

A Description of the Contribution of Reputation Maintenance on Government Ministries Public Perception: A Case Study of Government Ministries Headquarters

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ABSTRACT

Reputation is an intangible concept. Universally, good reputation demonstrably increases corporate worth and provides a sustained competitive hedge. As such, positive reputation from key stakeholders such as customers, opinion leaders in the business community, suppliers and current and potential employees can help a business undertaking achieve its objectives more easily. For instance, if an organization is positively perceived by its main customers, they will prefer trading with the organisation rather than its competitors. Positive reputation is not only a preserve for business enterprises, but it is also an important and beneficial task for non-profit organisation including government institutions. The main objective of this study was to describe the contribution of reputation management on government ministries public perception .To achieve the study objectives a survey design was employed. The target population included the corporate communication practitioners and their deputy's in government ministries. The study used census, where eighteen ministries were randomly selected and two respondents were selected from each hence making up a total sample of 36 respondents. The research instrument used was a questionnaire, which was developed, based on the research questions. The researcher self-administered the questionnaires to the sampled corporate communication practitioners and their deputies. The questionnaire also served as the interview guide since it had both open and closed questions. Further, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using percentages, graphs, frequency tables, and cross tabulation. The study findings revealed that reputation maintenance contributions are immense although they are ranked in the order of their contribution and other were more important in some department that others.

Introduction

Many organizations place the importance of a good reputation at the back of their minds while they attend to more hard-edged, day-to-day urgencies. On the other hand, most organizations consider their greatest asset to be their good name or reputation. This is especially true in knowledge-based organizations such as professional services firms in the consulting, legal, medical and financial sectors and in universities. They work actively to build their good reputation, to build the 'bank of goodwill' towards them. Although reputation is an intangible concept, research universally shows that a good reputation demonstrably increases corporate worth and provides sustained competitive advantage. A business can achieve its objectives more easily if it has a good reputation among its stakeholders, especially key stakeholders such as its largest customers, opinion leaders in the business community, suppliers and current and potential employees (Sirsly & Sur, 2012).

Main objective

To establish the contribution of reputation maintenance in government ministries

Literature review

Positive corporate reputation has a several beneficial consequences (Yoon et al., 1993). Brown (1995) argued that it boosted the intention to purchase a service; the attitude of buyers to salespersons and products in the organization-buying situation. Weigelt and Camerer (1988) associated it with improved perceived product quality and deterring competitor entry when a tough stance is adopted. Rao (1994) argued that positive corporate contributed to performance differences between firms. Fombrun and Shanley (2004) highlighted that it attracts investors, lowers the cost of capital and enhances the competitive ability of firms. (Dutton et al., 1994) stated that it enabled strong organization identification by employees and "inter-organizational cooperation or citizenship behavior"

Reputation maintenance has been found to contribute to organizational stability, profit, performance and employee loyalty, and to ease recruitment and decrease transaction costs (Fombrun and van Riel, 2004), all of which are particularly attractive attributes to public sector organisations struggling with financial and political pressures. The importance of reputation is only lately been understood by public sector organizations and national legislations, and remains a much underused resource (Luoma-aho, 2007).

An empirical study by Fombrun and Rindova (1998) with leading US/UK companies found that those companies with a more positive reputation appeared to project their core mission and identity in a more systematic and consistent fashion than companies with lower reputation rankings. Further, these companies try to impart significantly more information, not only about their products, but also about a range of issues relating to their operations, identity and history. An exceptional reputation will distinguish the firm from its competitors (Howard, 1998). In addition, it will lead the customer to assume that the products have a higher quality (Dowling, 1994), and may enable the firm to command premium price, attract better applicants and investors.

Public sector organizations are beginning to understand the importance of reputation, since its benefits are vital for their survival; a good organizational reputation among the stakeholders is acknowledged as reputational capital. This capital is claimed to contribute to reduced

transaction costs, easier recruitment, added employee loyalty as well as to the legitimacy of the organization (Staw and Epstein, 2000; Fombrun and van Riel, 2003; Tyler, 2006; Deephouse and Carter, 2005). Public sector organizations are often knowledge-based industries, and their reputation greatly depends on stakeholders' conceptions of their services (Fombrun, 1996). Stakeholder assessments have been introduced as possible measures of efficiency as well as claimed to contribute to organizational legitimacy (Deephouse and Carter, 2005; Claver et al 1999; Bolton, 2003; Luoma-aho, 2006; Staw and Epstein, 2000).

Research Methodology

Introduction

This section presents the research methodology that the researcher used in the study in order to achieve the objectives. It presents research design, target population, sampling procedure, data collection methods, data presentation and analysis and ethical consideration.

Research design

This study used survey design. It involved the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. The information was collected from corporate communication practitioners in the government ministries through their responses to questions. Survey design was used because it is easy to collect data in a large population of the government ministries within a short time. Findings were generalised to a large population. This determined current status of the situation on the ground in the government ministries on the contributions of reputation on their perception, thereby giving an opportunity to improve the situation accordingly. Data was generated from literate population in the corporate communications department through questionnaires (Orodho, 2002). The researcher was able to get the opinions of the respondents on the contributions of a reputation management on the government ministry public perception.

Target Population.

The target population refers to the entire group of individuals or objects of which the researcher is interested in generalizing the conclusions. It included the corporate communication practitioners and their deputy in government ministries since they are the people who directly deal with reputation and they were knowledgeable enough to give all the relevant information.

Sampling Procedure

The study used random sampling, where 9 ministries were randomly sampled. The study used purposive sampling, which is an informant selection tool where there is deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. The researcher has decided what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006), in this case

corporate communication officers and their deputy. Therefore, from the ministries the sample size was 18 respondents.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data through questionnaires.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data was collected and analyzed quantitatively using SPSS 18. This is because the researcher used both open ended and closed ended questions in the questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using percentages, graphs, frequency tables, and cross tabulation.

Results findings

| Contribution | No of respondents | Percentage | Rank |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Reach their goals | 5 | 27.8% | 10 |
| Prosper | 8 | 44.5% | 7 |
| Generating investment interest, | 6 | 33.3% | 9 |
| Attracting top employee talent | 3 | 16.7% | 11 |
| Motivating workers | 9 | 50% | 5 |
| Increasing job satisfaction | 8 | 44.5% | 7 |
| Generating more positive media coverage, | 16 | 88.9% | 1 |
| Garnering positive comments from analysts | 11 | 61.1% | 3 |
| Acceptance by stakeholders | 10 | 55.5% | 4 |
| Trust in the organization | 9 | 50% | 5 |
| Improve public perception | 14 | 77.7% | 2 |

Regarding contributions of reputation maintenance in government ministries, 88.9% indicated that reputation maintenance led to the generation of more positive media coverage. On the other, hand 77.7%, 61.1%, 55.5%, indicated that reputation maintenance had improved public perception, led to garnering of positive comments from analysts and acceptance by stakeholders. Further, 50% of the respondents indicated that it had led to increase in trust of the ministries and served as a motivation to workers while 44.5%, 33.3%, 27.8% and 16.7%

indicate reputation maintenance contributed to increased job satisfaction and prosperity, generated investment interest, led to reaching the ministries goals along with attracting top employee talent. On average, the results indicated that reputation maintenance contributions were immense although they are ranked in the order of their individual contribution. For instance, in ministries of planning and devolution and foreign affairs indicated that reputation maintenance led to the generation of more investment opportunities as investors are to a certain extent influenced by information released from government departments. These findings concur with those of Hall (1992) that the benefits of a positive corporate reputation in the public sector are an intangible asset contributing most to overall corporate success and that supports premium pricing and product quality, aids staff recruitment improves access to financial resources, attracts investors and inhibits the mobility of rivals. Positive corporate reputation enhances the organization's access to capital markets and generates a word-of-mouth endorsement and act as a barrier against imitation (Fombrun and Gardberg, 2000). Pihlstedt (2012) adds that good reputation gives a company premise for better economic results. In addition, good reputation attracts educated and knowledgeable work force as well as the right types of investors.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Contribution of reputation maintenance in government ministries

The study results revealed that reputation maintenance was an important and worthwhile undertaking by government departments. As such, the study established that reputation management generated extra positive media coverage, led to enhanced public perception, led to garnering of positive comments from analysts and acceptance by stakeholders. Further, the results established that reputation maintenance had increased the level of trust in the ministries and motivated employees leading to increased job satisfaction and prosperity. In addition, the study established that reputation maintenance generated investment interest and helped the ministries in reaching their goals and attracting top employee talent. On average, the study revealed that reputation maintenance contributions are immense although they are ranked in the order of their contribution and other were more important in some department than others. However, the study established that all ministries required reputation. These findings are similar to those of Fombrun and van Riel (2003) that reputation maintenance has been found to contribute to organizational stability, profit, performance and employee loyalty, and to ease recruitment and decrease transaction costs. The findings also concur with those of Staw and Epstein, (2000); Fombrun and van Riel, (2003); Tyler, (2006); Deephouse and Carter (2005) that a good organizational reputation among the stakeholders is acknowledged as reputational capital. This capital is claimed to contribute to reduced transaction costs, easier recruitment, and added employee loyalty as well as to the legitimacy of the organization. Luoma-aho, (2007) also found out that a good reputation creates a favorable operating environment even though it demands continuous maintenance and demonstration through good practices.

Recommendations

As per the study findings, the researcher recommends that heads of corporate communication departments seize the opportunity and lead by illustration. As such, most of the challenges complained about are common to both private and public institutions but the privately owned institution are at par concerning reputation maintenance. The researcher therefore advises that the departmental heads use the minimum resource allocated to their department in reputation maintenance.

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