Repairing corporate reputation damage in the South African chemical industry.

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Management, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business Administration

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Abstract

Good corporate reputations can be a source of competitive advantage to any business but this reputation can be damaged in many ways. The ideas surrounding corporate reputation and how to repair a damaged reputation have been well studied in the business to consumer (B2C) markets but to date it has not been comprehensively studied in the business to business (B2B) markets. This research sets out to establish the key dimensions that a business must put into place to repair a damaged corporate reputation in B2B markets. The research also aims to establish process guidelines that a business can follow in order to repair a corporate reputation in the South African chemical industry.

In order to achieve the stated aim of the research a qualitative methodology was used. The research data was conducted through semi-structured interviews with senior managers and executives of a business that had suffered severe reputational damage though a product failure. The information gathered from the interviews was analysed in order to determine what the respondents felt were the key dimensions and the process involved in repairing a corporate reputation in the industry.

The results of the interviews showed that the key dimensions for repairing a corporate reputation are trust, authentic communication and innovation. Trust is an integral part of developing a corporate reputation as the stakeholders need to believe that they are going to derive their required value from that business whether they are customers, shareholders or employees. Trust is built over time through continually delivering on the performance and quality required by each of the stakeholder groups. Authentic communication provides the platform for the business to build relationships. Communication provides the information that the stakeholders require to make informed decisions about the business and therefore it must be authentic otherwise the trust from the stakeholder will be broken. Innovation is what sets a business apart from the crowd and thus it is important when rebuilding a reputation that an atmosphere allowing for innovation is created

within the business. Innovation creates sustainability and is what stakeholders are looking for.

In order for a business to rebuild its corporate reputation it must first identify the root cause of the reputational damage otherwise the strategies and solutions that are to be developed will not fully address the issue that is causing the reputational damage. The solutions and strategies must then be implemented and measured to ensure that they are addressing the cause of the reputational damage. In order for the reputation repair process to be successful the employees of the business must support the initiative and thus it is important for a business to ensure that as part of the strategy and internal marketing strategy is implemented concurrently with the reputational strategies. Measurements of the targets, as defined by the strategy, are imperative as this allows the business to evaluate the progress and make the required adjustments to the areas where the strategy is not being implemented according to plan. The process of reputational repair is not a once off process but rather a circular one similar to that of continuous improvement.

Whilst a good corporate reputation will not ensure that the required opportunities can be exploited, but a poor reputation will prevent any of the opportunities from presenting themselves. It is extremely important that a business repairs its damaged reputation, and ensures that continued to monitoring and management ensuring the business remains sustainable. The recommendations of this research provide executive management in B2B markets with assistance with the key dimensions and process of repairing a corporate reputation.

Declaration

I, Patrick John Mcloughlin, declare to the best of my knowledge and believe that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Patrick John Mcloughlin

Signed at …………………………………………………

On the …………………………….. day of ………………………… 2016

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1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to establish what stakeholders (senior management including executives and customers) suggest should be done in order to rebuild a corporate reputation within business to business (B2B) markets in the South African chemical industry after the reputation has suffered damage as a result of a product failure.

1.2 Context of the study

The South African chemical manufacturing industry is highly capital intensive and is under threat from rising electricity costs, reduced electricity availability, poor logistical efficiency, increasing transport cost and a constrained supply of skills (Republic of South Afica, 2010). The National development plan (NDP) (2010) goes on to say that half of South Africa's exports are based on these capital intensive industries producing refined minerals, metals and chemicals. The capital intensive industries are heavily reliant on foreign direct investment for business continuity and thus depend on their reputations to survive in a struggling commodities based economy.

Labour productivity with the implementation of broad based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) has reduced by 2.3-5% as BBBEE becomes legally enforceable (Mebratie & Bedi, 2013) this has the effect of increasing unit labour costs in order to maintain the same level of output. These challenges are making it increasingly difficult to maintain operations and expand in order meet the growing demand being generated from the growing economy thus it is extremely important that organisations operating within this industry maintain any possible competitive advantage.

Corporate reputation is a source of competitive advantage allowing easier access to the investment required in the chemical industry, reputation also allows the organisation to differentiate itself from its competitors (Horner, 2002). The competitive advantage in B2B markets results from the customers being more willing to purchase from a supplier with a known good reputation over a unknown supplier (Helm & Salminen, 2010). Reputation if managed correctly can develop into a source of competitive advantage within the chemical industry in South Africa and therefore it is imperative that all stakeholders within an organisation are aligned in developing and maintaining a strong reputation.

Businesses develop relationships with one another (business to business) in order to improve on the effectiveness and efficiency of their transactions (Suh & Houston, 2010). These B2B relationships have to potential to increase efficiency and sales through waste reduction within a value chain and thus the B2B relationships can improve the operational positions of both organisations. The corporate reputation of each of the organisations plays a role in how effective the agreements are and the decisions taken. It can be said that reputation is important in determining how effective the interactions of these businesses are (Horner, 2002). Reputation damage of one of the firms could severely impact the financial and operating position of the other firm in the partnership. The reputation damage of the one firm involved with the partnership can influence the reputation of the other thus the relations can be extremely complex within B2B markets (Alsop, 2004a)

Corporate reputation can suffer damage through a number of various different sources. Some of these sources are described by Balmer and Greyser (2009) below:

1. Product\service failure
2. Social responsibility gap
3. Corporate misbehaviour
4. Executive misbehaviour
5. Poor business results
6. Spokesperson misbehaviour and controversy
7. Death of the symbol of the company
8. Loss of public support

9. Controversial ownership
10. Perceived failure (failure only as a perception of stakeholders)

There are many reasons that a corporate reputation can be damaged but this research report will focus on product failure. Product failure in this instant will not be the product failing in public eye but rather the failure to deliver the product that was promised to the customer resulting in the reputation of the organisation being damaged and having to be rebuilt in order to regain trust and continue to be sustainable.

Once the reputation damaging event has taken place it is important for the organisation to assess the situation in order to be able to fully understand the extent of the damage and then to implement strategies to be able to repair the damage such that all stakeholders will have a favourable view of the organisation once again. The reputation damage can be assessed using the key brand elements that the reputation damage is affecting, the damage causing event, the company initiatives in place and finally the results that these initiatives produce (Balmer & Greyser, 2009).

“Authenticity plays a key role in building, sustaining, and defending reputation. From analysis of many corporate brand crisis experiences the paper finds that forthrightness in communications and substantive credible responses in the form of behaviour are most likely to restore trust and rescue a brand in crisis. The most important actions, however, are those taken to build a “reputational reservoir” as a strong foundation for corporate reputation” (Balmer & Greyser, 2009, p. 590).

Many businesses try to present a fresh new image to the market through restricting the business or reworking old models of success but this is not sufficient in repairing the damage as the changes need to be fully implemented throughout the whole organisation (Alsop, 2004a). In order to repair corporate reputation the leader of the organisation will play a key role in guiding the organisation into the new strategic path and away from old habits (Alsop, 2004a). Organisations may also take previous reputation damaging events as learning experiences and thus they may reduce further damage in the future that could hinder the repair process (Rhee & Kim, 2012).

Rebuilding of corporate reputations after a product failure is a challenge to organisations that could potentially face. It could even affect the survival of that organisation. Corporate reputations allow space to develop authentic strategies to ensure that organisations critical to the economy of South Africa continue to operate. To successfully repair corporate reputations the organisation must restore or renew the perceptions of all stakeholders and ensure that measures are put in place to ensure that a similar reputational damage situation is prevented in the future by identifying the root cause of the initial problem (Rhee & Kim, 2012).

1.3 Specific background to the research report topic

In the South African chemical manufacturing industry there is a constant strive for innovation in order to meet the growing customer demand and minimise the effects of increasing operation expenses such as electricity (Republic of South Afica, 2010). Process changes are often implemented prior to the required research and development being completed which results in the overall output of product being reduced because of manufacturing difficulties. The on-going difficulty with the manufacturing process ultimately leads to the required product not being available to deliver to the customer and thus it directly impacts on the top line sales and further impacted by additional maintenance costs. The sum of these effects negatively affects the profitability of the organisation. The circle of repeated failure to deliver product will destroy the reputation of the business as it becomes an unreliable supplier. The poor reputation has potential impacts of losing current customers and future business.

The promise of new products as a result of the process change resulted in other companies installing infrastructure to utilise the proposed new products at great capital cost and now as the changes to the process failed the capital investment is worthless resulting in the company being sued for making deals that it could not deliver upon (Liao & Cheng, 2014). These factors have the potential to destroy the reputation of any business but as a base chemicals manufacturer is it possible to recover and rebuild the reputation in order to establish itself back in the market as a preferred product and service partner within the business to business markets in the South African chemical industry.

1.3.1 *NCP Chlorchem*

NCP Chorchem is leading manufacturer of chlorine, caustic soda lye and other chlor-alkali derivatives. The products are supplied into the pulp and paper industry, mining sector as well as effluent and potable water treatment. NCP has national key point status due to the supply of chemicals into the potable water facilities which ensure drinking water is available to South African citizens. The turnover at NCP Chlorchem is roughly R1.1 billion annually (NCPChlorchem, 2015).

NCP had a monopoly in the packed chlorine market until competition from Protea Chemicals was introduced late in 2012 (Chlorchem, 2012). Due to the rise of competition NCP had to introduce innovation in order to be able to ensure they could supply the South African caustic demand (South Africa is a net importer) and therefore grow the business. A project was under taken in order to use a waste sodium carbonate as a raw material instead of traditional purified salt. The change in the raw material had many advantages in that it was much cheaper than the salt and the process would consume large amounts of hydrochloric acid in the process therefore allowing the chlorine plant to produce larger amounts of caustic soda lye for sales and reduce the amount of chlorine stock which is a severe production constraint. The change in the process would result in carbon dioxide being produced as a by-product. Carbon dioxide is a very valuable gas and could provide the company with an additional income stream.

The change to the process was not successful due to a number of unforeseen operational difficulties. The change to the process effectively destroyed the production efficiency of the plant and resulted in many breakdowns therefore severe production loss and exorbitant repair costs. The decision was taken in July

2014 to revert back to the old process in order to ensure that operations could stabilise and products could once again be supplied into the market.

Due to the failure of the project NCP suffered severe reputational damage and lost its status of being a reliable supplier. The reputation damage was worsened as third parties had built plants based on the expected new products which were multi-million Rand investments. These plants are now standing and cannot be used. NCP had entered into agreements with these potential customers and were not able to deliver and now results in court cases taking place for the other companies to recover their losses. Many of NCP's other customers had also been disappointed as they suffered production losses as a result of NCP failing to deliver product they required for production. The reputation damage however was not only limited to customers, the shareholders (private equity) suffered large losses due to the capital expenditure in repairing the mechanical damage to production equipment and the loss in revenue due to poor production. These effects culminated in large financial losses for the business. The suppliers of the technology had also lost faith in the continuity of the business and required payment upfront for spares which was not the case in the past. The reputational damage suffered by NCP is thus severe and seen across all stakeholder groups.

Manufacturing stability returned to the business from August 2014 (NCPChlorchem, 2014) and the company had to go through a process of rebuilding its corporate reputation. The learning experiences from all those involved in this process can be used to aid other companies in business to business markets rebuild and manage their corporate reputations in troubled times such that the effects can be minimised and competitive advantage maintained.

In order to repair the reputation the management at NCP had to focus on ensuring that operations was able to perform consistently prior to attempting to repair the reputation with customers and the market. NCP successfully developed a strategy based on the vision:

“To be a world-class company in its operational execution as the producer and preferred supplier of quality caustic and chlorine derivatives and of long term, value adding solutions to the water treatment industry in selected African markets; this will be achieved by providing innovative technologies in the manufacture and supply of cost effective products that are supported by the provision of world class technical expertise.” (NCPChlorchem)

Intensive internal marketing and change management took place within the company and NCP worked exceptionally hard with the loyal customers that remained to ensure that NCP continually delivered on the promises made to all stakeholders.

Studying the reputational repair at NCP could provide insight into the topic of corporate reputational repair in the business to business markets in South Africa.

1.4 Problem statement

1.4.1 *Main problem*

The research intends to determine how an organisation should go about rebuilding a corporate reputation after a product failure and what selected stakeholders view as important to maintain, build or rebuild a good reputation.

1.4.2 *First sub-problem*

The first sub-problem is to discover what key stakeholders view as important dimensions of a good reputation.

1.4.3 *Second sub-problem*

The second sub-problem is to identify how an organisation would go about rebuilding a damaged reputation after a product failure.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study may provide guidance to executive management of organisations that have suffered reputation damage on strategies to put in place in order to repair the reputation damage. The importance of a reputation is that an organisation can use a positive reputation to compete for financial resources as well as differentiate it from other organisations as a competitive advantage (Horner, 2002). Considering the importance of a positive reputation, an organisation should thus do everything in its power to rebuild a damaged reputation and this study will attempt to set out guidelines for rebuilding a corporate reputation.

There have been studies that look at repairing of corporate reputations from authors like Rhee and Valdez (2009) and Balmer and Greyser (2009) which provide good insight into developing strategies and models. This study becomes significant in that the previous studies deal with business to consumer based industries where this study will be looking more at B2B organisations which present different reputational problems to those involving the general public.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

- The research will focus on B2B markets in the South African chemical industry. The study will not consider direct sales to the public or any public interaction.
- The internal stakeholders that will be considered will be at senior management level as strategic input will be of importance in reaching conclusions for the study.

1.7 Definition of terms

Corporate reputation is the stakeholder's overall evaluation of the organisation over time and it constitutes the following dimensions (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012):

- Performance

- Products and services
- Corporate citizenship
- Service
- Innovation
- Workplace
- Governance

Product Failure for the purpose of this report will be the failure of an organisation to deliver the goods to the customer that was promised over an extended period of time (Balmer & Greyser, 2009).

Trust is firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something (Oxford online dictionary, 2016)

1.8 Assumptions

- It is assumed for the purpose of this research report that the respondents will reflect normal perspectives and experiences. The respondents anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved throughout the process and the respondents will be able to withdraw at any time during the process without any ramifications thus it will not cause any harm to the respondents in any way. These facts should put all respondents at ease and would thus make them likely to reflect normal perspectives and experiences.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The definition of corporate reputation as proposed by Gotsi and Wilson (2001, p. 29) is "A corporate reputation is a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time. This evaluation is based on the stakeholder's direct experiences with the company, any other form of communication and symbolism that provides information about the firm's actions and/or a comparison with the actions of other leading rivals". The definition indicates that the idea of corporate reputation is not static and not solely based on the view of a single stakeholder but rather corporate reputation is dynamic based on the on-going interactions with all stakeholders of a company. Reputation is built or undermined on each interaction that the stakeholders have with the firm. The management of these interactions at each point of contact with the stakeholders is important to maintaining and building a good reputation.

The definition described by Gotsi and Wilson is not the only definition proposed by scholars. The idea of corporate reputation has been an increasing field of study in recent years indicating that is of increasing importance to the modern business (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006). Figure 1 below shows the increase in the number of peer reviewed articles that contain “corporate reputation” in the title or abstract from 1980 to 2003. The definition from Barnett et al. (2006) describes reputation as the judgement of the financial, economic and environmental aspects of a business by all observers. Both of the definitions mentioned indicate that corporate reputation is based on every aspect of the interactions with all stakeholders and thus needs to be managed with extreme car. The reputation of a company has possible positive and negative impacts to any business. The definitions mentioned refer to stakeholders and observers rather than just customers therefore the definitions can be applied to both business to business (B2B) and business to consumers (B2C) markets.

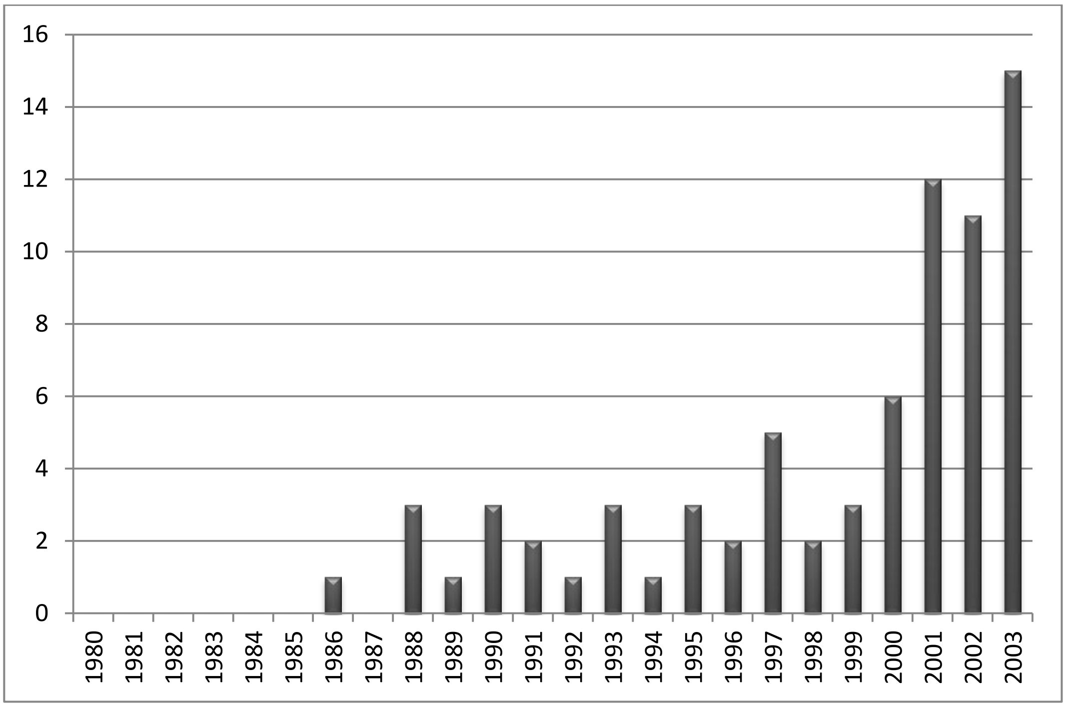

Figure 1: increase in the number of peer reviewed articles that contain "corporate reputation" in the title or abstract (Barnett et al., 2006, p. 27)

Corporate reputation is not a simple standalone concept instead it is the integration of the corporate brand and corporate identity. The corporate identity is the organisations internal view and projection of its strategy, culture and branding that has been established over time. The corporate brand is the expressions and images identifying the organisation to its stakeholders. The overall reputation of the organisation is based on the interactions of these concepts with the stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012) making important aspects of the corporate reputation. Brand management and corporate identity need to be core to the reputation building strategy of the organisation. A good reputation for the business could build a competitive and sustainable advantage to the business.

2.2 Benefits of a good corporate reputation

There is some debate as to whether a good corporate reputation leads to an increase in financial performance or good performance leads to a good reputation (Dowling, 2006) but the studies that were carried out indicate that a good reputation results in better performance. A good corporate reputation in B2B markets can influence customers so that they will be more willing to take the product from a particular organisation rather than a similar offer from an unknown organisation therefore showing that reputation can influence the ability of the organisation to generate an income (Helm & Salminen, 2010). Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) indicate that sales revenue is increased through the following means for both B2C and B2B markets:

- Increase the size and loyalty of the customer base
- Larger volumes purchased by each customer.
- Higher prices charged for the products and services compared to the competitors.
- Higher customer satisfaction and a reduction in the effects of a product or service failure
- More repeat purchases
- Less sensitivity to price increases and competitor discounts
- Easier psychological decision making.

A good corporate reputation can act as a reservoir meaning that customers and buyers are less likely to reject the firm on an instance of product or service failure but only after a prolonged period of failure(Jones, Jones, & Little, 2000). They also suggest that this buffering effect will mean that the performance of an organisation with a good reputation will not be as badly affected during a financial downturn as other companies. These factors indicate that a good corporate reputation is a key factor to maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage within the industry the business is competing in. The strategy and management of corporate reputation must be core to the business if it is to take advantage and ensure that the reputation is of worth.

Good corporate reputation does not only provide the benefit of increasing sales and profitability as it relates to all stakeholders which includes investors. Good reputation increases investor confidence and satisfaction which makes it more likely that they will continue to invest in the business(Helm, 2007). The reputation may also attract new investors providing the business with access to capital investment for future expansion and growth. The confidence and satisfaction of investors is a key factor in providing the ability for growth and innovation in order to maintain a competitive advantage thus it is important to manage the reputation with investors as key stakeholders in any organisation.

2.3 Corporate reputation in B2B markets

Corporate reputation was initially considered is unimportant in business to business (B2B) markets because buyers were considered to be more rational focussed only on price, quality and delivery of the product or service but due to global operating, convergence of prices, numerous mergers and acquisitions and the growing influence of societal influences intangible assets like reputation have become more of an influencing factor with buyers in these markets (Lindgreen, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2010).

In B2B markets relationships can improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of both organisations value chain (Suh & Houston, 2010) and these relationships are heavily influenced by the reputation of each of the organisations. The relationships built through reputation can be a source of competitive advantage on their own in that they open the way to share technologies and provide access to new markets that would have otherwise been unavailable (Helm & Salminen, 2010).

The corporate brand is linked to the visual identity, brand promise brand experience and communications and the reputation of the corporate brand carries the views of the stakeholders. The corporate brand differentiates the organisation from its competitors and helps customers identify the brand that delivers quality products and services. As corporate brands are a part corporate reputation it could be said that a strong corporate brand can assist in building a strong corporate reputation.

Brand equity as defined by Kotler and Keller (2012) is the added value endowed on products and services of a particular organisation. Brand equity in B2B markets allows the business to charge a price premium for their products and services should their brand equity be high (Bendixen, Bukasa, & Abratt, 2004). The corporate brand is an integral part of the corporate reputation thus it can be inferred that corporate reputation may have similar effects on the purchasing decisions of buyers in B2B markets. The brand equity may be developed in the B2B sense from a business being accredited with such international standards as ISO9001 which develops the corporate reputation simultaneously as the customer can be guaranteed of a certain quality of product. Performance is a key part of the corporate reputation thus building B2B brand equity will assist in driving the performance of the business.

The importance of the corporate reputation and the factors of corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications and corporate image are of such value that they should all be combined under corporate marketing so that they have the status that will allow the business to take full advantage of the benefits of a good corporate reputation(Balmer et al., 2006). In order to achieve the full benefit Balmer et al. (2006) suggests a model of 6C's marketing. The 6C's consist of Character (corporate identity), communication (corporate communication), constituencies (marketing and stakeholder management), conceptualisations (corporate reputation) and culture (organisational identity). The model may prove to be effective although form previous sections the aspects mentioned contribute towards the corporate reputation. Managing the aspects effectively will thus lead to a good corporate reputation and it should not be a direct part of the model.

A corporate reputation is not static. The way corporate reputation is being measured is also changing to include the social and environmental factors surrounding a business(Alsop, 2004b) which makes it more difficult to manage. Technology of modern times has increased the speed at which information is spread over the globe especially that of factors impacting the social and environmental aspects of business mean that cognisance must be taken to ensure that every effort is being made by the business as being a good corporate citizen could prove vital in maintaining the good reputation that has been earned over the life of the business. The sustainability of the environment is of growing concern to all businesses and thus anything that impacts the environment negatively could destroy a corporate reputation making it extremely hard to sustain the business. The effect in B2B markets is that the buyers need to consider is that their purchasing has an effect of their overall carbon footprint thus businesses with a reputation of being environmentally friendly will attract more business. The negative social and monetary loss as a result of fines can severely impact on business and profitability for example the oil spill from BP in 2010 (Ritchie, Gill, & Picou, 2011). This shows that reputations can be destroyed in an instant.

The growing social aspects of business operations make ethical branding a part of corporate reputation even in B2B markets. Corporate brands as mentioned previously is part of the corporate reputation but has usually been studied as part of an economical construct (Fan, 2005). Ethical branding can enhance or destroy a corporate reputation thus ethics and governance has become a large part of maintaining a corporate reputation. Probably the most well-known implosion of a corporate brand is the Enron saga which indicates how quickly a business reputation and business itself can be destroyed through unethical operations (Bratton, 2001). Another example of unethical behaviour is the Nike labour scandal (Balmer & Greyser, 2009). A recent example would be that of Volkswagen in their emissions testing saga where various results were falsified.

Corporate reputation is proving to be more and more fragile and can be destroyed as a result of many factors other than the social and ethical considerations mention in the two previous paragraphs. Balmer and Greyser (2009) describe some of these factors:

- Product\service failure – this would be when a product supplied by a business fails impacting on the customers lives (firestone), and service failure where the standards of a service do not meet the required standards (restaurant service)
- Poor business results – the business continually failing to make a profit and thus affecting the investors return that had been promised
- Individual representing the organisation behaving in a manner that brings the organisation into disrepute for example an executive having a public affair

- Death of a symbol of the organisation – for example the Death of Steve Jobs at apple
- Loss of public support – for example the boycott of a specific product
- Controversial ownership –Barclays buyout of ABSA

Due to the number of ways in which a corporate reputation can be destroyed the importance of reputation management is highlighted and strategies must be implemented within an organisation in order to maintain the competitive advantage.

2.4 The key dimensions of a good corporate reputation

It has been shown that corporate reputation is the view over time of all stakeholders of the organisation (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). The fact that this is a time based view and taking into consideration the fragility of the reputation trust and reliability of products and services delivered consistently would be key dimensions in building the value of the corporate reputation. The dimensions of a corporate reputation according to Abratt and Kleyn (2012) are:

- Performance
- Products and services
- Citizenship
- Service
- Innovation
- Workplace
- Governance

The importance of these dimensions will have differing effects and importance on the various stakeholders when considering reputational repair of an organisation. The business trying to repair its reputation will have to analyse its stakeholder's relationships and requirements in order to develop a strategy to get the most important dimensions in place to successfully rebuild its reputation. The strategic market analysis would need to be conducted within the current market of the business whether it is a B2B or B2C business. The performance and service are likely to be most important in rebuilding B2B reputations of an existing business.

Authentic communication with the stakeholders plays a key role in creating trust within the organisation (Balmer & Greyser, 2009). The communication can be affected by the situations faced by the organisation but the communication must attempt at all times to be authentic. Unauthentic communications and actions from an organisation are usually discovered and this information is quickly relayed with modern technology and can have detrimental effect to the corporate reputation.

Balmer and Greyser (2009) describe four contexts of authentic communications:

- Talking authentic – authentic communications
- Being authentic – having authenticity as part of the core values of the organisation
- Staying authentic – delivering on the promises that have been made and showing stewardship of the core values and strategy
- Defending authenticity – using the reputational reservoir built up over time during times of crises

This would indicate that authenticity is an important part of not only of building and maintaining a reputation but using the reputation that had already been developed to assist during a time of crises. The authenticity in a business to business situation keeping all stakeholders (customers, investors and community) informed of what is happening in the business in a timeous and truthful manner.

Communication is not the only determinant of corporate reputation but the actions that go along with it such as ethical branding, environmentally friendly or safe operations and maintaining the core visions of the business. These items are not only important to customer markets but business to business markets as well. To be considered a reliable provider of products and services over time and deliver on the promises made to investors can only put the organisation and its leadership in good stead and develop the much sought after good corporate reputation. It is clear that trust and reliability are the key factors in creating and maintaining a good corporate reputation.

B2B reputations are also built on the network relations for that specific organisation as communication between customers and other stakeholders can be used to form a reputation which can be leveraged in order to build new customer relations thus expanding the business showing the relations with selected stakeholders can be of benefit to the organisation (Helm & Salminen, 2010). Maintaining the relationship network and the opinions is thus a key factor in building and maintaining a good corporate reputation within B2B markets. The network of good reputation of other firms in the industry can also be leveraged to develop a reputation similarly an organisations poor reputation in the industry can affect all the reputations in the industry (Helm & Salminen, 2010).

In B2B markets quality of the product or service is a key factor in determining the reputation of an organisation thus product quality must meet the requirements of the customer thus quality assurance plays an important role in generating good reputation (Bendixen et al., 2004). As quality is an important part of generating good reputations the systems implemented by a business such as ISO9001 should be followed and regularly audited to ensure that high standards of quality are maintained within the business with regards to both products and services it would then be up to the marketers to ensure that this is turned into perceived value to the customer (Bendixen et al., 2004).

2.4.1 *Research Question 1*

What are the key dimensions that need to be put into practise in order to rebuild a corporate reputation after it has suffered damage?

2.5 How a business would repair a damaged corporate reputation

Rhee and Kim (2012) indicate that corporate reputation repair is a three step process:

1. Recognise the problem
2. Identify the root cause and search for solutions
3. Implement and maintain the solutions

Considering that trust and reliability are the key factors within the corporate reputation the plans need to be authentic and come from the heart of the organisation and its brand. A number of questions can be asked to assess the situation in order to develop a plan (Balmer & Greyser, 2009):

1. What are the aspects of the brand that have been damaged?
2. What is the seriousness of the situation or what impacts is the situation having on the corporate brand?
3. What solutions are available to deal with the situation
4. How effective have the solutions been

Corporate reputation has been shown to be of value to any organisation thus any crisis needs to be taken seriously in order to avoid total destruction of the business.

The culture of the organisation must also be looked into in order to make the changes necessary to rebuild a corporate reputation. The core values of the brand and organisation need to be fully established and lived by all the employees of the organisation meaning that the employees need to be fully involved in the core values and cannot know less than the external stakeholders with regards to the core values (Balmer, Greyser, & Urde, 2009). The top management and executives of the organisation need to play a key leadership role in this regard so that the idea can be fully developed and the reputation can be lifted from the doldrums. Employees are often the source of contact between the organisation and its customers as well as the outside world and thus they need to champion the reputation repair with guidance from senior management and thus it is important to ensure that the rebuilding of the reputation is started at employee level by renewing their confidence in the business through strategic interventions (Alsop, 2004a).

The employee is a key stakeholder of every business and thus rebuilding the reputation of an organisation must start with their commitment firstly to change their views of the business and they will then be able to change the views of some of the other stakeholders. Ensuring that this is successful the business will need to develop a proper internal branding strategy which will involve HR activities, Brand communication and brand leadership which will have to be developed in terms of the culture fit to the business as well as structurally sound. These elements if in place can lead to brand commitment with the correct employee know-how and resources can lead to brand citizenship and eventually develop into a strong employee brand which can assist the organisation to recover its reputation (Mangold & Miles, 2007). The table below indicates how messages are communicated within organisations and it should be taken into account when developing an internal communication strategy to create buy-in to the reputational repair process.

Table 1: Organisational message systems (Mangold & Miles, 2007)

External audiences	Word- of-mouth	Advertising directed to external constituents Public relations directed to external constituents
Internal audiences	Customer feedback Co-worker influence Organisational culture Organisational leadership and management	Human resource management systems: • Recruiting & staffing • Training and development • Compensation • Performance management Public relations directed toward employees Advertising directed toward employees
	Informal sources	Formal sources

Organisation strategy and vision will also play a key role in rebuilding a damaged corporate reputation. These aspects d are some of the main determinants of the business culture and thus need to be developed in detail to take advantage of whatever competitive advantage is available. Strategic strategy may include a disengagement of parts of the brand that have passed the stage of transient advantage (McGrath, 2013). Strategic decisions that are not in line with authenticity and creating trust can do further damage to the reputation thus the turnaround strategy of the organisation must be carefully considered and be inclusive of all the stakeholders.

The marketing orientation of the organisation can also play a role in lifting a corporate reputation from a damaged state. A marketing orientation can be established within the business as this relies on all employees to be market orientated and thus able to understand the customers which will build trust and develop the reputation further or aid in the repair of a damaged reputation. This kind of orientation can build a competitive advantage(Levitt, 2004).

2.5.1 *Research Question 2*

How would an organisation implement the key dimensions for corporate reputation repair?

2.6 Conclusion

Corporate reputation is the overall view of all stakeholders taking place overtime though all interactions with the business. The value of having a good corporate brand has been established in that it aids a business in maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage. The reputation of an organisation can be measured though the valuation of brand equity. Corporate reputation is not static and in business to business environments is affected greatly by globalisation (Alsop, 2004b) and can be affected by a number of factors thus its needs to be managed carefully and with intent. Social and ethical factors are becoming more and more prevalent in modern times and thus needs to be taken into account when managing the reputation.

Trust and reliability though authentic communications and strategy are key factors in rebuilding and maintaining a good corporate reputation and thus need to be built into the organisation culture through strategy and internal communications. Developing a market orientated business may also help in rebuilding a damaged corporate reputation. Rebuilding a damaged corporate reputation is not a simple process and can take time to rebuild and will require consistent delivery of products and services with authentic strategies and communications.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objectives for this research was to illustrate the importance of developing and maintaining a strong corporate reputation in business to business markets, to identify the key factors that are involved within the concept of corporate reputation and to develop a process to rebuild the corporate brand after severe damage caused by product and service failure.

The research methodology chapter outlines the methods that were used in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The sections to follow describe the methodology and design of the study while the sections that follow describe the population and sampling process with the method and process that was used during the research. The chapter concludes with the internal and external validity as well as the reliability of the study.

3.1 Research methodology / paradigm

In recent years the number of approaches to research has multiplied leaving the researcher with many different options (Creswell, 2013) to consider. The three main options available to researchers are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. According to Creswell (2013) the elements of the inquiry as conceptualised by the researcher lead to the potential approaches that can be used for the specific research to be conducted which is finally put into practice with the design of the entire research process.

A quantitative research method involves the collection and analysis of data in numeric form. The specific numbers of interest to the researcher are measured in order to determine the relationships between the different constructs. The measures of the constructs are summarised and analysed using various statistical methodologies in order to develop or prove the relationships between the constructs as proposed by the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Golafshani, 2003).

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that the aim of the research is not to provide a measure or statistical analysis of the various constructs (Corbin & Strauss, 1994). Qualitative research is used when the constructs are based more on the human side of the research topic where the researcher is trying to gain insight into the thinking and opinions of the sampled population to gain an understanding of how well theory is related to the thoughts and opinions (Golafshani, 2003).

A mixed methodology is an evolving and developing type of methodology where quantitative and qualitative methods are combined to give both the numeric and human analysis when either quantitative or qualitative analysis on their own are insufficient to achieve the results that are required by the researcher to make plausible conclusions on their research prepositions (Creswell, 2013).

For the purposes of this research a qualitative study based on a case study of NCP Chlorchem was used. The research required the knowledge and insight of those involved in the industry to shed light on what they believe are the critical points in building and maintaining a good corporate reputation as well as how to develop effective strategies that can be used to rebuild a corporate reputation after severe damage. The various opinions of the respondents in effective implementations of the strategies were also crucial to resolving the research prepositions due to their complex nature (Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 2012). The experiences of the respondents from NCP did provide valuable insight into the topic as they had experienced severe reputation damage and have had to repair the corporate reputation in order to ensure the continuity of the business. Reputation and matters of reputation is a collective opinion of all stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012) thus the concept was difficult to measure as a numeric value therefore the research was better served as a qualitative study.

The aim of this study was to explore in detail the respondents view of their own personal, business and social experiences pertaining to corporate reputation and how it has affected their views (Smith, 2007). The method chosen for this research was a semi-structured interview as it proved to be flexible and allowed for the researcher to explore different avenues based on the responses from those being interviewed. Personal accounts also formed a valuable part of the research as experience of actual situations provided vital clues in answering the research questions. A semi-structured interview is a common method used in studies of this nature (Smith, 2007).

3.2 Research Design

Parasuraman, Grewal, and Krishnan (2006) discuss two types of data available to researchers these are primary and secondary data. Primary data is data collected specifically for the research topic being studied and secondary data is which is already available from academic literature and previous research into the field being studied. The data collection for this research was collected by means of number of a semi-structured interviews which was appropriate because of its flexibility and ability to derive opinions and insights of the respondents (Smith, 2007).

The advantage of personal semi-structured interviews as proposed by Kotler and Keller (2012) are:

1. Interviews gave an immediate response
2. Allowed the interviewer the chance to ask clarifying questions
3. Had higher response rates than other collection methods
4. Additional information such as body language could have been recorded
5. Actions do not always match survey answers
6. Explored perceptions as well as direct answers
7. The indirect nature may mean respondents are less guarded and may reveal more in sites

There are however a number of drawbacks to this technique (Kotler & Keller, 2012):

1. The in depth responses from a small number of respondents were difficult to generalise to the industry

2. The process was time consuming and due to the nature resulted in much rescheduling with respondents
3. The process was subject to interviewer bias

Despite the inherent drawbacks of this method of data collection it was selected as it provided for an effective instrument to gather the required data to answer the research questions.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

The research was conducted at NCP chlorchem which is a company based in Gauteng South Africa and is part of the chemical industry. The research population included interviewing senior managers and executives at NCP because the author had access to these individuals and they have had experience in rebuilding a corporate reputation based on the description of the business given in chapter 1.

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

A Purposive sample was used during the research as random samples did not provide the data that was required in this research thus the target population was individuals involved with NCP who have been involved with the reputation repair process. The research question was more pertinent to the targeted population (Smith, 2007).

There were four executives interviewed during the process. Three of the executives interviewed were male and the other female. The last two were not available for the interview during the collection of the data. The executives are the senior decision makers and they define the strategies of the business and did provide insight into the topic based on the experiences they had during the reputation repair process. The executives have all been involved in the business and industry for an extended period of time and thus their experience did prove invaluable to the research.

The senior managers interviewed were from different departments within the business. All of those interviewed had been with NCP for at least 5 years and had various bachelor degrees in marketing, science, engineering and finance, two of the interviewees had obtained their masters in business administration. Eight of the thirteen managers interviewed are also private equity shareholders of NCP and thus did provide insights into the reputation from the point of view of a shareholder and what a shareholder requires in order to have their perception of the business revitalised. Of the managers interviewed seven were female and 6 were male. There are 20 senior managers in the business but not all of them consented to an interview. The departments included:

- Marketing and sales – this provided insight into how the reputational repair process was projected outward to the customers as well as the difficulties that were experienced during this time
- Operations – how the repair process took place within the manufacturing side of the business and the requirements to get buy in of the staff
- Procurement – how reputation affected the suppliers of NCP and what was required in order to repair the reputation with the stakeholder group
- Finance – what effect the poor reputation had on the business
- Human resources – to identify the effect of rebuilding reputation had on the staff and policies of NCP

3.4 The research instrument

The research instrument used was in the interview process of the respondents mentioned in the previous section. It was assumed that the responses to the guiding questions and follow up discussion enabled the researcher to obtain sufficiently detailed and accurate information enabling the answering of the proposed research questions. The interview guide was developed from the literature review based on the factors that were important to the author. The same interview guide was used for all the interviews but the discussions and knowledge of each person’s area led to different emphasis on the key factors affecting a corporate reputation.

Each interview began with an introduction to the purpose of the research and confirmation that the identity of the respondents will be kept confidential. The initial questions asked determine were to the role of the respondent within the organisation and within the customer’s organisation. The initial questions were followed by the guiding questions which attempted to delve deep into the topic of corporate reputations. The guiding questions can be found in Appendix A. The guiding questions were developed from the review of the corporate reputation literature and their aim was to prompt the respondents to answer the research questions posed in this report.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The respondents for this research were contacted directly by the researcher through which ever contact details were available (telephone or email) and interviews were set up at a time and place that was convenient to both the researcher and respondent. The face-to-face interviews were then conducted by the researcher in person and key points and observations noted. Some of the interviews were recorded electronically but only of those respondents that gave express permission. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents was stressed during the interview to provide them with piece of mind.

The actual interviews were of a semi-structured nature which promoted a free discussion with the interviewee and that their opinions were compared with the theory from chapter 2. A number of guiding questions were followed in order to keep the focus of the interview on the topic covered by this research report. Each interview took approximately forty minutes depending on the responses and knowledge of the topic illustrated by the interviewee. The data gathered from each interview was used to refine the remaining interviews as the interviewer gained further experience on the topic.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

In a qualitative study the collection and analysis of the data occurs concurrently which allowed for the interviews to be focused on key points being described by the respondent and allowed the interviewer to test the observations and conclusions that emerged during the interviews (Maxwell, 2012). Thus the analysis of the data began at the start of the first interview and progressed until the completion of the last interview. The depth of the interviews were increased as the data gathered from earlier interviews enhanced the researcher's knowledge and provided insights to draw more information from later respondents.

The main analysis of the data took place once all the required interviews had been conducted. The notes taken by the researcher (observations and key points) and actual content given by the respondents was analysed in depth with comparisons to the relevant theory as proposed in the literature review. This type of content analysis is well suited to this type of research. The researcher took precautions to consider the relative biases of the respondents while developing conclusions from the data analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The data analysis was done manually through the author's interpretation of the responses given during the interviews. The full analysis of the results was conducted from the notes taken during the interviews as well as the various recordings that were made. The author had access to company data such as internal reports and meeting minutes which were used in the analysis in conjunction with the interview results. The goal was to develop similar constructs from the responses for the purposes of discussion and recommendation which was achieved.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The limitations to this research have been identified and listed below:

- The results were limited due to the fact that the number of sources was limited to the executive, senior management, shareholders and customers of an individual company which posed some difficulties in generalising the findings

- As with all qualitative research the conclusions drawn may be influenced by the biases and values of the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) but every effort was made to avoid this situation during the research.
- Inexperience of the researcher was exposed slightly in that the questions and conclusions drawn could have excluded pertinent information to the study
- The respondents may have withheld information with regards to various questions based on confidentiality agreements with the company they are in the employ of
- As the researcher is involved in the industry and familiar with some of the respondents this may have influenced the answers given
- The familiarity of the researcher brought into question the randomness of the selection of respondents

3.8 Validity and reliability

All studies conducted must address the threats to reliability and validity in order for them to add meaning to the existing literature (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). "Reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in a qualitative paradigm" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604)

3.8.1 *External validity*

External validity refers to the degree with which the findings of a particular qualitative study can be generalised to other populations, situations and time periods not included in the sample used in the study (Golafshani, 2003). Due to the limited nature of this particular study the results cannot be said to be generalizable. Having said that should the results and opinions conformed to other business to business markets studies that have been completed in this field therefore the results can be said to contribute to the overall literature and thus will gain external validity when used with other literature on the topic. The external validity of this study on its own is not sufficient enough to be credible and requires a much wider sample population and perhaps some quantitative measures to provide evidence as to the qualitative findings.

3.8.2 *Internal validity*

The internal validity of a qualitative study refers to the degree to which the results are genuine and realistic (Merriam, 1998). The internal validity of this study is quite high as the researcher has intimate knowledge of NCP Chlorchem and the industry which thus provides the ability to understand the responses given in relation to the industry. The research supervisor is an expert within the field of corporate reputation thus is able to provide sound advice on the collected data and provide insight into the reasonableness of the conclusions drawn. Academic reviews will also provide insight into the conclusions that may be drawn from the data.

3.8.3 *Reliability*

The reliability of a study refers to its repeatability i.e. if the study was to be replicated would the results be the same (Merriam, 1998). The reliability of this study is questionable as corporate reputations are constantly changing as it is a perception of all stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012) thus repeating the same results would be challenging. The conclusions of qualitative studies may not be comparable as they may be based on the biases and values of the researcher thus the study may not be repeatable.

The researcher has attempted to ensure that the results of this study are consistent with the collected data through discussions with experts and the researcher’s knowledge of the industry itself. The studies reliability improved as the results were comparable with other studies within the topic’s boundaries.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the semi-structure interviews conducted during the research process as described in chapter 3. The interpretation and discussion of the results will be covered in chapter 5.

4.2 Value of a good reputation

All respondents indicated that it is essential for a business to have a good reputation in the South African chemical industry as it is felt that a poor reputation will result in an unsustainable business environment. One of the executives said "successful tender bids on reputation alone are very unlikely but exclusion on the basis of poor reputation is very likely". The executives felt a good reputation gives the business access to relationships which allow the business to develop and grow while the senior managers felt that a good reputation would mean more customers and increased profits.

"A good reputation provides the business with opportunities to maximise their customer relations which positively affects the bottom line profits" as indicated by the respondents in finance. The respondents from the marketing department indicated that customers are more willing to accept increases from a business of good reputation due to the belief that the increase is needed to cover growing costs rather than maximise profitability. The good reputation provides an atmosphere of trust between supplier and customer. The customers are also less likely to seek alternative suppliers as there is belief that their requirements will be met consistently. A marketing manager said "working at a business with a good reputation also gives individuals a good personal reputation in the market place".

A business with a good reputation according to the respondents is able to:

- Get new business

- Cross sell products to the same customer which increases sales volumes
- Charge a premium for the products
- Retain customers
- Morale within the business is higher and a culture of accountability will be evident
- Attract and retain the right talent
- Create sustainable growth through access to capital
- Better pricing and availability from suppliers

4.3 Key dimensions needed to rebuild a reputation

Authentic communication with all stakeholders is imperative to start rebuilding a damaged reputation. Clear and honest communication allows the business to start earning the trust of the stakeholders. Trust of stakeholders is a key dimension of rebuilding a reputation. Communication of the future plans is essential and how the problems are to be resolved needs to continually be done to start rebuilding the reputation. Communication was highlighted as a key dimension of rebuilding a corporate reputation by all the respondents and they continually emphasized this point throughout the entire interview. An executive stated that “communication is a corner stone of any business and this is how the internal view of the reputation is portrayed to the outside world”.

The executives indicate that the business must continually deliver on performance and quality over an extended period of time to rebuild the reputation. Authentic communication and delivered performance is essential to the rebuilding phase of the business. A senior manager stated “a failure of performance during the rebuilding phase will damage the reputation further and it may not be able to be recovered”.

A key dimension that was highlighted by senior managers is the leadership of the organisation. The stakeholders will look to the leadership and the actions they are taking during the time of reputation repair. The leadership skills of all managers during this time will be essential in guiding the organisation towards a state of reputation repair. An executive said “leading by example is the only way that this process can succeed as the executives must be seen to be committed to the process”.

There are a number of things that need to be in place in order to start rebuilding the reputation as a summary from the respondents:

- Acknowledgement that there is a problem
- Identify the root cause
- Legal compliance
- HR processes
- Consistent internal communication
- Machinery working efficiently
- Decide on how to service the customer’s needs
- Commitment from all management and employees
- Systems that promote innovation

4.4 Reputation rebuilding process

An executive said “Firstly would be to correct the factors that are causing this and then to ensure that proper systems and policies are in place to ensure that business relations are rebuilt properly”. Repairing the reputation must begin with an analysis of the cause of the reputation damage. All of the respondents indicated that identifying the root cause was essential so that an effective plan could be developed. An executive said that the business must “engage to resolve the related issue and take responsibility of the loss of reputation”. The next step in repairing the reputational damage is to develop a strategy that addresses the root causes. Senior manager in operations advised that there needs to be both an internal and an external strategy but they must be aligned to the same goals. The internal strategy should cover the change internal change management process to correct the root cause and create the internal conviction to recover the reputation while the external strategy will cover the communication, marketing and sales strategy for the business moving forward. The executives stated “each strategic goal must include parameters for success and failure”.

Communication of the strategies was stressed throughout all the interviews as it will be used to create alignment within the organisation. The communication of the strategy and branding will also be used to ensure that the external stakeholders are aware that the problems have been identified and that there is a solution in place in order to resolve the issues. The managers in marketing and human resources said that the message that is broadcast must be consistent in order to create the element of trust which as highlighted above is a key dimension in rebuilding a reputation. “The communication with the stakeholders needs to be authentic and humble to ensure that it is taken seriously by the stakeholders” as stated by a senior manager.

The business compliance manager said “Once a possible set of solutions have been developed a risk analysis should be done in order to determine the risks and rewards involved different solutions”. The risk analysis will also enable the business to develop more effective implementation plans as the areas of danger have been identified therefore they can either be avoided or worked on with closer attention to ensure that the reputation repair remains on schedule.

The executives responded that the strategies need implementation throughout the entire organisation by ensuring commitment through a respective R.A.C.I (Responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) matrix. The managers all commented that clear lines of responsibility were required from the executive in order for them to be able to implement the various strategies adopted. Managers in human resources said “in order for the implementation to be successful the business processes for the whole organisation must be in place to ensure that the organisation is running as effectively and efficiently as possible”. All respondents agreed that the business process and systems should be reviewed as part of the strategy development. The responsibilities and accountabilities would have been determined from the strategy that was developed. The tasks and operations must be clearly defined with proper measurements in place that highlight both the short and long term goals defined by the strategy and those that are accountable must ensure that the targets are met as any failure to meet the targets will extend the reputational process. Communication of the measurements and achievement of the goals must be done regularly in order to keep all stakeholders informed of the progress and motivated.

All of those interviewed agreed that the repair process is not a once off event even though targets may have been achieved a constant process of monitoring and evaluation must be in place followed up with continual strategy development with the aim of improvement should be the business norm in order to keep the reputation with all stakeholders in high regard.

4.5 External factors that could affect the reputation rebuilding

There are a number of factors that could affect the business and the reputation especially during the rebuilding phase. All interviewed agreed that the most pressing of these issues is the electricity shortage within South Africa as the production at NCP is heavily dependent on electricity along with the industry as a whole. The affects would be hardest felt by those trying to repair the reputation as electricity supply problems may be seen by the stakeholders as just another excuse for not being able to deliver on the promises that have been made although the business does not have any direct control over the supply. The communication during the doubtful times need to clear and concise during this time in order not to create confusion or do any further damage to the reputation.

“PESTLE elements of the area/country plays a large role on implementation process and associated performance of a business” as quoted from an executive. The executives indicate that macro-economic factors such as exchange rates and slow GDP growth also have the potential to affect the reputation of the country and business. The reason for this is that most of the technology supplied into the industry is imported and thus it affects the cost structure of the organisation which affects pricing and this could severely affect the reputation of the organisation due to profitability constraints. All stakeholders of a business should be concerned about the sustainability of the business and a business with poor results means that the reputation is no longer held in high regard.

The senior managers in operations discussed that legislation changes may also affect the reputation of the business. As indicated earlier in the chapter legal compliance is a key dimension in rebuilding the reputation and therefore the changing of legal and environmental requirements can mean that the business is no longer compliant and thus could have an adverse effect on the reputation of the business.

The executives and senior managers agree that the external factors should be considered when developing a strategy in order to ensure that the risks are mitigated wherever possible. Although external factors do not directly affect the reputation of the business they affect the performance of the business and therefore affect the perception of the business.

4.6 Who are the key stakeholders?

The key stakeholder in the process of rebuilding a reputation is undoubtedly the executive management of the organisation as agreed by all respondents. They are responsible for identifying the cause, developing the solutions and the implementation strategies to rebuild the reputation and ensure the continuity of the business. An executive stated "the executive will also be looked to for leadership during the time of the rebuild and their commitment must be unwavering at all times".

A number of stakeholders will be involved in the process with differing roles. All stakeholders need to support the initiatives in order for the reputation to be rebuilt successfully. The following is a general consensus of the respondents.

- Shareholders\capital providers – need to provide financial means for initiatives to rebuild the reputation
- Employees – the support and commitment of employees is crucial to the success of the rebuilding phase

- Customers – support and clear requirements is crucial in understanding the issues of reputation with the stakeholders
- Auditing bodies – external validation of legal requirements is required to show that the business is doing everything possible to ensure compliance
- Suppliers – provide good quality materials to the business to ensure that it can operate effectively and efficiently

It is clear that for an organisation to rebuild its reputation all stakeholders in the organisation are required to work together and should there be any one stakeholder that does not support the strategy it is likely to fall short of the requirements and therefore the reputation will suffer.

4.7 Effect of rebuilding process on the employees

The human resources manager said “the employees will go through a period of intense change during the rebuilding phase”. There will most likely be structural changes within the organisation in order to align the processes with the reputational requirements of the developed strategies. Changes in the organisational structure were pointed out during the interviews as a noted effect by all the respondents. The change experienced by the employees will need a carefully managed change management process as the employees carry a perceived reputation with them in all their dealings with the external stakeholders and may affect the perceptions of those stakeholders.

There must be an internal communication strategy to assist the employees to become aligned with the goals and objectives of the business as indicated by the executives. The goal of this internal marketing program should be to create a sense of pride and belonging with the employees which in turn will allow them to support the process fully. Operations managers discussed that the employees of a business with a poor reputation are normally demoralised and thus the reputation rebuilding in their eyes is important in order to achieve higher levels of teamwork and innovation. Clear and constant communication of success and failure needs to be in place so that the employees are aware of the situation at all times.

A performance management system should also be in place to ensure that the performance requirements are met by each individual. Rewards can also be put in place to incentivise performance. The requirements of performance will be based on the RACI developed as part of the strategy to rebuild the reputation.

4.8 Reputation rebuilding measurements

All those that were interviewed note a baseline measurement at the beginning of the process is essential in order to be able to successfully measure any progress that is made. The measurements that need to take place should be decided upon during the strategic formulation and should measure as much as possible the dimensions that need to be in place in order to rebuild the reputation. The suggestions made by the various respondents include:

- Customer and employee satisfaction surveys
- Increase in sales volumes
- Number of products sold to each individual customer
- Ratio of complaints to compliments
- Achievement with relation to the budgets
- Audit scores for various compliance issues

The measurements need to be done regularly after the baseline measurement so that the progress can be monitored on an on-going basis. The measurements should also trigger a review process so that the effectiveness of the strategy can be monitored and the necessary changes can be implemented to ensure that the reputation is rebuilt successfully within the time limits decided upon.

The interaction and relationships with the stakeholders must also be monitored although there is no direct measure for the relationships the marketing department can assess the opinion through interaction thus it is extremely important for the business to be visible at all times to the relevant stakeholders.

4.9 Effect of digital technology

An executive said “digital media has taken hold in the consumer market but is not as prevalent in our markets as much of the business is done through building business relationships within the total value chain of the organisation”. The business relationships that are developed are the basis of the reputation as indicated by the respondents during the interviews.

Although digital media is not that prevalent in the B2B markets it cannot be ignored due to the fact that news about the business in both positive and negative situations spreads extremely quickly and may damage the reputation further this point was agreed by all those interviewed. The digital media presence is required in order to manage the image of the organisation that is displayed to the general public and anybody searching for information about the business using online platforms. A manager said “the website of the organisation needs to have the correct information and be available in order for it to be of any use”. Potential customers are most likely to search the internet and media platforms before making contact with the organisation therefore it is important that the values and reputation is well portrayed on these platforms. They don’t have direct impact on new business but have the potential to negatively affect the reputation if not properly managed and updated.

The respondents are divided upon the effectiveness of digital technology in the current B2B market but all agree that it will have a much larger role to play in the future thus a digital strategy needs to be in place to ensure that the business is not left behind in the future. A senior manager stated “The failure to be part of the information highway can affect the company’s reputation in that they are not progressive and or driving continuous improvement”. Digital technology may also provide the business with a competitive advantage in terms of service innovation to the customers. The disruptive technology cannot be totally ignored and thus will form part of the reputation rebuilding strategy as it can be used as a vital communication tool both internally and externally with all stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the relevant findings from the results presented in chapter 4 in comparison to the theory from chapter 2 in order to identify the key dimensions in attempting to rebuild a corporate reputation after it has suffered damage from product failure. A similar process will be adopted to develop a process that a business can follow in order to ensure that the key dimensions are put in place and the rebuild of the reputation is successful and can be maintained over the extended life of the business.

5.2 Key dimensions of rebuilding a corporate reputation

5.2.1 *Trust*

Throughout chapter 4 a key dimension mentioned in rebuilding the reputation after severe reputational damage has been suffered is to regain the trust of all stakeholders in the business. Trust from the customer point of view is the belief that your business will continue to supply them the products they require on time with the right quality without fail as this affects the continuity of their business. Continuity of any business is a key area of concern within the value chain of B2B markets and thus a customer must ultimately trust the supplier. Trust is not only important with the customers but with the shareholders and employees. Trust from the shareholders is such that they believe that they will receive a good return on the investments they have made with the business. The employees of the business must also trust that the business is providing them with a safe (important to the chemical industry) and comfortable work environment that meets their needs. Trust could be derived in two ways:

- From an existing good reputation

- Delivering on performance targets (consistent delivery of products to the customer and financial performance)

As reputational damage has occurred there is only one way left to regain trust and that would be delivering on performance targets and ensuring products are continually available over a long period of time. Time is a factor in rebuilding trust in that it takes not only one delivery to be perfect or one financial target to be met but rather these have to be continually met over an extended period of time. The period of time that is considered will be different for each individual stakeholder. Corporate reputation is dynamic as proposed by the definition of Gotsi and Wilson (2001) in chapter 2 and thus it can be repaired in a similar way trust can be regained through consistent performance in all areas of the business.

The word trust can be misleading in terms of it being a key dimension of reputation but if you describe it as

- Good performance
- Excellent products and services
- Citizenship integral to the business
- Consistently above average service
- Purposeful innovation
- Healthy and safe workplace
- Good governance

The concept of trust as discussed in chapter 4 links back to the key dimensions as described by Abratt and Kleyn (2012) in chapter 2. In chapter 2 it was also discussed that poor governance and unethical behaviour has destroyed companies such as Enron (Bratton, 2001) therefore rebuilding or maintaining the trust of stakeholders is extremely important to the corporate reputation.

Product quality, health, safety and environmental concerns of the stakeholders can be mitigated should the company hold the ISO (International standards organisation) and OHSAS (Occupational health and safety standards) certifications. Some of these include:

- ISO9001 – product quality
- ISO14001 – environmental compliance
- OHSAS18001 – occupational health and safety standards as determined by law

Should the company have certain of these certifications it would show the stakeholders that there are systems in place within the business that are working as they are audited regularly to ensure compliance. These certifications can assist in the company regaining the trust in that the stakeholders can feel comfortable in dealing with the business. An example of such would be that a customer can feel confident about the quality of the product received from a company that has ISO9001 certification as there is a quality control system in place to ensure that customers receive product that is within the predefined specifications. Results of regular audits can show the stakeholders that the business processes are in place and working which will enable the business to regain trust and therefore play a role in rebuilding the reputation. Obtaining the various certification can enhance the brand equity of the company which is able to lift the reputation of the company as it provides perceived value to the customer. A similar suggestion is made by Bendixen et al. (2004) and discussed in chapter 2.

Regaining trust is an important part of rebuilding a corporate reputation that has suffered damage and in order to achieve this a business must deliver on promises made to all stakeholders over an extended period of time. Trust is therefore a key dimension in rebuilding a corporate reputation in the B2B market.

5.2.2 *Effective communication*

Communication with all stakeholders is an integral part in rebuilding the reputation as was highlighted during the research process. The flow of information from the business to all stakeholders in order to keep them informed of the developments within the business as this creates trust. Success in B2B markets can be derived from the relationships (Helm & Salminen, 2010) that have been built and the relationships are based on effective communication. Proper communication allows the business to convey its strategies, visual identity and values to the stakeholders of the business and it allows the business to represent its value proposition to the customers and potential investors. Balmer et al. (2006) also identifies communication as a key tool in corporate marketing which links in well with the emphisis placed on proper communication internally and externally by the respondents in chapter 4. Communication is the thread that holds the reputation of the company together and is an integral cog in the wheel of repairing a damaged corporate reputation.

Communication however can only be effective if it is authentic and all communications are aligned to the goals of the business and in terms of this paper in repairing corporate reputation damage in B2B markets. Communication can only be authentic if the actions follow suit, i.e. the business must not only "talk the talk but must also walk the walk". The concept of communication not only being spoken or written but communication through action ties in with the four concepts of authentic communication(Balmer et al., 2009) as discussed in chapter 2. Authentic communication starts from the leadership of the organisation and the communication must be followed by actions that are aligned to the goals of the business. Should any of the communication during the reputation rebuild phase not be authentic the reputation may suffer further damage. Leadership is a key role in communication and repairing of the reputation therefore as a business looking to rebuild its reputation it is important to have the right leaders in place.

Due to the fact that authentic communication is integral part of repairing a damaged corporate reputation a well-developed strategy needs to be in place prior to starting the rebuilding phase as communication to the stakeholders of such a phase will signal the beginning of the rebuild. The strategy needs to include both internal and external communication; although the strategies and format of the communication may be different they must have a message which is aligned to the goals of the business.

When developing the communication strategies for B2B markets the effects of digital media (Facebook, Twitter, websites etc.) have largely been ignored as personal and business relationships have been considered to be more important.

As suggested by the respondents in chapter 4 digital media is not an integral part of the B2B markets but as information is spread extremely quickly over these forms of communication. The respondents failed to mention the social aspects of digital media as discussed in chapter 2 when considering the environmental incidents experienced by BP thus is would be beneficial to manage the social and corporate responsibility of the business through this form of communication. Digital media does not provide a path to reputational repair but if not in place and considered as part of the strategy can do serious harm to the business.

5.2.3 *Innovation*

In the current business climate innovation in technology and service delivery can provide a business with a source of competitive advantage and enhance the reputation of a business. Innovation was mentioned as a dimension of a corporate reputation (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012) in chapter 2 but it was a focal point but as economic conditions become ever tougher it is important to a reputation to be seen as a business that is capable of driving innovation to remain ahead of the curve. Innovation can play a role in rebuilding the reputation of the business in that it can show stakeholders that the business is dynamic and sustainable moving forward. A sustainable business in B2B markets provides the element of trust that is required by the customers in that the resources they require will be available and the shareholders will receive the return on investment that they are looking for. The employees can be rewarded both physically in terms of payment and emotionally in that they are part of a dynamic exciting business.

Failed innovations can lead to serious harm to a corporate reputation as discussed in chapter 1 when considering NCP Chlorchem. This indicates that all changes in technology and processes are not always a good fit for an organisation and should not be taken for granted that they will succeed.

Disruptive technologies in the current business environment provide the opportunity for innovation in that they can be used to reduce production costs and improve the services delivered to the customer. The role of the business is to ensure that an environment for innovation is created. The environment for innovation can lead to the business enhancing its reputation more rapidly and thus is a key dimension of reputational repair.

5.3 Effects of external influences

There are many external factors that can play a role in the rebuilding of a reputation which a business does not have direct control over. The main external factors which are affecting the chemical industry in South Africa a present are:

- Electricity shortage – much of the chemical industry relies on a constant supply of electricity into the manufacturing processes and load shedding therefore has a direct impact on the output of the industry which in turn affects the profitability and reliability in supply. A business with a poor reputation may suffer more than other businesses as due to poor reputation the lack of production output due to electricity supply may be seen as an excuse rather than a valid reason for poor performance.
- Poor economic conditions in South Africa – the slow economic growth in the country means that the unemployment rate is particularly high meaning that the number of consumers of the final product is slow thus affecting the value chain in the B2B markets. The decline of the currency means that the technology and spare requirements become increasingly more expensive resulting in higher production costs. The decline in the currency does protect the sales in the local B2B markets but overall makes the industry uncompetitive in global terms.
- Legislation changes – legislation and regulation changes force business to make changes and some of these changes come at high cost. It has been shown that being legally compliant plays a role in generating trust in the B2B markets and therefore affects the reputation. The changes to legislation again increase the cost of production and thus decrease the ability of the South African industry to compete globally.

Although these external factors are not in direct control of the business trying to repair its corporate reputation they cannot be ignored as they impact directly on the repair process of the business. The external factors mentioned above must be taken into account when developing the strategy for corporate reputation repair and these hardships created externally could be the source of innovation within a business in order to mitigate the effects.

5.4 Corporate reputation repair process

The respondents all mentioned that there was a problem with the reputation at NCP and something had to be done in order to rectify the situation. Problem recognition was the first step in the three step process as proposed by Rhee and Kim (2012) which was discussed in chapter 2.

The process of repairing corporate reputation damage must be initiated with a root cause investigation in order to determine the exact cause of the reputational damage. Identifying the root cause of the corporate reputational damage can be accomplished through following the question posed by (Balmer & Greyser, 2009) in chapter 2. Should the root cause of the damage not be properly identified the solutions and strategies proposed in order to rebuild the reputation cannot be effective leaving the business short of the intended goals or doing further damage to the reputation leading to point of unsustainability. Therefore the first and one possibly one of the most crucial steps in repairing a corporate reputation is determining the root cause of the damage. This is part of the second step proposed by Rhee and Kim (2012) as discussed in the literature review.

The next step in the reputational repair process is to develop a strategy to resolve the cause of the reputation damage in the case for this report it was the inability of the business to supply the customers with the required products i.e. a product failure. Strategy development is also part of the three step process to repair a corporate reputation discussed in chapter 2. The repair strategy must address the root cause a map out a plan to repair the damage to the reputation. The strategy must have measurable and achievable goals for it to be effective and must include a communication strategy as communication to the stakeholders is a key part in ensuring implementation and creating awareness among the various stakeholders. The strategy should be developed with input from as many of the employees as practically possible in order to generate ideas for innovation and to cover all areas of the business. The participation of the employees will also allow a sense of ownership to be created which means that the chances of successful implementation are greatly increased.

Once the strategy has been defined this must be implemented effectively which is the third step proposed by Rhee and Kim (2012). The leadership and employees are obviously the key stakeholders in the effectiveness of the strategy that is to be implemented and thus it will require commitment to the strategy by all employees of the business. The implementation plan should include a comprehensive internal marketing plan as the employees will have to undergo a change in both process and culture for the reputation to be successfully rebuilt. The involvement of employees to provide them with the knowledge of the core values concurs with discussion in chapter two by Balmer et al. (2009).

During the implementation of the strategy measurements need to be in place to monitor the progress to be able to evaluate if the strategy is successful and the reputation of the business is improving with the various stakeholders. The measurements used for evaluation should have been defined from the goals identified by the strategy. Measuring the progress will not be effective unless a realistic baseline measure in in place for comparison purposes. Although there are no direct measures for a corporate reputation a business can define its own measurements. The measurements of the reputational repair process must be as continuous as possible in order to ensure that action can be taken if there are any measures falling behind the set targets and timeframes. The measurements could include

- Percentage of on time in full deliveries to the customer. This measurement will give the business an indication of the service levels in the organisation. The service levels directly impact on performance and reliability which impacts on customer trust and therefore reputation.

- Financial performance - This measurement will indicate both the cost and income of the business if this is rising the reputation of the business is in the state of repair.
- Audit scores- The audit scores of other organisations on the business will present an indirect measure of how various stakeholders view the processes that are in place within the business.
- Number of compliments against the number of complaints. This measure will allow the business to identify areas where they are performing well and areas where performance is lacking. Should the number of complaints drop and the number of compliments rise it would give an indication that the reputation of the business is improving.
- Customer and employee satisfaction surveys. This measure would allow the business to rate the satisfaction perception of the business and should these scores rise it would indicate that the reputation is being repaired.

The measurements mentioned above for a business trying to monitor its corporate is similar to the means discussed in chapter 2 on how a business with a good corporate reputation benefits (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). This indicates that these measurements could be key performance indicators for other parts of the business as well and should coincide with the status of the corporate reutation.

The measurements of the reputational repair process will be useless information unless they are fully analysed and fed back into the identification and strategy development phases. The measurements are indicators of the success of the process of rebuilding the corporate reputation and therefore action needs to be taken should any indicators be falling behind the target. The evaluation process is the final step in the rebuilding phase but it may feedback into the maintenance of the reputation or the cycle of further reputation rebuild.

5.4.1 *Internal reputational repair process*

In chapter 4 it was discussed that their needs to both an internal and an external reputational repair strategy to ensure that all stakeholders are covered during this process. The internal and external strategy will have to be aligned as they are targeting the same results. The internal strategy will play a role in the overall strategy that the business implements in order to ensure that the reputation is rebuilt after a reputation damaging event has occurred.

The employees of a business attempting to repair its corporate reputation will undergo a process of change most likely in terms of process and culture. The employees play a significant role in the reputation of the business as they are continually interacting with various stakeholder groups therefore their commitment to the process needs to be in place for the strategy to succeed. An internal marketing strategy must be devised and implemented along with the reputation repair strategy.

Internal communication plays an important role in determining the success of the employee brand. The employee brand as discussed above has a direct impact on the reputation of the business therefore the channels of communication need to provide a consistent message aligned with the reputational repair strategy. Once the organisational message systems are understood and a the internal communication strategy is in place it would be prudent to conceptualise and implement an employee branding strategy to ensure that all employees are aligned to ensure the effectiveness of the reputation repair. As discussed in chapter 2 the figure below shows a conceptualised employee branding strategy which can be developed to suit the purpose of rebuilding the reputation with the employees as a key stakeholder which will promote the repair to external stakeholders.

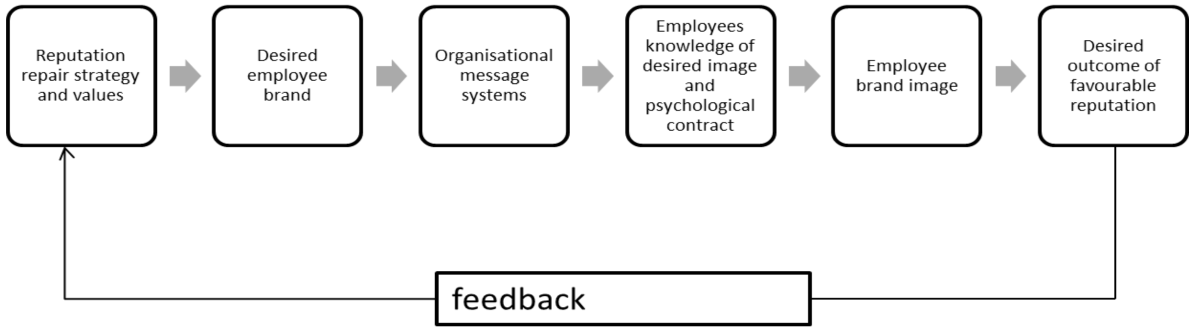

Figure 2: Conceptualisation of the employee branding strategy (Miles & Mangold, 2004)

The employee branding strategy should run concurrently with the external reputational repair strategies and both must be a success for the reputation to be enhanced

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

It has been shown that a good corporate reputation provides many benefits to a business in B2B markets and is an integral part of the sustainability of a business. A good corporate reputation does not necessarily mean that a business will have access to the markets and customers it needs to survive but a poor reputation will increase the risk of being excluded therefore it is imperative that a damaged reputation be repaired as quickly and effectively as possible to ensure that the business survives.

This chapter will present the conclusion to the research paper in answering the two research questions that were posed.

- What are the key dimensions that need to be put into practise in order to rebuild a corporate reputation after it has suffered damage?
- How would an organisation implement the key dimensions for corporate reputation repair?

Recommendations will be made based on the research results that have been derived from answering the research questions and recommendations for further studies into this field will also be made.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

Repairing a corporate reputation after it has suffered damage due to a product failure may take a long time but it is imperative that reputation repair is achieved to ensure the continuity of the business. The first question that this research tried to define was to establish what the key dimensions are that need to be in place in order to repair the corporate reputation. The research indicated that that there are four key dimensions:

1. Trust – the organisation must re-establish trust with all of its stakeholders. The stakeholders of a business need to believe that the business is sustainable into the future and the various stakeholders will be able to derive their required value. Trust is only established through the actions of the organisations in terms of continually delivering on the performance and quality that was promised to the various stakeholders. Trust can also be established through good governance of the business this is extremely important after reputational damage has been suffered.
2. Effective and authentic communication – the business must communicate authentically with all stakeholders in order to maintain the trust that has been established. The communication also serves to inform the stakeholders on the information about the business that they require to form an opinion of the business. Authentic communication enables a business to build the relationships that can aid a business in gaining a sustainable business. Poor communication results in doubt being formed in the minds of the stakeholders thus leading to poor reputational status. In order to rebuild a corporate reputation in the B2B markets clear lines of communication and a deliberate authentic message are required to rebuild the reputation. Communication with all stakeholders needs to also consider digital media although at this stage it does not play a major role in developing a reputation but it can severely damage one.
3. Innovation – a business must create an atmosphere for innovation within the business whether this is the use or development of new technology in producing more efficiently or delivering a better service to the various stakeholders. Innovation leads to the stakeholders holding the business in higher regard as innovation provides opportunities and therefore sustainability

The business needs to ensure that these dimensions are put in place during the actual process of rebuilding the corporate reputation. How a business goes about rebuilding the corporate reputation was the second research question that was posed. In order to rebuild a corporate reputation a business should follow these few steps:

1. Establish the root cause for the reputational damage
2. Develop solutions and strategies to address the reputational damage
3. Implement the strategies developed
    a. Internal implementation
    b. Total business implementation
4. Measure the progress of reputational repair against the targets derived from the strategy
5. Evaluate the measures against the targets and objectives

The process of reputational repair is a circular one in that constant feedback on the state of the reputation is required to ensure that the strategy is succeeding and to ensure that the required adjustments are made to the strategy to ensure that the targets are met. The internal execution and buy-in from the employees is crucial to success therefore a well-developed internal marketing strategy must be in place prior to starting the process of reputation repair within the business itself.

6.3 Recommendations

This research has identified the key dimensions that need to be in place in order for a corporate reputation to be repaired and the process that a business should follow in order for the business to repair its reputation. Based on the findings from this research the following recommendations are made to management in the South African chemical industry:

- A good corporate reputation on its own will not open doors to success but a poor reputation will certainly close them therefore it is important that the management of a business monitor for any signs that the reputation has suffered damage and act swiftly to ensure that the reputation does not suffer severe damage. Corporate reputation must be continually monitored and managed to ensure that a business maintains its good standing with the stakeholders.

- Once a corporate reputation has suffered a damage the business must investigate the loss of trust and ensure measures of put in place as swiftly as possible to ensure that the reputation is repaired to ensure the sustainability of the business. A business could follow the proposed model in figure 3 below. The idea is that the process of repairing a damaged corporate reputation is underpinned by the communication strategy during all steps in the process.

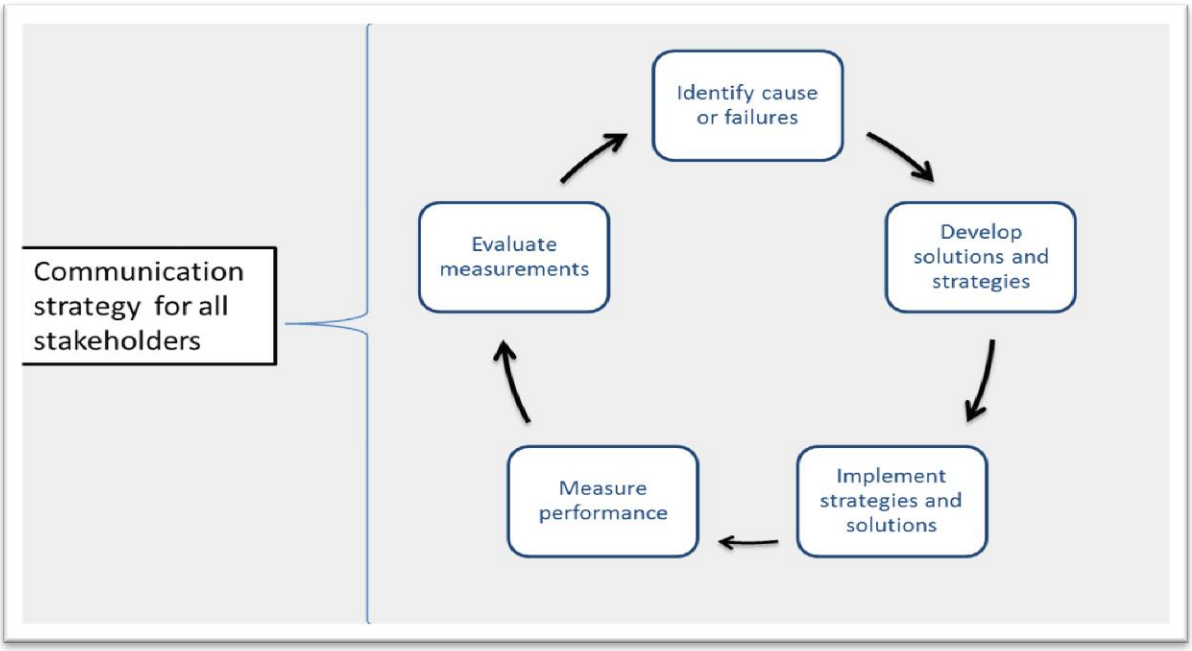

Figure 3: Process model for corporate reputation repair

- A clear and authentic communication strategy for stakeholders is a must in order for the business to repair a reputation or for it to maintain a good reputation. Good communication promotes the element of trust with that business and enables it to develop the much needed business relationships in the B2B markets.
- When considering changes to the process through innovative technologies or process due care should be taken to consider the reputational consequences should the innovation be a failure. The innovation should be

thoroughly investigated to be sure that it will succeed and the stakeholders should be well informed about the changes that are going to take place in order to protect the reputation.

- Digital media currently does not play a large role in repairing or maintain a corporate reputation in B2B markets but it does have the ability to destroy a reputation due to the speed at which information is broadcast. Therefore it is important that management ensure that they have a digital media strategy as part of the overall communication strategy to ensure that damage to the reputation is minimised or prevented whenever possible.
- Should there be a reputation damaging event a business should act swiftly to ensure that the reputation is fully repaired if the damage is left to fester for an extended period of time the reputation may not be recoverable and thus the sustainability of the business will be forever in doubt. In order for this to be achieved constant reputational measurements need to be in place and monitored.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Corporate reputations and their effects on stakeholders have been widely studied in the B2C markets but have not been widely popular in the B2B markets. This research has shown that reputation is starting to play a larger role within B2B markets as the effects of globalisation take hold. A corporate reputation may become a source of differentiation and sustainability for a business in these markets therefore the need to study the effects should take place to develop further knowledge in these markets.

- The scope of this research can be widened to include other industries and countries outside the chemical industry in South Africa.
- A quantitative study could be conducted in order to find out which of the dimensions of a corporate reputation are most important to various stakeholder groups.

- A comparison study of the concept of corporate reputation in the B2B and B2C markets can be carried out to identify the key difference in behaviours of the two markets.
- A study can be conducted to show that reputation is being considered to be growing of importance in B2B markets not only the B2C markets.

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APPENDIX A: Research Questionnaire

Introduction

The topic for this research is: Repairing corporate reputation damage in the South African chemical industry.

The objectives for this research are to illustrate the importance of developing and maintaining a strong corporate reputation in business to business markets and to identify the key factors that are involved within the concept of corporate reputation. The ultimate goal develop is to develop a process to rebuild the corporate brand after severe damage caused by product and\or service failure.

The questionnaire is designed to compare the theory with the responses of willing participants who are stakeholders within the chemical industry and gain insight from their knowledge and experiences. This information will be used to develop a theoretical model of how the dimensions of a corporate reputation can be used to rebuild the reputation after damage has been caused.

The information given by each participant will be kept confidential i.e. there will be no names of people or organisations mentioned in the report it will just add to the basis of the knowledge used to develop the rebuilding model. The research is highly qualitative at this stage thus it would be appreciated if you could provide as much detail as possible.

Questions

1. What in your opinion is the value of a good reputation to the business within business to business markets?

2. Once a reputation has suffered severe damage what are the key dimensions that are needed to rebuild the reputation?

3. How would a business go about getting these factors in place and rebuilding the reputation? (This would be the process undertaken by the affected firm)

4. What other factors that may affect the implementation process? (These can be both macro and micro economic factors which affect a particular firm or the whole industry)

5. Who are the key stakeholders that need to be involved in rebuilding the reputation and why?

6. How will the employees of the organisation be affected? What can be done to ensure that they are aligned with the changes experienced by the business?

7. How would the progress of the reputation rebuild be measured?

8. Will the current digital media (twitter, facebook, websites etc.) revolution play a significant role or affect the rebuilding process in the B2B markets? If so how? If not why not? Will this affect the business positively or negatively? Can digital media be managed? Can it be a source of innovation for the business?