

CORPORATE REPUTATION IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY:

A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY

by

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Declaration

I declare that the Master's dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MCom Communication Management at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

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Abstract

This study focuses on measuring the corporate reputation of an organisation within the information technology (IT) industry in South Africa. An empirical investigation was conducted to identify the elements that influence corporate reputation. The research design selected was a case study. For purposes of confidentiality, the organisation used in this dissertation will be referred to as The Group.

There were three specific objectives to this study; firstly to identify the channels of communication between the organisation's stakeholders; secondly to identify the specific elements that influence corporate reputation for each stakeholder group, and finally to provide The Group with recommendations to develop an investor-orientated image and reputation within the South African business environment.

This research study consisted of four phases: initial qualitative exploratory research, problem finalisation and re-conceptualisation, quantitative data collection and finally analysis reporting. Stakeholders included in this study were The Group's employees, The Group's executive board, clients, non-clients, financial analysts, trade and business media, partners and suppliers, public relations houses and the general public.

The main conclusions drawn from the study are that the channels of communication internally and externally to the organisation influence corporate reputation. The most important disseminators of information regarding The Group are its employees. Corporate communications, clients and the media also play a vital role in influencing corporate reputation. These stakeholders should be targeted to receive the bulk of the reputation improvement activities so that a change in their perceptions can be filtered through to the stakeholders. Four specific business processes have been identified that have an impact on corporate reputation, namely general business management, financial management, corporate marketing and corporate communications.

Recommendations emanating from this study to improve corporate reputation within the IT industry suggest that The Group create a stronger public awareness. Communication initiatives need to assure stakeholders that The Group is performing well although the share price is low. An extensive black economic empowerment (BEE) programme will enhance the corporate reputation. Finally, The Group needs to agree on a set of actionable initiatives across corporate functions, marketplaces and service lines to enhance the corporate reputation.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Orientation and background	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Problem statement.....	1
1.3 Research objectives	2
1.4 Definition of corporate reputation.....	3
1.5 Conceptual framework.....	4
1.6 Definition of terms.....	8
1.7 Delimitation of the study	9
1.8 Demarcation of study.....	9
Chapter 2: General business management	11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Being in the IT industry	12
2.3 Leadership style	13
2.4 The quality of management	15
2.5 The sustainability of strategy	16
2.6 Vision and mission clarity of an organisation.....	17
2.7 Core competencies of an organisation	18
2.8 Corporate management process alignment.....	19
2.9 Ability of an organisation to take advantage of opportunities.....	19
2.10 The innovativeness of the organisation in terms of intellectual property.....	20
2.11 Corporate benchmarking	21
2.12 Going global	22

Table of contents

2.13	Business ethics within an organisation	23
2.14	Black economic empowerment initiatives	25
2.15	Trustworthiness of an organisation	26
2.16	Conclusion.....	27
Chapter 3: Financial management		29
3.1	Introduction.....	29
3.2	Share price value as influencer on corporate reputation.....	30
3.3	Shareholder value of an organisation	31
3.4	Investor attractiveness.....	32
3.5	Profitability of an organisation.....	34
3.6	Organisational sustainability	34
3.7	The commercial viability of an organisation	35
3.8	Transparency of an organisation	35
3.9	Conclusion.....	38
Chapter 4: Corporate marketing		39
4.1	Introduction.....	39
4.2	The corporate identity of an organisation.....	40
4.3	Corporate image of an organisation.....	46
4.4	Corporate branding of an organisation	48
4.5	Products and services of an organisation	52
4.6	The value of offerings	56
4.7	Promotions of an organisation	57
4.8	Conclusion.....	60

Chapter 5: Corporate communication	62
5.1 Introduction	62
5.2 Public relations communication	63
5.3 The importance of quality employees within an organisation.....	67
5.4 Employee satisfaction.....	68
5.5 Employee loyalty within an organisation.....	70
5.6 Client relationships	73
5.7 Client satisfaction.....	75
5.8 Client loyalty	77
5.9 Relationship with shareholders.....	79
5.10 Summary of relationships with stakeholders.....	79
5.11 An organisation’s corporate social responsibility (CSR)	81
5.12 Conclusion.....	84
Chapter 6: Corporate reputation	85
6.1 Introduction.....	85
6.2 Defining corporate reputation	86
6.3 General business elements influencing corporate reputation	86
6.4 Financial management elements influencing corporate reputation.....	89
6.5 Marketing elements influencing corporate reputation	91
6.6 Corporate communication elements influencing corporate reputations	94
6.7 Conclusion.....	97
Chapter 7: Research methodology	100
7.1 Research design.....	100
7.2 Case study perspective	100

Table of contents

7.3	Research strategy.....	102
7.4	Phase 1: Qualitative exploratory research	104
7.5	Phase 2: Problem re-conceptualisation and questionnaire development	105
7.6	Phase 3: Sampling design and data collection	105
7.7	Phase 4: Data analysis	111
Chapter 8: Findings.....		114
8.1	Introduction.....	114
8.2	Hypotheses.....	114
8.3	Layout of the findings explained	114
8.4	The Group’s employees’ perception of corporate reputation	116
8.5	The Group’s executive board’s perception of corporate reputation	124
8.6	The Group’s clients’ perception of corporate reputation	129
8.7	Non-clients’ perception of corporate reputation	133
8.8	Financial analysts’ perception of corporate reputation.....	135
8.9	The media’s perception of corporate reputation	140
8.10	Suppliers and partners’ perception of corporate reputation	142
8.11	Public relations houses’ perception of corporate reputation	145
8.12	The public’s perception of corporate reputation.....	146
8.13	Conclusion on the perception of The Group’s corporate reputation.....	148
Chapter 9: Conclusion and recommendations		151
9.1	Introduction.....	151
9.2	Conclusions	151
9.3	Recommendations for The Group to improve its corporate reputation	154
9.4	Limitation of the study.....	157

Table of contents

9.5 Recommendations for future research.....	158
List of references	159
List of figures.....	ix
List of tables.....	x

List of figures

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of corporate reputation	4
Figure 2 General business management in relation to corporate reputation	11
Figure 3 Financial management in relation to corporate reputation.....	29
Figure 4 Corporate marketing in relation to corporate reputation	39
Figure 5 Relationship between corporate identity, image and reputation	41
Figure 6 Corporate communication in relation to corporate reputation	62
Figure 7 Graphic representation of corporate communication.....	66
Figure 8 A framework for relationship value management	80
Figure 9 Corporate reputation in relation to other organisational processes	85
Figure 10 Research methodology process.....	103
Figure 11 Equation for SERVQUAL	112
Figure 12 The Group's employee inflow of communication.....	118
Figure 13 Distribution of communication from The Group's employees	119
Figure 14 Performance matrix of corporate reputation according to their employees	121
Figure 15 Performance matrix of corporate reputation according to their client	131
Figure 16 Financial analysts' channels of communication.....	136
Figure 17 Performance matrix of financial analyst.....	138
Figure 18 PR houses' awareness of IT organisations in South Africa.....	146
Figure 19 Public awareness of IT organisations in South Africa.....	147
Figure 20 Total communication structure for The Group	152
Figure 21 The overall performance of The Group's corporate reputation.....	153

List of tables

List of tables

Table 1 Sample respondents realised for this study..... 106

Table 2 Main under performance elements negatively impacting corporate reputation... 149

Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire: Qualitative.....I

Appendix B: Questionnaire: Quantitative.....II