

Role of Mass Media in Shaping Corporate Reputation and Brand Management

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of mass media on corporate reputation and brand management within branded companies. Employing a descriptive research design, the study investigates how mass media affects corporate reputation and brand identity from the perspectives of corporate employees. A sample of 396 respondents from various branded companies was selected using purposive sampling to provide diverse insights into the role of media in shaping corporate strategies. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, comprising sections on demographic profiles and perceptions of mass media's impact. The findings reveal that a significant majority of respondents perceive media coverage as crucial in influencing corporate reputation, with social media being recognized as more influential than traditional media. Positive media exposure is linked to enhanced brand perception, while negative coverage can impact internal corporate culture and employee morale. The study underscores the importance of strategic media engagement in maintaining a favorable public image and sustaining stakeholder trust.

Introduction

In today's digital age, mass media plays a significant role in shaping corporate reputation and brand management. As businesses grow increasingly global and interconnected, the impact of media on public perception has never been more influential. A company's reputation can be its greatest asset or its biggest liability, and mass media—from traditional outlets like television and newspapers to digital platforms such as social media and online news portals—acts as a powerful mediator between businesses and the public (Andrejczuk, M., 2010). The way in which corporations manage their media presence can substantially affect their brand identity, market performance, and stakeholder relationships (Gray, E. R., & Balmer, J. M., 1998).

Despite the rise of digital platforms, traditional mass media such as newspapers, radio, and television still hold significant sway over public opinion. These outlets are often seen as more credible and authoritative than social media, due in part to their editorial standards and professional journalism practices (Vogler, D., & Eisenegger, M., 2021). News coverage, whether positive or negative, can directly impact how a company is perceived by its consumers, investors, and the wider public. For example, investigative reports exposing unethical practices, such as poor labor conditions or environmental violations, can cause irreparable damage to a company's reputation. On the other hand, positive features highlighting corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives or financial successes can bolster a company's image and enhance its brand. Public relations teams spend significant resources managing relationships with journalists and media outlets, ensuring that their company's narrative is framed in the best possible light (Varey, R. J., 2013).

A well-managed media presence can also provide corporations with the opportunity to control the narrative. This is particularly important during crises. Corporations often release official statements through press releases, television interviews, or newspaper op-eds to mitigate reputational damage. In such situations, how the media frames the issue is crucial. A strategic response plan that includes proactive engagement with traditional media can help restore public trust and manage the company's reputation (Meadows, C. Z., & Meadows, C. W., 2016). With the advent of the internet and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook,

and Instagram, brand management has undergone a significant transformation. Unlike traditional media, where content is typically disseminated through a one-way communication model, social media offers companies the chance to engage directly with their audience in real-time. This has made managing corporate reputation both more complex and more dynamic (Agnihotri, A., 2014).

Review of literature

On social media, a single tweet or post can go viral in minutes, leading to widespread attention. While this presents an opportunity for companies to enhance their visibility and build stronger relationships with their customers, it also increases the risk of brand damage. A misstep—such as a poorly worded tweet or an insensitive campaign—can quickly lead to backlash, tarnishing the brand's reputation. Companies like Pepsi and United Airlines have faced this issue, where social media controversies went viral and severely impacted their public image (Carroll, C. E., 2016).

Brand management in the digital era is about creating consistent, authentic, and positive content that resonates with the target audience. Social media influencers and user-generated content play a large role in shaping brand identity. In fact, many consumers now rely more on influencer recommendations or peer reviews than traditional advertisements (De Chernatony, L., 1999). This shift in influence means that companies must carefully curate their online presence and maintain transparency to protect and enhance their brand image. Engaging in dialogues, addressing consumer complaints publicly, and promoting CSR initiatives through these channels can help companies project a favorable image (Wang, J., 2005).

One of the most critical moments for corporate reputation and brand management is during a crisis. Whether it is a product recall, environmental disaster, or public relations blunder, the role of mass media in these moments becomes even more critical. How a company handles a crisis in the media can either mitigate damage or exacerbate it (Syed Alwi, S. F., Melewar, T. C., Cuomo, M. T., & Schwaiger, M., 2020). Effective crisis communication involves crafting a clear, consistent message and delivering it through multiple media channels. Social media can be particularly useful in these scenarios because it allows companies to respond quickly and engage directly with concerned stakeholders (Pomering, A., & Johnson, L. W., 2009).

However, speed must be balanced with care to ensure that the response does not come across as reactive or poorly thought out. Additionally, companies need to work with traditional media to ensure accurate reporting and to provide key journalists with access to company representatives (Shamma, H. M., & Hassan, S. S., 2009).

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the influence of mass media on corporate reputation management in branded companies.
2. To evaluate the role of mass media in shaping brand identity from the perspective of corporate employees.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to explore the role of mass media in shaping corporate reputation and brand management. The descriptive design is appropriate for this study as it allows for the collection of data that can describe the impact and significance of mass media on corporate reputation and brand identity from the perspective of corporate employees. By examining the perceptions and experiences of individuals working in branded companies, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how media influences reputation and brand-related strategies.

The target population for this study comprises corporate employees from branded companies. A total of 396 respondents were selected to represent the sample. The sample size was determined to ensure sufficient coverage of various perspectives across different positions, experiences, and industries.

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants. Purposive sampling was chosen as it allows the researcher to focus on individuals who are directly involved in corporate operations, branding, or public relations, ensuring the relevance and depth of responses. Corporate employees in branded companies were selected based on their role in managing, interacting with, or being affected by mass media and brand management practices.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed specifically for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

- **Demographic Profile:** This section gathered information on the respondents' age, gender, education, years of experience, position in the company, and company size. This demographic information provided a context for understanding the diversity of the respondents and its possible influence on their perceptions of mass media's role.
- **Role of Mass Media in Shaping Corporate Reputation and Brand:** This section contained questions that directly addressed the research objectives. Likert scale questions were used to gauge the level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding the influence of traditional and digital media, the importance of media coverage, and the effectiveness of media strategies in managing corporate reputation and brand image.

Analysis and Interpretation

The table provides a demographic breakdown of the 396 respondents who participated in the study. It covers variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of experience, position within the company, and company size. The percentages were calculated based on the total sample size and provide insight into the diversity of the respondent pool.

Table No. 1: Percentage Analysis - Demographic Profile

Demographic Category	Category	Sample Size (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	62	15.70%
	26-35	133	33.60%
	36-45	101	25.50%
	46-55	58	14.60%
	56 and above	42	10.60%
Gender	Male	236	59.60%
	Female	139	35.10%
	Other	21	5.30%
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	117	29.50%
	Postgraduate	160	40.40%
	Doctorate	102	25.80%
	Others (Specify)	17	4.30%
Years of Experience	0-5 years	101	25.50%
	6-10 years	118	29.80%
	11-15 years	81	20.50%

	16-20 years	57	14.40%
	21 years and above	39	9.80%
Position in the Company	Entry-level	153	38.60%
	Mid-level management	137	34.60%
	Senior management	61	15.40%
	Executive leadership	45	11.40%
Company Size	Less than 100	42	10.60%
	100-500	98	24.70%
	501-1000	118	29.80%
	1001-5000	81	20.50%
	Above 5000	57	14.40%

Source: (Primary data)

In terms of age, the largest group (33.6%) consists of employees between the ages of 26 and 35. More than half of the respondents (59.6%) are male, and a substantial portion (40.4%) have completed postgraduate studies. Nearly 30% of respondents have 6-10 years of experience, and 38.6% work in entry-level roles. Additionally, 29.8% of the respondents work in companies that have 501-1000 employees. The spread of demographics in this sample ensures that the study captures perspectives from various segments of corporate professionals, enhancing the reliability of the findings on media's influence on corporate reputation and brand.

The table above provides the distribution of responses across the 396 corporate employees who participated in the study. The survey measures perceptions of mass media's role in shaping corporate reputation and brand, including media's impact, company engagement with traditional and social media, and opinions on crisis communication and stakeholder trust.

Table No. 2: Percentage Analysis - Role of mass media in creating reputation and shaping brand

Question	Category	Sample Size (n)	Percentage (%)
Impact of mass media coverage on company reputation	Strongly agree	133	33.60%
	Agree	158	39.90%
	Neutral	60	15.20%
	Disagree	30	7.60%
	Strongly disagree	15	3.80%
Positive media coverage improves brand perception	Very high extent	120	30.30%
	High extent	138	34.80%
	Moderate extent	86	21.70%
	Low extent	38	9.60%
	Very low extent	14	3.50%
Frequency of engagement with traditional	Very often	102	25.80%

media	Often	130	32.80%
	Occasionally	97	24.50%
	Rarely	50	12.60%
	Never	17	4.30%
Social media's role compared to traditional media	Strongly agree	155	39.10%
	Agree	127	32.10%
	Neutral	64	16.20%
	Disagree	31	7.80%
	Strongly disagree	19	4.80%
Effectiveness of crisis communication through mass media	Highly effective	101	25.50%
	Effective	142	35.90%
	Neutral	81	20.50%
	Ineffective	50	12.60%
	Highly ineffective	22	5.50%
Importance of media coverage in shaping consumer perceptions	Very important	163	41.20%
	Important	135	34.10%
	Neutral	63	15.90%
	Unimportant	24	6.10%
	Very unimportant	11	2.80%
Effect of negative media coverage on employee morale	Strongly negatively	104	26.30%
	Negatively	136	34.30%
	No effect	104	26.30%
	Positively	32	8.10%
	Strongly positively	20	5.10%
Influence of mass media on stakeholder trust	Very high degree	101	25.50%
	High degree	135	34.10%
	Moderate degree	95	24.00%
	Low degree	42	10.60%
	Very low degree	23	5.80%
Investment in media training or public relations	Yes	168	42.40%
	No	143	36.10%
	Not sure	85	21.50%
Role of influencers and digital media in brand recognition	Very high	110	27.80%
	High	125	31.60%
	Moderate	92	23.20%
	Low	45	11.40%
	Very low	24	6.10%

Source: (Primary data)

A significant proportion of respondents (73.5%) believe that mass media coverage impacts their company's overall reputation either strongly or moderately. When it comes to improving brand perception through positive media coverage, 65.1% of respondents perceive a high or very high extent of impact. Additionally, nearly two-thirds (63.6%) of participants agree that social media plays a more important role than traditional media in shaping brand image. The results indicate that mass media is considered highly influential in both internal

and external corporate environments, especially regarding reputation, stakeholder trust, and employee morale.

Findings

The study reveals several key insights about the demographic profile of the respondents and their views on the role of mass media in shaping corporate reputation and brand. The largest age group (33.6%) consists of employees between 26 and 35 years old, indicating that younger professionals dominate the workforce in this sample. A majority of respondents (59.6%) are male, while 40.4% hold postgraduate degrees, reflecting a well-educated corporate environment. In terms of experience, nearly 30% have 6-10 years of professional experience, and 38.6% work in entry-level positions, demonstrating that a significant portion of the sample consists of early to mid-career professionals. Additionally, 29.8% of the respondents are employed in companies with 501-1000 employees, ensuring that perspectives from mid-sized companies are well-represented.

When it comes to the influence of mass media, 73.5% of respondents believe that media coverage significantly impacts their company's reputation, with many strongly agreeing with this view. Furthermore, 65.1% of respondents believe that positive media coverage enhances their company's brand perception to a high or very high extent. Social media is seen as a more critical tool than traditional media for shaping brand image, with 63.6% of respondents agreeing on its greater importance. The findings suggest that mass media, including both traditional and social media, plays a vital role in influencing corporate reputation, stakeholder trust, and employee morale. The responses also reflect that many companies actively engage with mass media to manage their public image and respond to crises.

Conclusion

The study concludes that mass media has a profound and far-reaching influence on corporate reputation and brand management. A substantial majority of corporate employees recognize the significant role that both traditional and social media play in shaping public perception, with social media gaining a more prominent role in recent times. Positive media coverage is

seen as instrumental in enhancing brand perception, while negative coverage can potentially affect internal corporate culture and employee morale. Companies that invest in media engagement and public relations strategies appear better equipped to manage crises and maintain a favorable public image. Ultimately, the findings emphasize that strategic use of mass media is crucial for sustaining corporate reputation and ensuring stakeholder trust in today's media-driven world.

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