, or are they ideologically driven activists who oppose the same incumbent firms? Lacking any formal funding, dotcauses may rely on private contributions from participants and firms, for example, by promoting firms' products and services, or accepting corporate funding for their activities. However, are these firms intrinsically motivated by the dotcauses' cause, or extrinsically motivated by the marketing and legitimacy benefits their identification with the activist group may provide? These ethical considerations urge dotcauses to think about their desired impact: Do they strive to achieve social change no matter what motivations their partners may have, or do they remain ideologically motivated to maintain consistent means to achieve their ends? With my analysis, I add to the discussion on activist groups' legitimacy when they collaborate with incumbent firms (Van Wijk et al., 2013).

Tactical Mix. The question addressed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation was: *"How do activist groups combine frontstage and backstage tactics over time to promote socially responsible investment policy?"* This question was addressed by presenting an in-depth case study on how an online protest campaign is embedded in an activist group's broader influence strategy. I followed a large, reformative activist group that organized a protest campaign to persuade nine Dutch retail banks to adopt anti-landgrabbing measures in their investment policy over a time period of three months in 2012. This chapter highlights the interplay between this public social media campaign – the front stage – and private lobby efforts – the backstage. Based on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis of public behavior, I developed six propositions on how the frontstage and backstage interaction between activists and firms influenced firm responses. The distinction between public and private tactics contributes to previous typologies of influence tactics (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010).

The case study shows that the interaction of public campaigning and private lobby efforts offer activist groups both opportunities and risks. First, a future public campaign poses a threat to a firm of a potentially discrediting performance in front of a broad audience. Hence, the threat of a digital campaign pressures firms to collaborate with activist groups and accept their demands to prevent the campaign from being carried out. Second, digital media allow consumers to take an active part in the frontstage campaign, to personalize the campaign frame, and vent their grievance in public (e.g. on social media) and in private (e.g. e-mail). The case shows that consumers' encounters with firms on the land-grab issue assisted the activists in their frontstage discussions with firms. There is, however, an important risk for activist groups in threatening to carry out a public campaign. In my case study, I find only limited attention on social media to the protest campaign due to competing frames, which meant that the firms' images were not widely discredited, thus potentially emboldening them. Hence, I propose that public campaigns that fail to attract a broad audience may even damage the effectiveness of lobbying efforts. Last, I find that public campaigning and private lobbying may conflict and subsequently decrease the activist group's effectiveness. The informal and cooperative tone of backstage lobbying efforts may limit and even conflict with the formal and adversarial tone used on the frontstage of digital media. As a consequence, large activist groups face competing tactics within one influence strategy, resulting in what I term 'tactical complexity.' In other words, the combination of private and public tactics may elicit framing contests within the activist groups. The issue of tactical complexity contributes to organizational research on activist groups' tactics to influence firm behavior (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; McDonnell & King, 2013; Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010; Van Wijk et al., 2013).

Campaign Design and Mobilization. The research question in the fifth chapter of this dissertation was: *“What is the effect of campaign design on slacktivists’ motivation to participate in low-effort consumer protest?”* This question was addressed by presenting an experimental study that examined how an online protest targeted at a firm influences consumers willing to make an effort for a protest (‘activists’) and those less willing (‘slacktivists’) to do so. My study contributes to the understanding of this increasing number of low-effort protest forms. This study combines the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) from cognitive psychology and protest recruitment theories from social movement literature to hypothesize that activists elaborate the content-related arguments in a campaign more, whereas slacktivists become engaged through peripheral design cues (interactivity, vividness, and publicness). The hypotheses are tested in an online experiment, in which the design cues of a low-effort protest website were presented to 333 respondents after which their mobilization process was compared. I classified activists and slacktivists based on their perceived effort and on their actual effort (time taken) during the experiment instead of a priori selection. This approach helps future research operationalize slacktivist behavior.

My first finding is that slacktivists may be more receptive to the peripheral design cues of a protest website than activists are. First, the interactivity of the protest website does not significantly affect the campaign engagement of either activists or slacktivists. Second, the vividness of a protest website influence the campaign engagement of slacktivists positively, but not that of activists. Third, I find that the perceived publicness of the protest website influences the campaign engagement of slacktivists negatively, but not that of activists. This may provide evidence that impression management is not a central mechanism to drive slacktivists to become engaged. Slacktivists may be more aware of being surveilled by others and consider this an extra effort, resulting in their lower campaign engagement. In this way, I contribute to recent calls for research on the influence of digital communication characteristics on protest mobilization (González-Bailón et al., 2011; Vaast, Safadi, Negoita, & Lapointe, 2014).

My second finding is that activists seem to pay more attention to arguments presented on the protest website and based on injustice and collective efficacy significantly more. Added to this, their identification with the other participating protesters influences activists more strongly than slacktivists are. However, their identification with the victims of the firm’s egregious behavior influences slacktivists’ decision to participate to a larger degree than that of activists. My study provides a process perspective on protest mobilization, taking all the key motivations of protest participation into account. According to Klandermans (2004), previous research on social movement membership has mainly concentrated on one or two protest motivations and, hence, lacks a balance between the various motivations. Taking a range of motivations into account, I was able to study the motivational profiles of protesters. My experiment contributes to the understanding of slacktivism behavior in protest campaigns (Fatkin & Lansdown, 2015; Kristofferson et al., 2014).

7.1.3 | **The Outcomes of Online Protests Targeting Firms**

The last two questions of this dissertation were addressed in chapter 6. The first research question on protest outcomes relates to the impact on the targeted firm's financial and brand value: *"To what extent do online protests decrease shareholders' and consumers' evaluation of the targeted firm?"* First, I conducted a financial event study of online petitions to assess the impact on the stock price of the targeted firms. An additional regression analysis helped us take protest characteristics, based on Eesley and Lenox's (2006) framework, into account. Second, a consumer experiment simulated an online protest by presenting the respondents with vignettes, after which a survey assessed their impact on brand image and purchase intention. Firms, however, may mitigate damaging effects by responding to an online protest. Hence, the second research question on protest outcome is related to the targeted firm's response: *"What effect does the targeted firm's response have on the damage that online protests can do to consumers' evaluation of the firm?"* I tested the mitigating effect of four types of organizational responses in the same consumer experiment, ranging from countering the protest to fully complying to the protest demands.

In the financial event analysis, I find that online protests causing the stock price of targeted firms to drop affect shareholders' expectations. This finding supports my claim that, similar to the effect of offline protests on financial value, the sum of many small public contributions by online slacktivists can affect a firm financially (Bartley & Child, 2011; King & Soule, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012). In line with Vasi and King (2012), I show that primary stakeholders have an important role in protest outcomes. A complementary regression analysis reveals that protest size influences the financial value of the targeted firm negatively, which underlines the logic of numbers: The more participants, the greater the effect (della Porta & Diani, 1999; Luders, 2006; Tilly, 2004). Additionally, the legitimacy of the activist group and what it demands from the firm increases participation in a protest. Last, whereas offline protests are usually announced before the actual event takes place (King & Soule, 2007), which allows supporters to join in, I find that online protests may take firms (and markets) by complete surprise.

In the consumer experiment, I find that although firm response strategies cannot fully prevent damage to the firm's brand image, a public response that moves towards the protesters' demands can reduce the damage done. On the other hand, a public response that ignores the protest actually exacerbates the damaging effects. I contribute to the call for more research on the reputational impact of protest targeting firms (McDonnell & King, 2013). Similarly, the analysis shows that an online protest has a negative effect on consumers' intention to purchase the targeted firms' products. These findings contribute to Cheung and Thadani's (2012) call for research on the link between the electronic sharing of information about brands and purchase intention. Furthermore, the analysis shows that response strategies that move closer towards the protesters' demands (complying and engaging in a dialogue with the community) can mitigate the damage done by a protest. My findings add to the discussion on the response strategies of firms (Conlon & Murray, 1996; Eesley & Lenox, 2006; Xia, 2013; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009). My findings confirm that a pro-social communication strategy following a protest can reduce, or mitigate, the protest's negative effects by signaling a sense of responsibility for consumers. Hence, my findings support Castello, Etter, and Nielsen's (2015) networked strategy concept that urges firms to interact pro-actively with stakeholders on social media.

7.2 | **Practical Implications**

> *"Our industry should be less aloof, more assertive. We have to make sure that our voice is heard by members of government, by civil society and the general public. I'm well aware that the industry's credibility is an issue. Stereotypes that fail to see the benefits our industry brings to the world are short-sighted. But we must also take a critical look at ourselves."*
>
> Ben van Beurden, CEO Shell Corporation, February 12, 2015 in The Guardian, accessed on August 24, 2015.

In this dissertation, I consider online protests as a new form of societal dialogue between firms, their direct stakeholders, and activist groups. Despite critical opinion-makers who claim that low-effort protest is powerless (Morozov, 2009), the process and the impact studies in this dissertation demonstrate that (the threat of) online protest does affect firm performance and behavior. Following the logic of numbers, I demonstrate that the higher the number of participants, the stronger the effect on firms' financial and brand performance. As a consequence, online protest may pressure firms, such as Shell in the quote above[18], to engage pro-actively with online stakeholders to ascertain that their reputation is maintained or improved in public debates. My results are not only important to activist groups and firms, but may also inform policymakers who regulate markets. Below I describe the practical implications for each group.

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[18] See http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/feb/12/shell-boss-calls-fossil-fuel-critics-naive-but-admits-big-oil-has-credibility-issue, accessed on October 1, 2015

7.2.1 | **Activist Groups**

My findings inform activist groups that online protest may indeed hurt targeted firms, which can be an effective tactic to influence firm behavior. I present practical implications for digital campaigners, lobbyists or fundraisers, on three levels: 1) the strategic orientation, 2) the tactical mix, and 3) the campaign design and mobilization. On the strategic-orientation level, traditional activist groups can learn from dotcauses to organize large-scale protest while keeping costs for the organizers and participants low, and to connect their campaigns to online global activist networks. Traditional activist groups may need to employ an entrepreneurial leadership style to adapt to the informal, flexible, and opportunistic forms of online activism. The strategic orientation study shows that dotcauses often rely on financial contributions from firms. While both activist groups and firms can benefit from collaboration, dotcause campaigners need to be careful when selecting their partners to ensure that the collaboration does not harm their legitimacy. Nevertheless, collaboration with firms may temper activist groups' frames and, in extreme cases, lead to cooptation (Van Wijk et al., 2013).

On the tactical level, the process study shows the importance of activist groups carefully embedding their online protest campaigns in a broader tactical mix that includes private and public tactics. First, lobbyists may use the projection of a future online campaign as a threat, which increases the pressure on firms to cooperate with private lobbying efforts. Thus, together, the mix may result in firms complying with activist groups' demand. Second, my process study highlights the dilemma of combining a reformative and radical frame that large activist groups with lobbyists and campaigners may experience. Third, I find support for the logic of numbers: The size of online protests increase the effect on the targeted firms' financial performance. Hence, protest organizers may want to attract slacktivists to amplify their protest campaign. Last, my in-depth process study emphasizes the strategic sequencing of influence tactics rather than the current static frameworks.

On the campaign level, this dissertation offers insight to campaigners to improve the design of their online campaigns. My results show that protest organizers need to develop different designs for activists and slacktivists. Campaigners should pay more attention to the vividness and anonymity of their campaigns if they want to attract slacktivists. However, campaigners may need to balance the anonymity and legitimacy of the participants, as firms or governments may find it hard to accept anonymous participants as legitimate signers of petitions (Karpf, 2010; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Another implication related to attracting more participation is that campaigners may emphasize the cultural cues, such as symbols, images, and stories, to instigate identification with the protesters, and provide vivid information about the group that the firm's purported behavior disadvantages.

7.2.2 | **Firms**

The impact assessment study shows that an online protest may take firms by surprise. Hence, I assume that online protests may not always appear on firms' stakeholder radar, or do appear, but are considered harmless if the protests are small and organized by individual consumers. However, I find that these online protests may have a serious impact on firms' reputation, revenue, and financial performance. Hence, I urge managers, corporation communication, and CSR professionals at firms to better monitor digital media to detect online protest targeting their brands. Additionally, my results are of interest to public affairs consultants who want to influence public opinion on behalf of their corporate clients (Walker, 2014). My results provide firms and consultants with guidelines on how to manage social issues on the internet: 1) Reactive response strategies when targeted by online protests, 2) proactive responses that go beyond web care, and 3) organize online protests as a counter-mobilization tactic and start advocacy campaigns.

First, firms need to develop appropriate response strategies to limit the reputational or financial damage that an online protest could possibly inflict. The impact assessment study first shows that firms should respond, as ignoring the protest is most likely to result in damage. The best response strategy, in terms of reputation and revenue, is to publicly state that the firm takes the protest seriously and wants to reach out to the activist group to discuss the issue. Although firms may refrain from a stakeholder dialogue when the costs of complying with the activist group's demands are high, I argue that the reputational and financial damage poses a larger risk. Last, an approaching response ('moving towards' in the impact assessment) strategy may be more effective with reformative activist groups, as they might be more interested in a constructive dialogue than radical activist groups.

Second, the best strategy is to prevent online protest from emerging, as reactive response strategies focus mostly on damage limitation. Firms may proactively reach out to activist groups that are about to raise an issue. This approach requires firms to build up vigilant capabilities that go beyond web care. The process study confirms the value of engaging with activist groups to influence strategies in an early stage. Firms that discuss issues with activist groups privately can prevent, or influence, the framing and public reception of an online protest campaign. However, this strategy may only be effective when collaborating with a single activist group, as multiple activist groups may combine competing frames more easily.

Last, online protests targeting firms are not only sources of risks. The same online campaigns offer firms opportunities to connect to stakeholders and start constructive online dialogues. Participants in a protest are interested in the firm and committed enough to take some form of action. Firms may see such consumers as potential advocates, if they can show that the firm takes concrete steps to improve the contested situation. Such commitment, albeit initially negatively framed, can be seen as an opportunity for strengthening relationships with consumers, and as being preferable to consumers showing no interest at all. This dissertation's insights may help firms develop their own protest and advocacy campaigns. First, firms can also use digital media to mobilize consumers against their competitors. In 2011, the Dutch retail bank SNS organized an online campaign, www.ikwilnurenteopmijnbetaalrekening.nl,[19] to protest against other banks that did not pay customers interest on the money on their debit account as an additional service beside paying interest on their saving accounts. The purpose of this protest was to promote their extra service to consumers. However, the question is how effective this campaign was in persuading consumers to switch their bank account to SNS. Second, the insights may also help firms publicly advocate an issue related to their corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy. For example, the Dutch coffee producer Douwe Egberts and the NGO Het Oranjefonds mobilize consumers to organize a yearly coffee event in their neighborhood.[20] In this way, Douwe Egberts stimulates social cohesion in neighborhoods by promoting their CSR strategy to bring (coffee drinking) people together and thereby reduce social isolation.

7.2.3 | **Policy makers**

Policymakers institutionalize new norms in markets by developing and implementing policy and regulation. Hence, policymakers oversee behavior in markets, assess spillover effects, and intervene to mitigate the negative effects of market failures. My findings may inform market regulation in two ways: 1) Policymakers as targets of online protest, and 2) changing the dynamics of policy making.

Although this dissertation focuses on the effect of protests on firms, the results may also inform policymakers as potential targets of online protest. Activist groups and firms may publicly pressurize policymakers in their role as market referees. A recent example is the international taxi network company Uber of San Francisco, California. Uber offers a mobile application that allows consumers to submit a trip request that is matched to a taxi driver searching for a trip request. The novelty in Uber's business model is that unregistered drivers can work for Uber and that information and communication technologies replace the conventional taxi organization. Hence, both Uber and governments face severe protest from incumbent taxi companies that feel threatened, requiring policymakers to stop Uber's activities. In response, Uber started a delivery company that distributed free ice creams in the city of Portland (Oregon) in 2015. The taxi company used the data from consumers requesting ice cream with their Uber application to display consumers' need for their services and projected these consumers as protesters to pressure Portland's government to accept Uber as

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[19] The protest website is unfortunately offline.

[20] See www.burendag.nl, accessed on October 1, 2015

a legitimate taxi company[21]. Activist groups may increasingly deploy a dual strategy, organizing separate campaigns that simultaneously target firms and policymakers. Similar to firms, policymakers need to build capabilities to appropriately respond to protest, and guarantee that the dialogue about changing norms in markets is well-balanced and engage many consumers.

Second, my findings show that digital media may change the dynamics of protests in markets. Policy makers need to identify and engage with online stakeholders such as dotcauses, and need to decide whether these new stakeholder groups are salient enough to engage them in the policy process. Second, the speed and scale of online protest may require policymakers to remain vigilant and respond quickly to protest campaigns when needed. Despite this vigilance, policymakers should guard against long-term, well-thought through policy measures being hijacked by issues that grab the public's attention. Hence, governments may want to prevent the outcomes of a deliberative policy debate becoming sidelined due to online protest.

7.3 | **Limitations and Future Research**

I aimed for a well-balanced research design by adopting a mixed-method approach in this dissertation. However, I recognize several limitations in the assumptions, theories, and methodological approaches. I address several limitations in this section, discuss their theoretical relevance, and propose future research. These future research directions do not only result from the limitations of this dissertation, but are also inspired by technological and societal trends, and discussions with scientists and practitioners. For example, the advent of computational social science, which is a combination of machine learning and social science, allows organizational researchers to analyze the vast amount of data that digital sources makes available (George et al., 2014). A spin-off project of this dissertation, for example, applies machine learning to identify participants' motivations in the social media messages they send during an advocacy campaign (Nguyen, van den Broek, Hauff, Hiemstra, & Ehrenhard, 2015). In the following sections, I identify the theoretical gaps that were not addressed, provide examples of their relevance, describe future research directions, and state their projected theoretical contributions.

7.3.1 | **Tracking Activist-Firm Interactions Online**

Scholars point at the need for more research on the interactions between activist groups and firms during the different stages of the institutional change process (De Bakker, 2012; De Bakker & Den Hond, 2008; Zietsma & Winn, 2008). This dissertation focuses on a single protest cycle rather than a sequence of multiple protest campaigns. As shown in the landgrabbing case, online protests are often part of a larger influence project that contains multiple lobbying efforts, research, and public campaigns from multiple activist groups.

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[21] See Edward Walker's opinion article on the Uberization of activism in the New York Times, retrieved on August 20, 2015 from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/07/opinion/the-uber-ization-of-activism.html

Activist groups may compete or work together to ultimately change norms in institutional fields instead of motivating individual firms to change. As in the example of the SNS bank and taxi company Uber, firms may also aim for institutional change and challenge the incumbent players and regulators in their institutional field (King & Pearce, 2010; Vasi et al., 2015). The complexity of political interactions that lead to institutional change requires longitudinal studies on multiple levels (e.g. within and between organizations) (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008). Similar to Zietsma and Winn's (2008) concept of an influence chain, I propose that future research should adopt a network perspective that goes beyond the dyadic interactions between activist groups and firms. Computational social science, such as large-scale social network analysis and automated content analysis, may help increase the number of actors and interactions in studies on institutional change. According to De Bakker and Hellsten (2013), these digital methods may help better track processes that lead to institutional change. Ultimately, this may help us better understand why and how online protest contribute to change in institutional fields.

7.3.2 | **From Online Awareness to Offline Collective Action**

A key question in social movement research that remains unanswered, is: To what extent is slacktivism a substitute for more substantial support, or does it increase the political engagement of new groups of consumers by luring them into a participation funnel? (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber, 2000; Kristofferson et al., 2014). Additionally, we need more knowledge about the factors that stimulate slacktivists to become more active, turning online awareness and expression of opinions into offline collective action, such as boycotting behavior.

I did not study the engagement of consumers in activism over a longer period of time. The slacktivist experiment in chapter 5 uses a single protest event to classify participants into activists and slacktivists. In practice, however, I believe that consumers may become involved – to a greater or lesser extent – over time and take on different roles in activist groups: From being slacktivists who click on a 'like' button on Facebook to being campaigners who start their own petitions on websites like Change.org. I propose that future research needs to track the engagement of protest participants over time. Several research approaches are promising. First, researchers may collaborate with activist groups to follow the behavior of many individual participants on digital media. Second, a netnographic approach could provide additional qualitative insights into the motivation and behavior of protest participants over time. In this case, the researcher observes and reflects on the interactions that participants have on the activist groups' digital media (Kozinets, 2002). Third, researchers may interview or survey the same participants. A selection bias may, however, occur, because slacktivists could be less motivated to participate in research than protest participants who are willing to make an effort. These approaches could help social movement research better grasp consumers' online engagement and may help campaigners organize sustained collective action.

7.3.3 | **Online Movement Leadership**

Although leaders have played pivotal roles in social movements throughout history, researchers have paid limited attention to leadership as an explanation of movement outcomes (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Similar to offline movements, leaders are also essential to the organization and outcomes of online protest. For example, Earl and Schussman (2002) emphasize the importance of online 'movement entrepreneurs' who inspire, recognize opportunities, reach consensus between the movement members, frame their causes, and mobilize resources. Future research, however, should go beyond the distinction made between activist and slacktivists in chapter 5 of this dissertation. Researchers should recognize different roles within an activist group's organizational structure (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). For example, influential Twitter users who only retweet messages from the protest organization may amplify a protest campaign's frame and help it reach a broader audience.[22] Figure 7.1 presents a pyramid model with different levels of online engagement adapted from Li (2010). The leaders are in the top level and organize the campaign. These protest organizers engage the lower layers of the pyramid to produce, comment, share, and watch the online protest's content. The different layers interact and the participants can shift up and down in the engagement pyramid. These types of models may help researchers better understand the organizational dynamics of online activist groups.

I propose that organizational researchers should learn from online marketing research on the role of influential online consumers in the diffusion of products and services to a broader audience (Watts & Dodds, 2007). Following the protest diffusion on social media can help reveal different participant roles and their contribution to protest outcomes.

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[22] See, for example, https://blog.twitter.com/2013/amplifiers-study-the-twitter-users-who-are-most-likely-to-retweet-and-how-to-engage-them, accessed on October 1, 2015

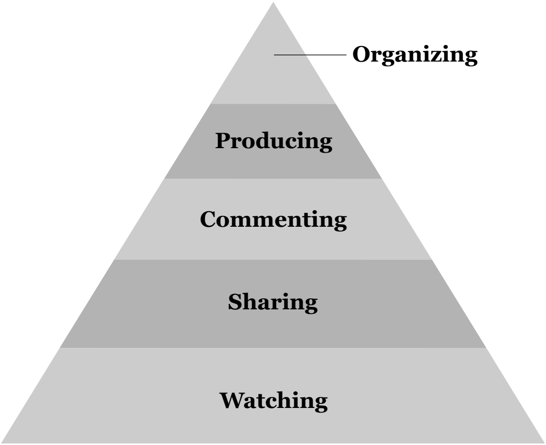

Figure 7.1 | Overview of roles in online protests (adapted from Li, 2010)

7.3.4 | **Expanding to Different Forms of Collective Action**

This dissertation focuses on adversarial protest campaigns that threat firms with reputational damage. Politics in markets, however, include more types of collective action than protest aiming to damage firms (King & Pearce, 2010). For example, activist groups may collaborate with firms to promote institutional norms, for example, by organizing advocacy campaigns, or buycotts that encourage consumers to buy their partner firm's products (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Advocacy campaigns urge consumers and firms to promote new practices and behave in a prosocial manner rather than opposing disputed norms in the market (Renkema, Van den Broek, & Ehrenhard, 2014). Such collaboration can contribute both to the firm CSR strategy and the influence strategy of the activist group. Similar to online protest, digital media play an important role in tactics based on collaboration with firms. An example is the earlier mentioned neighborhood day that the Dutch coffee producer Douwe Egberts and the NGO Het Oranjefonds organize by means of social media to mobilize consumers to meet up with their neighbors. In this way, consumers work on the social cohesion in their neighborhood, while sipping their coffee. Other examples of online advocacy campaigns are found in the healthcare, food, energy, leisure, and financial industries. In future research, I would like to expand the insights of this dissertation to other forms of online collective action. In this way, I can increase my research impact on the solution of societal challenges and contribute to research on tactics that aim at collaborative collective action instead of confrontation (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Van Wijk et al., 2013).

7.3.5 | **Examining Online Interactions in a Natural Setting**

Social movement scholars have urged for more research on how digital media characteristics influence the recruitment of protest participants (Castelló et al., 2013; Diani, 2000; Garrett, 2006; González-Bailón et al., 2011). With the slacktivist experiment in chapter 5, I studied the effect of social cues on participants' motivation for signing an online petition. I operationalized the social cues as people-to-website interactions in the design of the protest website. For example, interactivity was operationalized with the presence of a forum function that included fictive participants discussing the protest. Although I made an effort to create a realistic design and tested the protest website multiple times, the interactions remained between the website and the respondent, rather than between groups of respondents. An online experiment decontextualizes online protests, as the respondents have no history with the protest under study, the static nature of both the intervention and the experimental task has no real consequences (Barry & Fulmer, 2004). Previous researchers struggled to replicate media effects when testing them on respondents who really interact with each other (Spears & Lea, 1992; Walther, 1995). The use of self-report, such as surveying participants after an experiment, may explain this low replicability.

I propose three ways to study the influence of digital media characteristics in a more natural setting. First, future research could conduct online field experiments to study people-to-people interaction. An example is an experiment in which the design of a campaign is tested on two online populations (an intervention and control group). The differences in the conditions could be controlled by matching for causal inference. Second, qualitative research methods, such as observation or netnography, could help us better understand the influence that campaign design has on protest recruitment. Third, researchers could take an action research approach and work as a campaigner in an activist group. This would allow them to design, implement, and test a campaign design in a natural setting. All these approaches require researchers to collaborate closely with activist groups.

7.3.6 | **Scaling Up Impact Assessment**

The impact that protest has on firm behavior is difficult to measure (Bartley & Child, 2011; Giugni et al., 1999; King & Soule, 2007; Vasi & King, 2012). First, there are many factors on multiple levels that affect firm behavior and even more factors that affect changes in market regulations. For example, both successful mobilization and opportunities in an firms' industry's power structure may influence the impact of protest targeting incumbent firms. Second, even if the factors have been identified, there are always uncertainties about causality. Den Hond and De Bakker (2007, p. 920) stress this causality problem: *"It is unlikely, however, that such outcomes solely depend on activist groups' efforts; characteristics of the firm or the industry in which* *the firm operates will be another important set of factors."* For example, firms often deny that changes in their behavior result from protest. Third, the impact of social movements is very diverse, for example, it comprises a legal impact, cultural impact, social impact, and economic impact (Bartley & Child, 2011). I assessed the impact of online protests on the perceptions of the stakeholders who are essential for firm performance – the shareholders and customers.

In addition, in the process study, I studied the effect of a protest campaign on actual firm behavior. How the activist groups' activities and the stakeholder feedback cause corporate decision makers to change their policy or practices remains unclear. First, the availability of online sources and data science tools may help social movement scholars scale up impact assessment and better track the impact of protest over time and on multiple levels, from short-term stakeholder perceptions to the institutionalization of new norms in an industry's routines. Second, I urge researchers to study how corporate decision makers are influenced on an individual level, and how changes in their perception result in a response to protest. As suggested by King (2008b), research could track the influence of protest over different stages of policy development: From putting an issue on the corporate agenda to changing the implementation of CSR strategies. However, as I experienced in the process study, it could be difficult to convince corporate decision makers to participate in research, as knowledge about how they perceive protests would make them more vulnerable. Hence, I propose that experiments, simulations, and games with corporate decision makers could help them understand their perception of online protests. This would contribute to the call for more research on the effect of protests on corporate decision making (Davis, 2005; King, 2008b; Vasi & King, 2012).

7.3.7 | **The Role of Political Opportunity Structures in Online Protests**

With my focus on the organization of online protests, I emphasized the role of agency in institutional change. In sociology, agency refers to social actors' ability to make independent choices, act independently, and cause social change with their actions (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Social movement scholars have also considered the role of structural factors, or political opportunities, as explanations for social change (Joseph, Ocasio, & McDonnell, 2014; King, 2008a; Kitschelt, 1986; Meyer, 2004; Tarrow, 1996). Changes in the power structures of organizational fields, such as a CEO's resignation at an incumbent firm, or scandalous events, may increase activists groups' influence, because the firm may be more receptive to change (King, 2008a). According to Garrett (2006), the role of digital media in identifying and exploiting political opportunity structures remains unclear in social movement research. This may be a fruitful research direction. For example, the transnational activist networks that digital media enable, may help individual activist groups monitor CSR behavior along firms' supply chain. On the other hand, firms and their decision makers also receive more information about activist groups and their tactics, and are increasingly aware of their supply chains' increased transparency. Hence, it is unclear whether activist groups' use of digital media may advantage activist groups or firms. Nevertheless, paying attention to political opportunity structures may balance agency and structure in online protest research.

7.3.8 | **The Role of Technological Innovation in Protest Organization**

Technological innovation is considered a historical factor that has changed activist groups' tactical repertoires (Diani, 2000; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). I demonstrated how current digital media affect the organization and outcomes of protest. However, digital media and information and communication technologies in general keep evolving. Hence, the question regarding how technology changes protest targeting firms should remain on the agenda of social movement and organizational researchers.

Whelan et al. (2013) provide a glimpse of future activism. They describe the Rapid Information Overlay Technology (RIOT) system designed by Raytheon. This system helps firms and government agencies predict the emergence of online protests targeted at them. These early warning systems may limit activists' ability to surprise firms with a protest, but may force them to invite activists to discuss their concerns before the protest escalates. Technological innovation may also change the recruitment of protest participants. Currently, there is an overload of protest opportunities for consumers (Garrett, 2006) and, consequently, there is an inefficient match between protests and potential participants. Similar to the virtual assistants that we know from web shops ('we recommend you to buy this book'), clever algorithms may help consumers select the best protest opportunities that match their individual values.

There are several examples of software that help citizens or consumers live up to their ethical intentions. First, the Megaphone action alert tool reminded citizens where and when they were able to support Israel on the internet.[23] This software tool ran in the background of Windows' desktop and popped up when an expected petition, letter-writing, or e-mail chain favoring pro-Israel policy was available. In the near future, these kind of tools are expected on all kinds of issues. Second, there are persuasive technologies that persuade consumers to buy sustainable products in the supermarket. The Good Shopping Guide app and www.ethicsscore.org, for example, provide consumers with advice on how ethical products in the supermarket are.[24] In this way, technology may make consumerism more effective, as it helps consumers make more ethical choices in their consumer behavior. These technological trends give rise to many ethical questions. For example, how legitimate is protest in the eyes

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[23] See http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Israels-newest-PR-weapon-The-Internet-Megaphone, accessed on October 1, 2015

[24] See http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/feb/04/app-ethical-shopping, accessed on October 1, 2015

of corporate decision makers when virtual assistants sign petitions or send an angry Twitter message in the name of consumers? Would technology make it too easy to protest against firms? As emphasized by Whelan et al. (2013), future research needs to understand the implications of technological innovation for business ethics.

7.4 | **Concluding Remarks: Will Slacktivism Become a Cacophony or a Polyphony?**

In this dissertation, I demonstrate that low-effort online protests, slacktivism, are far from worthless. In contrast to many scholars' derogatory opinion of the value of slacktivism, I conclude that slacktivism *does* matter. My empirical studies show that online protests have an impact on firm performance, and that the mere threat of an online campaign can pressurize firms sensitive to reputational damage to exhibit socially responsible behavior. The use of digital media support and constrain the strategic orientation, tactical mix, and mobilization of protest participants. First, digital media have spurred the emergence of dotcauses, which combine activism and entrepreneurship. Second, the use of digital media to organize campaigns is embedded in broader influence processes, in which a confrontational frame required to mobilize participants may conflict with a cooperative frame of private lobbying efforts. Third, I demonstrate that online campaigners need to adapt the design and framing of their campaigns to two distinct protesters – activists and slacktivists. Last, the impact assessment study shows that online protests, such as petitions on Facebook or websites, decrease firms' share value, reputation, and revenue. A response after an online protest may mitigate the damage done to the firm revenue, but not to the firm's reputation.

Research may increase activist groups, firms, and policymakers' understanding of slacktivism. A key question is how more knowledge about slacktivism may change the societal debate on the internet about what is deemed socially acceptable in markets. Will slacktivism evolve into a large-scale constructive dialogue between stakeholders? A modern example of such an online constructive dialogue is the engagement platform Civocracy.org which offers NGOs, government agencies, and firms a virtual public sphere to discuss controversial issues and policy with citizens and consumers. This approaches the ideal form of a deliberative public sphere (Habermas, 1991). In contrast, slacktivism may amplify simplified and extreme frames, and may result in the polarization of debates. Initiatives like the Megaphone app may, for example, turn slacktivism into a pantomime, in which protest organizers, whether they are activist groups or firms, encourage participants to echo simplified frames. In other words, will slacktivism be a polyphony or cacophony in the future? And, as Castello et al. (2013)

ponder, will slacktivism motivate a broader audience to discuss norms in markets, or lead to apathy due to an overload of discussions?

I believe that research on slacktivsm can increase all stakeholders' understanding of slacktivism in such a way that will allow more consumers to participate in discussions, and potential pitfalls to be anticipated. In this way, society may progress, while consumers just need to click their computer mouse to participate in discussions. Consequently, I conclude this dissertation with the claim that online slacktivism does matter, and that its relevance is likely to increase in the future.

Nederlandstalige Samenvatting

Wanneer slacktivisme telt: over de organisatie en uitkomsten van online protestacties gericht tegen bedrijven.

Dit proefschrift richt zich op de organisatie en effecten van laagdrempelige protestacties die via het internet druk uitoefenen op bedrijven om ander gedrag te vertonen. Voorbeelden van deze laagdrempelige online protestacties zijn petities op Facebook, het bekijken van protestvideo's op YouTube of het delen van een protesthashtag op Twitter. Critici noemen deze protestacties ook wel 'slacktivisme', een combinatie van de woorden slacker (een luiwammes) en activisme (op komen voor een sociaal doel). Slackivisme wordt door critici gezien als een zinloos alternatief voor meer inspannende protestvormen, zoals actievoeren op straat. Deze dissertatie stelt echter dat, wanneer goed georganiseerd, slacktivisme bijdraagt aan het effect van protestacties op bedrijven.

Recentelijk krijgt de rol van digital media, zoals sociale media, bij de organisatie en uitkomsten van protestacties tegen bedrijven meer aandacht in bedrijfskundige studies (Castelló, Morsing, & Schultz, 2013; De Bakker & Hellsten, 2013; Martin & Kracher, 2008; Schultz, Castelló, & Morsing, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013). Maar hoewel steeds vaker bedrijven door online campagnes op het internet onder druk staan, is het onduidelijk wat de bijdrage van digitale media is en wanneer online protestacties een impact hebben op bedrijven. Deze dissertatie volgt de oproep van bedrijfskundige onderzoek om online protestacties systematischer te bestuderen.

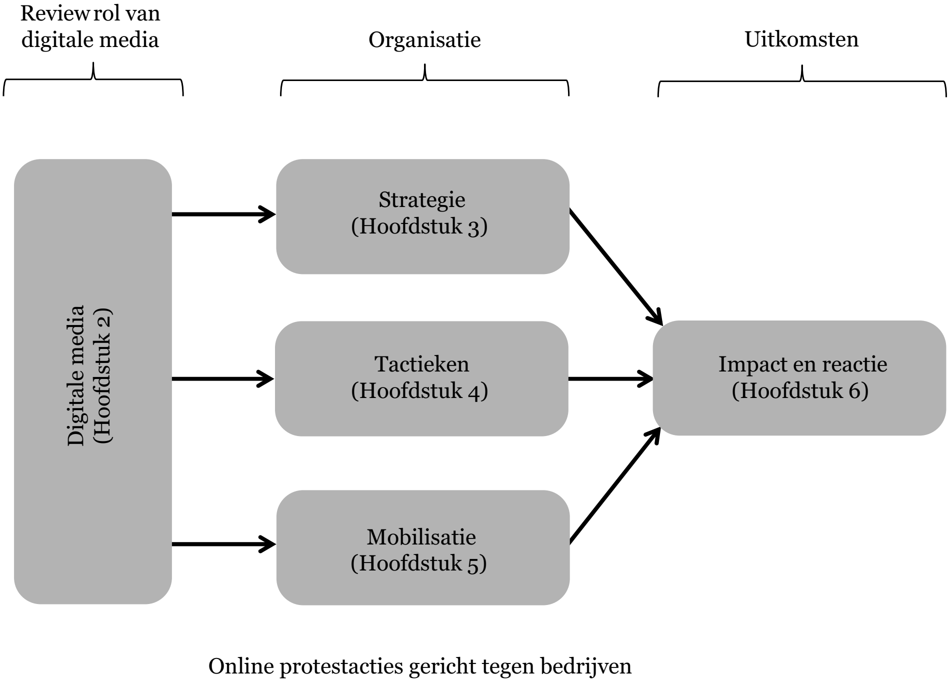
De centrale vraag in dit onderzoek is hoe online protestacties die weinig inspanning kosten van deelnemers een effect hebben op het gedrag van bedrijven. Na een systematische literatuur review naar de rol van digitale media in protestacties, is het onderzoek verdeeld in twee onderdelen: 1) de organisatie van online protestacties op strategisch-, tactisch-, en mobilisatieniveau, en 2) de impact van protestacties op aangevallen bedrijven en het effect van een reactiestrategie. De hoofdvraag is daarom opgesplitst in de volgende deelvragen (het nummer correspondeert met de hoofdstuk uit het proefschrift):

2. **Literatuur review:** Wat is er geschreven over het effect van digitale media op de organisatie van protestacties?
3. **Strategisch oriëntatie:** Hoe combineren actiegroepen online protestacties gericht tegen bedrijven met ondernemerschap om duurzame verandering te bewerk-stelligen?

4. **Tactieken:** Hoe wisselen actiegroepen lobbyen en online protestacties over tijd af om beleid voor duurzame investeringen te stimuleren?
5. **Mobilisatie:** Wat is het effect van campagneontwerp op de motivaties om deel te nemen in online protestacties gericht tegen bedrijven?
6. **Impact:** In hoeverre hebben online protestacties een invloed op hoe aandeelhouders en consumenten het aangevallen bedrijf waarderen?
7. **Reactie:** Wat is het effect van een reactiestrategie op de negatieve effecten van een online protestactie op hoe consumenten het bedrijf waarderen?

Hoofdbevindingen

Elke deelvraag wordt beantwoord door een hoofdstuk uit het proefschrift. Onderstaand figuur laat zien hoe de hoofdstukken met elkaar verbonden zijn.



Review rol van digitale media
Organisatie
Uitkomsten
Digitale media (Hoofdstuk 2)
Strategie (Hoofdstuk 3)
Tactieken (Hoofdstuk 4)
Mobilisatie (Hoofdstuk 5)
Impact en reactie (Hoofdstuk 6)
Online protestacties gericht tegen bedrijven

Figuur 1 | Overzicht hoe deelonderwerpen samenhangen

Het literatuuronderzoek in hoofdstuk 2 heeft tot doel om systematisch wetenschappelijke literatuur over de rol van digitale media in protestacties te identificeren, samen te vatten en kritisch te analyseren. Op basis van een systematische selectie van 52 artikelen formuleren we 15 onderzoeksvragen over de belangrijkste discussies in de literatuur, en gaan we dieper in op de gevolgen voor toekomstige studies en de praktijk voor zowel actiegroepen als bedrijven. De onderzoeksvragen laten drie thema's in de literatuur zien. Ten eerste is er een discussie over hoe de interactiviteit van digitale media de noodzaak voor formele, bureaucratische organisaties verminderd en meer de nadruk legt op informele, sociale netwerken om protest te organiseren en te verspreiden. Ten tweede, vragen wetenschappers zich af of digitale media een alternatief kanaal voor activisten vormen ten opzichte van traditionele. Ten derde, rijst de vraag of het gebruik van digitale media, door het publieke en interactieve karakter, een drijfveer kan zijn voor grootschalige collectieve identiteiten (bijvoorbeeld #occupy) die over landgrenzen heengaan. Deze virtuele netwerkidentiteiten bieden zowel kansen als uitdagingen voor actiegroepen.

De strategische oriëntatie studie in hoofdstuk 3 combineert procesmodellen van maatschappelijke bewegingen en ondernemerschap om de organisatie, activiteiten, gebruik van digitale media en ethische dilemma's van online actiegroepen te analyseren. We hebben acht 'dotcause' cases onderzocht die elk duurzame verandering als doel hadden. De data werd verzameld via semigestructureerde interviews en desk research. Een analyse over alle cases toont twee type dotcauses: online maatschappelijke ondernemers die voornamelijk samenwerken met bedrijven en ondernemende online activisten die juist zich tegen bedrijven richten. Beide type dotcauses verschillen sterk in hun collectieve identiteit (activist of ondernemer?) en de ethische dilemma's die ze ervaren. De case-analyse laat verder zien dat het gebruik van digitale media de dotcauses ondernemender en opener naar consumenten maakt.

De tactiekenstudie in hoofdstuk vier bestudeert het proces hoe actiegroepen publieke online campagnes en discrete lobbytactieken combineren om duurzame investeringsbeleid te stimuleren. We hebben onderzoek gedaan bij een grote, gematigde actiegroep in Nederland die een online campagne organiseerde om Nederlandse banken aan te sporen om mensenrechten te respecteren bij landinvesteringen in derde wereldlanden. Deze campagne combineerde zowel lobbyactiviteiten als een publieke campagne dat verspreid werd via digitale media. We maken gebruik van Ervig Goffman's dramaturgische theorie over impressie management om zes proposities te formuleren over de interactie van publieke en discrete beïnvloedingtactieken. Het procesmodel bestaat uit de vier fases van drama: framing, scripting, staging, en performing. De case toont aan dat er spanning ontstaat tussen het frames van de lobbyisten en campagnevoerders: voor online actievoeren is er een krachtiger en simpeler frame nodig dan voor discrete onderhandelingen met de banken. Ten tweede laat de case zien hoe een gematigde actiegroep geleidelijk de druk op bedrijven kan opvoeren doormiddel van impressie management technieken. De twee werelden van campagnevoerders en lobbyisten mogen voor bedrijven niet bij elkaar komen. De bedrijven willen immers een reputatieschade op het virtuele toneel voorkomen. Ten derde, laten we zien dat de rol van digitale media afhangt van de mix van beïnvloedingstechnieken.

De mobilisatiestudie in hoofdstuk vijf bestudeert het effect van campagneontwerp op twee groepen protestdeelnemers: zij die zich willen inspannen voor het protest (de activisten) en zij die niet meer dan symbolisch willen bijdragen (de slacktivisten). In een online experiment (n = 333) testen twee routes om tot protest deelname te komen. Deze routes zijn opgesteld op basis van het Elaboration Likelihood Model uit de cognitiewetenshappen. Een centrale route waarbij deelnemers zich verdiepen in de argumenten van het protest en een decentrale route waarbij deelnemers zich laten overtuigen door het ontwerp van de online campagne. Deze routes hebben we getest in een online experiment dat een online petitie over slavernij in de hotelbranche nabootst. Allereerst zijn we erin geslaagd om protestdeelnemers op basis van werkelijke en ervaren inspanning van de protestactie in te delen als activist of slacktivist. Vervolgens vinden we dat het campagneontwerp inderdaad een sterker effect heeft op slacktivisten dan op activisten. Ten derde, hoewel de slacktivisten in ons experiment zich minder druk maken om de ideologische argumenten van het protest, worden ze wel sterker beïnvloed wanneer ze zich identificeren met de slachtoffers (de slaven) waar de protestactie voor opkomt. Als laatste ontkrachten we de hypothese dat slacktivisten zich laten leiden door sociale status: we vinden juist dat hoe meer publiekelijk het karakter van de campagne is, des te minder betrokken de slacktivisten zijn.

De impact- en reactiestudie in hoofdstuk zes beantwoordt de vraag wat het effect van online protestacties en daaropvolgende reactie van het aangevallen bedrijf is op de waardering van aandeelhouders en klanten van het bedrijf. We gebruikten twee complementaire methoden om de effecten vast te stellen. Eerst hebben we een event analyse (n = 116) uitgevoerd waarmee we het effect van online protestacties meten op de beurskoerswaarde van het aangevallen bedrijf. Ten tweede hebben we een online experiment (n = 201) uitgevoerd om het effect van online protestacties en de daaropvolgende reactie van het aangevallen bedrijf te meten op het imago en de aankoopbereidheid van klanten. In tegenstelling tot de critici van slacktivisme, vinden we zowel in de financiële analyse als in het experiment dat online protestacties een negatief effect hebben op hoe het bedrijf wordt gewaardeerd. Kortom, bedrijven kunnen verwachten dat, zij het kortstondig, grootschalige protestacties een invloed hebben op de beurskoerswaarde, omzet en reputatie. Daarnaast toont de financiële analyse aan dat online protestacties aandeelhouders meer verrassen dan bij offline protestacties. Aangevallen bedrijven zijn echter niet machteloos: ze kunnen door in overleg te gaan met de actievoerders het negatieve effect op aankoopbereidheid herstellen, maar niet het effect op imago. Echter, negeren versterkt de negatieve effecten van de protestactie.

Praktische implicaties

Naast de academische waarde, heeft deze dissertatie ook implicaties voor managers en campagnevoerders bij zowel bedrijven als actiegrepen. Allereerst levert de dissertatie inzichten op voor actiegroepen hoe ze hun online campagnes effectiever kunnen maken om vervolgens het effect op het gedrag van bedrijven te vergroten. Ten tweede, het begrijpen van de impact van online protestacties kan bedrijven helpen om passende reactiestrategieën te ontwikkelen om eventuele reputatie of financiële schade te voorkomen. Ten derde, organiseren bedrijven zelf ook steeds vaker online campagnes, bijvoorbeeld om hun duurzame strategieën onder de aandacht te brengen, of om beleid te beïnvloeden. De inzichten uit deze dissertatie kunnen bedrijven ook helpen om zelf effectievere online campagnes te ontwikkelen. Tot slot vereisen online protestacties vaak weinig inspanning van deelnemers en kunnen daardoor een bredere groep consumenten in de samenleving aanspreken om deel te nemen aan maatschappelijke debat over wat acceptabel gedrag in markten is. De meningen van duizenden slacktivisten kunnen mogelijk helpen om radicalere geluiden op het internet te balanceren.

Conclusie

We concluderen dat slacktivisme een effectief middel kan zijn om bedrijven aan te sporen tot ander gedrag. Slacktivisme telt dus. Het effect hangt echter af van de organisatie van de protestactie en hoe het aangevallen bedrijf reageert: Hoe wordt de protestactie bijvoorbeeld gecombineerd met andere tactieken? Hoeveel deelnemers weet de protestactie te mobiliseren? Worden verschillende groepen deelnemers aangesproken door de protestactie? En hoe reageert het bedrijf op de protestactie? De verwachting is dat de rol van online protestacties groter zal worden in de toekomst door de verdere digitalisering van markten en de maatschappij. De vraag is hoe slacktivisme blijvend een positieve bijdrage kan leveren aan maatschappelijke verandering, zonder dat het in een kakofonie van meningen verandert. Met deze dissertatie hebben we een stap gezet om deze nieuwe vorm van online actievoeren beter te begrijpen.

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Appendices

Appendix A | **Concept Matrix Literature Review** (Chapter 2)

Appendix B | **Questions Interview** (Chapter 3)

Appendix C | **Questions Intake Interview** (Chapter 4)

Appendix D | **Questions Weekly Diaries** (Chapter 4)

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Appendix A | **Concept Matrix Systematic Literature Review** (Chapter 2)

Authors	**Year**	**Journal**	**Method**	*Form. Mob. structures*	*Inform. Mob. structures*	*Col. Injustice*	*Col. Identity*	*Col. Efficacy*
Anduiza, E. et al.[2]	2014	Information, Communication & Society	Case studies (n = 9)	X				
Bennett, W.L. and Segerberg, A	2012	Information, Communication & Society	Conceptual	X	X		X	
Bennett, W.L. et al.	2008	Political Communication	Survey (n = 33)	X	X		X	
Biddix J.P.	2008	New Media and Society	Mixed methods		X	X	X	
Byrne, D.N.	2008	Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication	Mixed methods	X				
Carty, V.	2010	Information, Communication & Society	Case study	X				
Clark, J.D., Themudo, N.S.	2006	World Development	Case study (n = 21)	X	X	X	X	X
Coopman, T.M.	2010	Critical Studies in Media Communication	Case study	X	X		X	
Earl, J. and Kimport, K	2009	Sociological theory	Content analysis		X			
Earl, J. and Kimport, K	2010	Information, Communication & Society	Conceptual				X	
Earl, J. et al.	2010	Mobilization: An International Journal	Conceptual					
Eaton, M.	2010	Information Communication and Society	Case study	X			X	
Eltantawy, N. and Wiest, J.B.	2011	International Journal of Communication	Case study		X			

Appendix A | *(Continued)*

Authors	**Year**	**Journal**	**Method**	*Form. Mob. structures*	*Inform. Mob. structures*	*Col. Injustice*	*Col. Identity*	*Col. Efficacy*
Fisher, D.R. and Boekkooi, M.	2010	Information, Communication & Society	Survey (n = 454)		X		X	
Flanagin, A.J., Stohl, S. and Bimber, B.	2006	Communication Monographs	Conceptual	X	X			
Ganesh, S. and Stohl, C.	2010	Communication Monographs	Case study		X		X	
Ganesh, S. and Stohl, C.	2013	Communication monographs	Case study	X				
Gillan, K. and Pickerill, J.	2008	Australian Journal of Political Science	Case study					
Gonzalez-Bailon, S., Borge-Holthoefer, J., Rivero, A and Moreno, Y	2011	Nature: Scientific Reports	Social Network Analysis	X	X			
Hamdy, N. and Gomaa, E.H.	2012	Journal of Communication	Database (content analysis)				X	
Harlow, S. and Harp, D.	2012	Information, Communication & Society	Interviews and content analysis			X		
Hooghe, M., Vissers, S., Stolle, D. and Mahéo, V.A.	2010	Political Communication	Experiment	X			X	X
Hwang, H. , Schmierbach, M., Paek, H.J., de Zuniga, H.G. and Shah, D.	2006	Mass Communication & Society	Survey (n = 307)			X		
Lev-On, A. and Hardin, R.	2007	Journal of Information Technology & Politics	Case study		X			
Lim M.	2012	Journal of Communication	Case study		X	X		
Lomicky, C.S. and Hogg, N.M.	2010	Information, Communication & Society	Mixed methods		X			

Appendix A | *(Continued)*

Authors	**Year**	**Journal**	**Method**	*Form. Mob. structures*	*Inform. Mob. structures*	*Col. Injustice*	*Col. Identity*	*Col. Efficacy*
Margetts, H., John, P., Escher, T. and Reissfelder, S.	2012	European Political Science Review	Experiment					X
Mercea A.	2013	Information, Communication & Society	Conceptual	X				
Olorunnisola, A.A. and Martin, B.L.	2012	Telematics and Informatics	Case studies (n = 4)			X		
Oostveen, A.M.	2010	Information Communication and Society	Content analysis					X
Pickard, V.W.	2008	New Media Society	Case studies (n = 4)				X	
Pickard, V.W.	2006	Media, Culture & Society	Case study		X		X	
Poell, T.	2013	Information, Communication & Society	Case study				X	
Postigo, H.	2010	Social Science Computer Review	Case study			X		
Pu, Q.Y. and Scanlan, S.J.	2012	Information, Communication and Society	Case study			X		
Rohlinger, D.A. and Jordan Brown	2009	American Behavioral Scientist	Case study			X		
Segerberg, A. and Bennett, W.L.	2011	Information, Communication & Society	Social Network Analysis	X	X	X	X	X
Shirazi, F.	2012	Telematics and Informatics	Case study			X		X
Shumate, M., Pike, J.	2006	Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication	Case study	X	X		X	
Soon, C. And Cho, H.	2013	Information, Communication & Society	Case study (76 interviews)				X	

Appendix A | *(Continued)*

Authors	**Year**	**Journal**	**Method**	*Form. Mob. structures*	*Inform. Mob. structures*	*Col. Injustice*	*Col. Identity*	*Col. Efficacy*
Strange, M.	2011	Media, Culture and Society	Case study		X		X	
Tatarchevskiy, T.	2011	New Media Society	Case study	X			X	
Theocharis Y.	2012	Parliamentary Affairs	Case study		X	X		
Toft, A	2011	Information, Communication & Society	Case studie (n = 3)		X		X	
Tufekci, Z. and Wilson, C.	2012	Journal of Communication	Survey (n = 1050)		X			
Van Laer, J.	2010	Mobilization: An International Journal	Multiple surveys	X	X	X		
Van Laer, J. and Van Aelst, P.	2010	Information, Communication & Society	Conceptual		X		X	
Walgrave, S., Bennett, W.L., Van Laer, J. and Breunig, C.	2011	Mobilization: An International Journal	Surveys		X		X	
Wall, M.A.	2007	New Media & Society	Case studies (n = 3)			X	X	
Whitten-Woodring, J., and James, P.	2012	Political Communication	Conceptual and case studies (n = 2)					
Youmans, W.L. and York, J.C.	2012	Journal of Communication	Case studies (n = 4)			X		

Appendix B | **Interview Protocol** (Chapter 3)

The questions below are translated from Dutch to English.

Introduction to interview

- Personal introduction
- Introduction to research and consent

Dotcause

- What is your background?
- Can you describe your initiative?
  - What is the brief history of …?
  - What is the goal of …?
  - What is the organizational structure of …?
  - What is the business model
  - What is the target organization?
  - What means do you use to get to your goal?
  - How many members and symphatizers does your initiative have?
  - How do you mobilize them?
  - What other market actors try to influence firm behavior? How?

Digital Media

- Do you use digital media for your activities?
- Why do you use digital media for your activities?
- How do you use digital media for your activities?
- What advantages and disadvantages do digital media have for your activities?

Impact

- Can you describe the impact of your initiative? How do you measure the impact?
- If relevant, how do the targeted organizations respond to your activities?
- What were critical success factors of the impact? Or what hampered the impact?
- What were the contributions of digital media to the impact?

End of Interview

Appendix C | **Questions Intake Interview** (Chapter 4)

The questions below are translated from Dutch to English.

Introduction to Interview

- Personal introduction
- Introduction to research and consent

Introduction

- What is your current position at the NGO? What is your background?
- What is your role in the campaign? With whom do you work together within and outside the NGO?
- When did you get involved in the campaign?

Context

- What is the goal of the campaign?
- How would you describe the social cause?
- Why is the campaign needed for this social cause?
- What experience does the NGO have in this social cause?
- Which national and international stakeholders are involved in the social cause, and what is their stake?

Events

- What were the most important events prior to the campaign? Please describe when, who, what, how, and why.
- Which of these events had a positive effect and which events had a negative effect on the campaign?

Mobilization

- What resources (strategic, cultural, economic, or social) do you provide to the campaign?
- What is, according to you, the message of the campaign to the public? How should this message be framed?
- What is your role in developing the message?
- To what extent do changes at the banks play a role in the campaign?

Role of Digital Media

- What digital media will be used during the campaign?
- Why do you use these digital media?
- What is, according to you, the contribution of digital media to the campaign’s goal?
- How does digital media hamper the campaign’s goals?

Outcomes

- When do you consider the campaign successful? How do you evaluate the outcomes of the campaign?

Request for additional documentation

End of Interview

Appendix D | **Questions Weekly Diaries** (Chapter 4)

The questions below are translated from Dutch to English.

- Please describe what events in the past week positively influenced the campaign. Please describe for each event when it happened, where it happened (offline / online), who was involved, and what effect it had.
- Please describe what events in the past week negatively influenced the campaign. Please describe for each event when it happened, where it happened (offline / online), who was involved, and what effect it had.

Appendix E | **Questions Outtake Interview** (Chapter 4)

The questions below are translated from Dutch to English.

Introduction to Interview

- Personal introduction
- Introduction to research, consent and audio recording.

Introduction

- What was your actual role in the campaign process? With whom did you work together within and outside the NGO in the end?

Outcomes of the Campaign

- According to you, to what extent did the campaign achieve its goal?
- What was the effect of the campaign on the firms? How did they respond? To what extent did they adopt new policy?
- What was the effect of the campaign on the NGO? How did management and employees respond?
- What was the effect of the campaign on media coverage and supporters?

Events

- What were the most important events during and after the campaign? Please describe when, who, what, how, and why?

Mobilization

- What resources (strategic, cultural, economic, and social) positively or negatively influenced the process and outcomes of the campaign?
- To what extent did the message and framing of the social issue positively or negatively influence the process and outcomes of the campaign?
- To what extent did the responses from the banks positively or negatively influence the process and outcomes of the campaign?
- What other factors had a positive or negative effect on the process and outcomes of the campaign?

Role of Digital Media

- What was, according to you, the actual contribution of digital media to the outcomes of the campaign?
- What was, according to you, the contribution of traditional media (e.g. television or radio commercials) to the outcomes of the campaign?

Outcomes

- To what extent do you consider the campaign successful?
- What are the next steps to follow-up the campaign

Request for additional documentation

End of Interview

Appendix F | **Examples of Experimental Conditions** (Chapter 5)

Two conditions (all high and all low) of the experiment's website are available online:

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/20275464/Experiment%20website/A1S.html

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/20275464/Experiment%20website/A32L.html

Appendix G | **Items Main Experiment** (Chapter 5)

The items below are translated from Dutch to English.

Collective identity (8 items) - 5-point Likert scale

- I would see myself as a member of the protest organization
- I would see myself as a member of the oppressed group
- I would define myself as a member of the protest organization
- I would define myself as a member of the oppressed group
- I identify with members of the protest organization
- I identify with members of the oppressed group
- I feel connected to members of the protest organization
- I feel connected with members of the oppressed group

Collective efficacy scale (3 items) - 5-point Likert scale

- I have much respect for the protest organization
- I think that this protest campaign will increase chances of Boekhotels.com changing their human rights policy
- I think that together we can change the repression of employees in South-European hotels.

Shared injustice scale (4 items) - 5-point Likert scale

- The way the oppressed employees are treated by South-European hotels is against my principles
- I think the way the oppressed employees are treated by South-European hotels is unfair
- I feel responsible to question Boekhotel.com's position on the oppressed employees in South-European hotels
- I feel angry because of the oppressed employees in South-European hotels

Motivation to participate - 5-point Likert scale

- Would you participate in this protest campaign?

Instrumentality scale (2 items) - 5-point Likert scale

- My personal situation is affected by the oppression of employees in South-European hotels.
- The situation of relatives is affected by the oppression of employees in South-European hotels.

Political efficacy scale (4 items) - 5-point Likert scale

- Dramatic change could occur in the hotel industry if consumers banded together and demanded change
- I think there is not much point in participating in protest campaigns: One person's participation will not make any difference (–)
- Firms would respond to the needs of consumers if enough people demanded change
- I do not think firms care very much what consumers like me think (–)

Effort scale (2 items) - 5-point Likert scale

- Participation in this protest requires a great amount of effort
- This protest is safe (–)

Campaign engagement (5 items) – 7-point semantic differential scale

This protest is:

- Interesting
- Relevant
- Means a lot to me
- Involving
- Valuable

Protest Experience

How many times did you participate in a protest (e.g. petition, demonstration, letter-writing, etc.) last year? None, Once, Two to five times, Six or more times

Appendix H | **Texts Experimental Conditions** (Chapter 6)

The texts below are translated from Dutch to English.

Attack only:
"[Protest NGO] has started a campaign against dairy producer [brand] due to the use of cattle feed based on palm trees. This means that tropical rainforest is being cut down, resulting in damage to the natural environment. Palm production is growing quickly, driven by demand for palm oil from the food, cosmetics, and bio-based fuels industries, but [protest NGO] claims that this growth has a high environmental cost. Deforestation contributes to the increasing carbon emissions and the destruction of the natural habitat of threatened species such as the orangutan.

The environmental organization is shifting its attention from the palm oil industry to the production of cattle feed based on the palm kernels, the seed of the oil palm tree. [Protest NGO] has chosen to focus on [brand], as the joint owner of RD1, a Dutch importer of palm kernel husks for cattle feed."

Moving with:
"A spokesperson from [brand] indicated that the firm is strongly opposed to deforestation and that [brand] was unaware of the consequences of the use of this cattle feed. He announced that the firm was immediately stopping the import of palm products from Indonesia."

Moving toward:
"A spokesperson from [brand] indicated that the firm is aiming for sustainability throughout the dairy supply chain. He stated that they were taking the situation seriously and that the CEO would like to enter into a dialogue with [protest NGO]."

Moving away:
"We asked [brand] for a reaction, but no one was available for comment."

Moving against:
"A spokesperson from [brand] indicated that everyone has the right to their own opinion but that this anti-[brand] campaign has gone too far. In an open letter the CEO has threatened legal action if [protest NGO] does not immediately stop the misuse of the [brand] name."

Appendix I | **Items Main Experiment** (Chapter 6)

The items below are translated from Dutch to English.

Attitude towards firm – 7-point semantic differential scale
<Firm name> is good / bad
<Firm name> is high quality / poor quality
<Firm name> is favorable / unfavorable
<Firm name> is likable / dislikable
<Firm name> is positive / negative
<Firm name> is attractive / unattractive
<Firm name> is enjoyable / unenjoyable
<Firm name> is desirable / undesirable
<Firm name> is important / unimportant
<Firm name> is harmless / harmful
<Firm name> is valuable / worthless
<Firm name> is expensive / inexpensive
<Firm name> is appealing / unappealing
<Firm name> is for me / not for me
<Firm name> is reasonable / unreasonable
<Firm name> is strong / weak
<Firm name> is responsible / irresponsible
<Firm name> is acceptable / unacceptable
<Firm name> is convincing / unconvincing
<Firm name> is impresses me / does not impress me

Image (Product and service quality, and Environment) – 7-point semantic differential scale
Has employees who treat customers courteously
Has employees who are concerned about customer needs
Is concerned about its customers.
Is a strong, reliable company
Develops innovative services
Offers high quality products and services
Seems to be environmentally responsible
Would reduce its profits to ensure a clean environment
Uses environmentally sustainable ingredients in its products

Purchase intention (1 item) – 7-point Likert scale

Imagine that you are in the supermarket and need milk, would you buy <firm name>’s milk?

Action willingness (1 item)

Did you participate in a protest last year?

Valorization

This is a selection of academic publications, presentations, media exposure and lectures related to this dissertation. See http://scholar.google.nl/citations?user=8dveZFMAAAAJ&hl=en for a full list of academic publications and citations.

Academic publications and conference presentations

2015

Van den Broek, T.A., Langley, D.J., & T. Hornig (2015). The Effect of Online Protests and Firm Response on Stakeholder Evaluation. *Manuscript under review at a journal*

Van Den Broek, T. A., Langley, D.J., & M.L. Ehrenhard (2015). Activist versus slacktivist: A Dual Path Model of Online Protest Mobilization. In *Academy of Management Best Paper Proceedings*, 1, 2015, OCIS Division

Van den Broek, T.A., Need, A., Ehrenhard, M.L., Priante, A. & D.J. Hiemstra (2015) The Influence of Prosocial Norms and Online Network Structure on Prosocial Behavior: An Analysis of Movember's Twitter Campaign in 24 Countries. Presented at the *Social Media, Activism and Organizations* (#SMAO15) symposium, November 6, London, UK

Nguyen, D., Van den Broek, T.A., Hauff, C., Hiemstra, D., & M.L. Ehrenhard (2015) #SupportTheCause: Identifying Motivations to Participate in Online Health Campaigns. Presented at the *EMNLP conference,* September 17-21, Lisbon, Portugal

Prasetyo, N., Hauff, C., Nguyen, D., Van den Broek, T.& D. Hiemstra (2015) On the Impact of Twitter-based Health Campaigns: A Cross-Country Analysis of Movember, Presented at the 6th *International Workshop on Health Text Mining and Information Analysis* Workshop, September 17, Lisbon, Portugal

Van den Broek, T.A., Ehrenhard, M.L., Langley, D.J. & A.J Groen (2015). Never the Twain Shall Meet? How Activist Groups Combine Backstage and Frontstage Tactics to Promote Socially Responsible Investment Policy. Presented at the *Society for Business Ethics Annual Meeting*, August 6-9, Vancouver, Canada

Van den Broek, T.A., Langley, D.J., & T. Hornig (2015). The Effect of Online Protests and Firm Response on Stakeholder Evaluation. Presented at the *EBEN Conference*, June 26-28, Istanbul, Turkey

Van der Veen, H., Hiemstra, D., Van den Broek, T.A., Ehrenhard, M.L., & A. Need (2015). Determine the User Country of a Tweet. *arXiv*:1508.02483

2014

Van den Broek, T.A, Ehrenhard, M.L., Langley, D.J., & A.J. Groen (2014) Reviewing the Role of Media Attributes in Mobilizing Protest Participation. Presented at the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting*, August 1-5, Philadelphia, PA

Renkema, M., & T.A. Van Den Broek (2014). Promoting Practices: How Activists Employ Online Tactics to Promote Energy Efficiency. Presented at the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting*, August 1-5, Philadelphia, PA

2013

Kappen, D. J., Van Den Broek, T. A., & M.L. Ehrenhard (2013). Challenging Communities: How Political Dynamics shape Organizational Responses to Competing Logics. Presented at the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting*, August 9-13, Orlando, FL

Van den Broek, T. A., Koers, W., & Langley, D. J. (2013). Learning how to respond to anti-branding communities: Designing a dilemma-based serious game for online marketing management. Presented at the *EMAC conference*, June 4-7, Istanbul, Turkey

2012

Van den Broek, T.A., Ehrenhard, M. L., Langley, D. J. and Groen, A. J. (2012), Dotcauses for sustainability: combining activism and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 12: 214-223

Van den Broek, T.A. (2012). Too Big to Adopt? Online Pressuring of Incumbent Multi-National Corporations into Adopting Socially Responsible Investment Policy, Presented at the *oikos young scholars academy*, August 26-31, Gais, Switzerland

Langley, D.J. & T.A. Van den Broek (2012) The Efficacy of Firm Responses to Online Consumer Protests, Presented at the *Marketing Science conference*, June 8, Boston, MA

Van den Broek, T.A., Ehrenhard, M.L., Langley, D.J., & A.J. Groen (2012), Literature Review of the Impact of Online Business Protest, Presented at the *EURAM conference*, 6-8 June, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

2011

Van den Broek, T.A., Ehrenhard, M.L., Langley, D.J, & A.J. Groen (2011). The Rapprochement of Social Entrepreneurs and Activists, Presented at *the Satter conference on Social Entrepreneurship*, November 2-4, New York City, NY

Langley, D.J, & T.A. Van den Broek (2011). The online slacktivist: a new type of influential user. Presented at *the International Product Development Management Conference*, June 5-7, Delft, the Netherlands

Langley, D.J, & T.A. Van den Broek (2011). The online slacktivist: exploring social media mechanisms behind a new and influential type of consumer, Presented at the *European Marketing Academy Conference*, Ljubljana, May 24-27, Ljubljana Slovenia

2010

Langley, D.J., & T.A. Van den Broek (2010). Exploring social media as a driver of sustainable behaviour: case analysis and policy implications, Presented at the *Internet, Politics and Policy Conference*, September 16-17, Oxford, UK

Media exposure, popular presentations, and lectures

2015

Panel member at debate on slacktivism organized by SPUI25, December 7, 2015, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Presentation at Movember HQ, August 14, 2015, Culver City, CA

2014

Presentation at the STAR Outreach, December 12, 2014, Eindhoven, the Netherlands

Presentation at the Social Media Week, September 24, 2014, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Presentation at KWF kankerbestrijding, July 7, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Presentation at the Big Boulder conference, June 6, 2014, Boulder, CO

Presentation at Google's Social Impact Team, June 3, 2014. Mountain View, CA

National media attention for #DataGrant (follow-up research of this dissertation, together with Michel Ehrenhard, Ariana Need and Djoerd Hiemstra) in outlets such as NOS Teletekst, Radio 1, NRC, 3FM, and Telegraaf. See following link for an extensive overview: http://wwwhome.cs.utwente.nl/~hiemstra/2014/cancer-early-detection-campaigns-on-twitter.html

Guest lecture slacktivism for post-master Risk Management of the University of Twente, May 15, 2014, Amersfoort, the Netherlands

2012

Presentation at WNF, December 12, 2012, Zeist, the Netherlands

Guest lecture together with Manon Spin, marketing course for bachelor Business Administration, University of Twente, December 11, 2012, Enschede, the Netherlands

Guest lecture social entrepreneurship, sustainable development course of University of Twente, November 15, 2012, Enschede, the Netherlands

Van den Broek, T.A. & Langley D.J. (2012). Slacktivism: A Serious Game to Play, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, November 1, accessible on http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/slacktivism_a_serious_game_to_play

Presentation at TNO seminar 'Innoveren met Impact', September 4, 2012, The Hague, the Netherlands

Panel member for evaluation of citizen initiative Dutch parliament at Netwerkdemocratie, June 26, 2012, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Workshop at Oxfam Novib, May 9, 2012, the Hague, the Netherlands

Van Teefelen, K. (2012). De macht van de luie activist, interview in Trouw, April 17, accessible on http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/article/detail/3241838/2012/04/17/De-macht-van-de-luie-activist.dhtml

Hollak, R. & De Valk, E. (2012). Kun je vanuit een stoel de wereld verbeteren?, interview in NRC, March 12, 2012, accessible on: http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2012/03/12/kun-je-vanuit-een-stoel-de-wereld-verbeteren-1082698

Guest lecture together with Manon Spin, marketing course for bachelor Business Administration, University of Twente, January 12, 2012, Enschede, the Netherlands

2011

Presentation at the ECP-EPN annual conference, November 17, 2011, The Hague, the Netherlands

Panel member at the Praktijkcongres Succesvol Persbeleid, October 11, 2011, Bussum, the Netherlands

Presentation at the Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs, September 5, 2011, The Hague, the Netherlands

Workshop at the NL IGF conference, June 10, 1011, The Hague, the Netherlands

Langley, D.J. & T.A. van den Broek (2011). Op het internet is iedereen activist, *Frankwatching*, January 31, accessible on http://www.frankwatching.com/archive/2011/01/31/slacktivisme-online-is-iedereen-activist/

Van den Broek, T.A., Langley, D. (2011), Slacktivisme: kansen en bedreigingen van online activisme, Ambtenaar 2.0 blog, January 19, accessible on: http://ambtenaar20.ning.com/profiles/blogs/slacktivisme-kansen-en

2010

Presentation at the Dutch ministry of Agriculture, December 13, 2010, The Hague, the Netherlands

Langley, D.J. & T.A. van den Broek. Greenpeace wees eens wat constructiever!, opinion article in Trouw, October 8, accessible on: http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/article/detail/1808721/2010/10/18/Greenpeace-wees-eens-wat-constructiever.dhtml

Interview in NOS Journaal op 3 (national television), May 18, accessible on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky2Si_UHres

Van den Broek, T.A., & D.J. Langley (2010). Hou de groene slacktivists in de gaten, opinion article in *Trouw*, May 4, 2010, accessible on http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/article/detail/1110515/2010/05/04/Hou-de-groene-slacktivists-in-de-gaten.dhtml

About the author

Tijs Adriaan van den Broek was born in Tilburg (the Netherlands) on January 28, 1984. After attending the Christelijk Gymnasium highschool in Utrecht, he moved to Enschede in 2001 to study Industrial Engineering & Management at the University of Twente. Tijs specialized in information systems strategy and obtained a second master's degree in Educational Psychology at the same university. During his studies, Tijs was board member of European student association AEGEE-Enschede. In 2006, Tijs was internee at PriceWaterhouseCoopers' public consultancy department in The Hague. In 2007, Tijs finished his master in Psychology (cum laude) with a thesis on how experts reason when they solve ill-defined problems. After graduation, Tijs moved to Turku (Finland) to conduct research at the Turku School of Economics. In 2008, Tijs graduated on a thesis that examined how Finnish municipalities jointly develop information systems strategies.

After his academic training, Tijs started as a research scientist at the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), the largest nonprofit research institute in the Netherlands. Tijs joined TNO's Strategy & Policy department to study the impact of online communities and open data in the public sector. He worked for clients such as the European Commission, IPTS, Dutch ministries, Unilever, and the Public Prosecution service. In 2011, Tijs became a part-time PhD candidate at the Netherlands Institute for Knowledge Intensive Entrepreneurship department at the University of Twente. During his dissertation, Tijs conducted research and consultancy projects on online protests for firms, policy-makers and NGOs. His research at TNO appeared on national television in NOS Journaal op 3 and was covered in large Dutch newspapers, such as Trouw, NRC, Telegraaf, and the Volkskrant, and weblogs such as Frankwatching and the Stanford Social Innovation Review. Academically, his research appeared in international journals and presented at international conferences. In 2015, Tijs' chapter on slacktivist motivations was selected for the best paper proceedings of the Academy of Management Annual Meeting (top 5% of accepted papers).

Together with Michel Ehrenhard, Prof. Ariana Need and Djoerd Hiemstra, Tijs won a Twitter data grant to study the effectiveness of online health campaigns in 2014. This competitive grant (6 awardees out of over 1200 submissions) resulted in a multi-disciplinary project that combines social science and machine learning techniques. The project team acquired additional funding for two PhD students and collaborates with organizations such as Movember. In 2015, Tijs became a postdoctoral researcher, besides his job at TNO, to coordinate the project and co-supervise one of the PhD candidates. The project was widely covered in the news and results were presented at Google's social impact department, the Big Boulder conference, Social Media Week, EMNLP, and #SMAO15.

When Slacktivism Matters

Activists increasingly organize online protests to pressurize firms into changing their policies or practices. These online protests often require little effort from participants, such as retweeting a Twitter hashtag. Hence, critics consider online protests requiring little effort as slacktivism: An easy and worthless substitute for more strenuous forms of activism.

This dissertation takes a multimethod approach to study when online slacktivism matters. The findings show that slacktivism does matter when it is well-organized. First, digital media have spurred the emergence of internet-based protest organizations – dotcauses – that require less resources than formal activist groups and employ more entrepreneurial strategies. Second, the effects of online protests depend on how they are embedded in broader campaign strategies. A confrontational frame required to mobilize protest participants on the internet may conflict with a cooperative frame of lobbying efforts. Third, protest organizers need to adapt the design and framing of their online protests to slacktivists as these protest participants are more receptive to design cues and identify more strongly with the oppressed group protests side with. Last, the impact study demonstrates that online protests, when sufficiently large, decrease firms' share value, reputation, and revenue. A response that approaches the protesters' demands may mitigate the damage done to the firm's revenue, but not the damage done to the firm's reputation.

Tijs van den Broek (@tyskevdb) is a researcher and consultant at TNO in the fields of social media and data-driven innovation in the public sector. Tijs also coordinates multi-disciplinary research on online health campaigns at the University of Twente, for which he won a Twitter data grant in 2014. Tijs obtained master's degrees in Industrial Engineering & Management and in Psychology (cum laude) from the University of Twente.

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