RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN BUILDING THE CORPORATE REPUTATION OF AN ORGANISATION:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TWO MANUFACTURING ORGANISATIONS IN GHANA

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Abstract

In a globalised world that is also very competitive, businesses are faced with the enormous challenge of surviving and staying strong. One of such big challenges is building and managing the reputation of the organisation. Corporate reputation has been identified over the years as one of the most important intangible assets of any organisation. The success of any organisation is strongly linked to how it is perceived by its stakeholders. Scholars across various disciplines, including marketing, sociology, communication and management have devoted much attention to this phenomenon. In order to build and manage a strong reputation, an organisation must be able to communicate effectively with the stakeholders. Effective communication allows an organisation to convince and persuade its stakeholders to remain loyal in the face of keen competition. Studies have shown that public relations should be at the forefront of such communication activities. Public relations facilitates the efforts of the organisation to build and manage a positive reputation in the eyes of its stakeholders. This paper tries to understand the relevance of public relations in building the corporate reputation of an organisation. The paucity of literature in a developing country like Ghana makes this research even more essential. The qualitative research approach was used in gathering data. Face to face interviews were held with two communication managers of two multinational companies to provide input for the research. Result demonstrated that public relations plays a critical role in building the reputation of an organisation. The day to day communication activities of an organisation's PR department coupled with other activities such as social responsibility, feedback and constant engagement with the publics contributes largely to positive evaluation of the organisation. This outcome has significant implications for the practice of public relations.

Key Words: Corporate Reputation, Public Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Stakeholder

Introduction

" He who steals my purse steals trash ... but he that filches from me my good name ... makes me poor indeed." OTHELLO *"*

Reputation building and organisational performance is a topic that has been discussed at length over the last two decades. Various literature provide evidence that suggest a strong link between a good corporate reputation and various intangible and tangible assets. Indeed the business scandals involving corporate organisations and low opinion the public tends to have of corporate organisations, especially in the past few years, demonstrates the need to build, maintain and defend reputation (Backhause & Tikoo, 2004; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Davies, Chun, Da Silva & Roper, 2003). According to Ernst and Young, in Burke, 2011, the investment community believes that 30 to 50 percent of a company's value is intangible.

Literature Review

Corporate reputation

The concept of reputation rest on what has traditionally been known as "public relations". Unfortunately public relations, in a bid to wean itself of the negativist tag, has in more recent decades taken on different identities such as "corporate communication, corporate affairs, and corporate relations among others. The recent addition of the term "reputation management" as a promotional tool for facilitating positive relations with the public has, in the words of Hutton, Goodman, Alexander & Genest, (2001), added to the identity crisis. What has worsened the situation is that, just like public relations itself, there is no single agreement on what constitute reputation. Varied definitions from both the academic and professional field suggest that reputation is really in "the eyes of the beholder". Whereas some define it as an intangible asset that represent the past actions of a firm and describe the ability of the firm to deliver value outcomes to multiple stakeholders (Schreiber, 2011; Mahon, 2002), others describe it as perceptions and attitudes held by individual members of a particular stakeholder group, that is; views about an organisation held by individuals outside of the organisation (Burke, 2011, Highhouse, Broadfoot, Yugo, & Devendorf, 2009; Schwaiger, 2004; Wartwick, 2002). Madhok (1995) identifies trust as an essential component in a world where business operates through cooperation and relationships.Shultze, Moritsen and Gabrielsen (2006) define it as derivative of other actions and behaviours of the firm. Grunig and Yang (2005) view reputation as a collective representation spread in the minds of multiple publics about an organisation over time. Schreiber (2011) after reviewing a number of definitions suggested two definitions, one from the perspective of the organisation and the other from the perspective of the stakeholders:

From the perspective of the organisation, reputation is an intangible asset that allows the company to better manage the expectations and needs of its various stakeholders, creating differentiation and barriers vis-à-vis its competitors. From the perspective of stakeholders, reputation is the intellectual, emotional and behavioural response as to whether or not the communications and actions of an organisation resonate with their needs and interests.

Barnett Jermier, and Lafferty (2006) also categorised reputation into three clusters after reviewing over 49 different definitions: a state of awareness, an assessment or evaluation, and an asset. Reputation as a state of awareness centres on reputation being the attention that a stakeholder gives an organization (i.e., stakeholders hold a general awareness but lack judgment about the organization); reputation as an assessment involves judgment and evaluation; and reputation as an asset emphasizes reputation as a value for the organization, which is tightly associated with its consequences.

Regardless of the definitions, one thing that is clear is that performance of an organisation is strongly

associated with its perceived reputation. Garcia and Doorley (2008) provide a formula for defining reputation as "sum of images = (performance and behaviour) + communication = sum of relationships". This definition also shows the value of communication in building reputation. Gibson, Gonzales, and Castanon (2006) postulate that "positive reputation facilitates and expedite the business of successful organisations, and conversely negative ones destroy individuals and organisations. Fombrum and Van Riel (2004) also suggest a good corporate reputation can attract customers to its products, investors to new investment, and media to favourable press coverage

Shreiber (2011) notes the importance of good reputation in blocking movement of competitors as well as producing returns to firms as they become difficult to imitate. An intangible asset ensures one has a competitive advantage as they are rare, valuable and difficult or costly to imitate, substitute and transfer (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001; Roberts & Dowling 2002; Peteraf, 1993). According to Watson and Kitchen (2010) "reputation was, is and will always be of immense importance to organisations, whether commercial, governmental or not-for-profits". The authors believe that good reputation opens the path to acceptance and approval by stakeholders. According to Men (2013) the fact that scholarship across major disciplines such as marketing, management, economics, sociology, and communication have attempted to identify possible drivers of favourable reputation shows its importance as an organisational asset.

Public relations role in organisations

The value of public relations in organisations has been demonstrated by scholars and professionals alike. Rensburg and Cant (2004) suggest that public relations exist in every organisation and institution whether the organisation recognises it or not. Every action of an organisation, from phone calls to welcoming a visitor, newsletters and other activities leaves an imprint in the mind of stakeholders. An organisation whose portrayed identity does not sync with the image perceived by its public is likely to suffer reputational damage. Throughout the world, public relations has become a central pillar in the effort to communicate effectively with stakeholders.

Public relations is about developing and building an effective relationship between an organisation and its public through the use of communication (Wilcox & Cameron, 2012; Broom & Sha, 2012, Butterick, 2011). Public relations researchers believe that PR is a deliberate attempt to build the image and reputation of a business in a social context (Sharma, Sharma, & Sharma, 2013). The value of public relations can therefore not be overlooked due to the fact that PR is an essential factor in deciding the success of any organisation by developing and fostering its corporate reputation (Sharma et al. 2013).

Organisations are sometimes seen as the nexus of relationships (Jones, 1995) and having a good relationship with multiple stakeholders may be the core value of an organisation (Phillips, 2006). However, the ability to truly manage multi-stakeholder relationship cannot be wholly successful without the involvement of the public relations or communications manager. This is emphasised by Grunig and Hon (1999) who articulate that apart from the CEO, the communications profession may be the only management function that takes multi-stakeholder perspective. Van Ruler and Verčič (2002), in the Bled Manifesto, aptly sum up the role of public relations as the voice of the multi-stakeholder:

What distinguishes the public relations manager when he sits down at the table from other managers is that he brings to the table a special concern for broader societal issues and approaches to any problem with a concern for the implications of organisational behaviour towards and in the public sphere. It is precisely this concern that is implicit in definitions of public relations as "relationships management" and as "communication management", in both "image management" and "reputation management" (16).

The ability to build and manage reputation is therefore a critical component of the public relations profession. Public relations provides an institutional structure for coordinating all communication with the aim of establishing and maintaining a favourable reputation between an organization and its public (Cornelissen 2004). Wilcox, Cameron and Reber (2015) report of the

result of a survey of marketing executives by PRWeek which suggested that public relations is ranked higher in effectiveness than advertising and marketing in nine areas, including management of corporate reputation. Public relations in essence contributes highly to the development, good functioning and sustainability of any organisation. PR professionals have the ability to identify, establish and extend an organisation's sphere of influence thereby helping to establish the organisation's corporate identity and corporate reputation (Lukusa, 2009).

Public relations and corporate reputation

Discussions on the role that PR professionals play/ or are expected to play in building and managing the reputation of an organisation, especially in the digital age when there is an unprecedented high expectations on companies' openness, visibility, transparency, and authenticity (Men, 2013) is well documented. Several articles on the topic have been published in various communication and business journals showing a strong link between organisational reputation and organisational effectiveness (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004; Gibson, Gonzales, & Castanon, 2006; Hong & Yang, 2011; Yang & J. Grunig, 2005).In its definition of PR, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR, UK) for instance, places emphasis on reputation management as a key component of PR. According to the CIPR, " Public relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics." The purpose of public relations is to manage reputation by communicating and building good relationship with every organisation's stakeholders. A similar statement is made by the London School of Public Relations (LSPR, 2015) who believe that PR is evolving into a multi-disciplinary subject that can best be termed as "reputation management". A study by Fortune 500 also suggest that reputation management is evolving as a driving philosophy behind corporate public relations. This is corroborated by

PRNews(2000) which asserts that measuring reputation is a fundamental function of the PR department. According to PRNEWS, "one of the real values that PR brings is as a protector and developer of corporate reputation. L'Etang (2008) further notes that public relation involves the analysis of the activities of the organisation which may in one way or the other have effects on the company. Conversely, it is not "customer care" or just "promotion" of the company's reputational view but it is the anticipation of analysis of new issues that when they emerge will have great impact on the organisation and how the public of this organisation will see it. Schreiber (2011) points out that focusing on reputation management allows the practitioners to build real value for their organisations through relationships, trust, and positive business result. However, building the corporate reputation of an organisation is not easy due to the position that practitioners sometimes find themselves in. Sharma et al, (2013) suggest that it is time for PR practitioners to play their proper role towards building and promoting a positive image for their organisations. This can only be possible if practitioners are allowed to be part of the "dominant coalition" i.e take part in the formulation of policy at the stage of initiation, analysis and preparation. Grunig and Dozier (1992) argue that "Public relations must be placed high in the organization's hierarchy and must be practiced strategically if it is to make the more effective and, thus, to be excellent". Owizy (2013) concurs by indicating that for public relations to properly build and sustain a company's reputation, the profession must be granted greater recognition. Ngozika (2014), based on his research on the impact of public relations on a corporate organisation, indicated the need for PR practitioners to be consulted in policy formulation as their contributions are quite significant. Kochar (2013) measured the impact of a public relations campaign on the perceived corporate reputation of BP, in the wake of the oil crisis. The survey tried to understand the perceptions of residents of Florida after the oil spill and the Gulf Coast Restoration Campaign. Result showed that campaign effectiveness is an important indicator of corporate reputation and the success of a campaign is reflected in perceived corporate reputation. The result however indicated that the campaign was not successful in changing the

negative perception of its stakeholders. Johan and Noor (2013) also found a correlation between corporate communication and corporate reputation in their research on the role of corporate communication in building organisation's corporate reputation.

The discussion so far shows how reputation represent an oganisation's past and present performance and "portrays the ability to deliver reliable desirable results to various stakeholders...

.....Reputation is arguably the single most valued organizational asset. Consequently, a positive and linear relationship exists between reputation and organizational success. Positive reputations facilitate and expedite the business of successful organizations and conversely negative ones damage or destroy individuals and organisations"(Gibson, Gonzales, Leigh & Jaclynn 2006).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to understand how organisations in Ghana use public relations to build corporate reputation, especially from a different cultural context. Much of the discussion on this subject in the academic world has mainly been from the Western view point with little or no contribution from Africa. In this view theoretical development is purely based on western perspective which may or may not apply in different cultures. Although public relations is steadily becoming an integral part of organisations in developing countries such as Ghana (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009) not much is known about how the profession is used to build and maintain reputation. The result is that empirical evidence about the practice of the profession in other parts of the world is very scarce. Scholars therefore advocate for a descriptive account of public relations practice from individual countries to enhance the body of knowledge currently in existence, especially as public relations is now a global enterprise. One key area where there is a

paucity of literature, especially in a developing country like Ghana is corporate reputation and the role PR plays in it. The paucity of literature leaves a vacuum which needs to be filled. The problems to be addressed therefore is based on the following: To investigate how organisations in Ghana use public relations to build corporate reputation with a focus on the manufacturing industry. The study will therefore contribute to literature and understanding of how public relations is practiced from a different cultural setting. This is in line with evidence from various studies(Sriramesh 2009; Bartlet and Gupta 2007; Rhee, 2005; Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009; Kiambi, 2012) which shows that public relations cannot be practiced the same way in different settings and that a number of factors come into play in determining how PR is practiced. This paper therefore seeks to examine how PR practitioners in two manufacturing companies use communication/PR to manage/build reputation.

Profile of the Multinational Organisations

For the purposes of confidentiality, the names of the two multinational companies will not be used in this study. This brief description will therefore be based on the products they offer. The two multinational companies are both manufacturing companies that have been operating in Ghana since the early 1990's.

The first company is into the manufacturing and marketing of carbonated soft drinks and two water brands. The second company is one of the leading manufacturers of alcoholic beverages in Ghana. However it also produces non-alcoholic beverages including one of the Malt brands.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study the qualitative method was used to gather information from two communication managers of two multinational manufacturing companies. These companies are members of the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana and are also members in good standing. Two face-to-face in-depth interviews, lasting approximately sixty minutes, were conducted at the offices of the participants. An in-depth interview is an extensive one-on-one personal communication through which a lot of information can be acquired (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). This helps to provide clearer understanding into the study. The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it enabled the researcher collect rich data from public relations practitioners. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) the wealth of detail provided by the in-depth interview serves as a great benefit. It therefore helped in gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of the role and perceived contribution of PR in the above-mentioned organisations. Before the interview started, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and got permission to record the interview. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions meant to examine how public relations is used to improve corporate reputation.

Data Analysis

Data collected were transcribed in accordance with the objectives of the study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) qualitative analysis consist of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis followed the techniques outlined by Miles and Huberman. Recurring themes and patterns were identified through the use of data reduction, short summaries and field notes. For the purpose of analysis the communication managers of the two manufacturing companies will be labelled as CM1 and CM 2 respectively.

Results

Nature of public relations: Van Heerden (2004) points out that public relations has evolved from generating "mere publicity" to building "confidence, accountability and transparency". Grunig (2001) also emphasises this by observing that PR is becoming more of a management function than a technical communication. This means that practitioners have now become strategic counsellors who are less preoccupied with publicity in the mass media. The corporate communication managers of both organisations asserted that public relations has moved from the era of being seen as just carrier of messages (publicity) to become a management function. It has become a day to day affair of drawing up strategies, meeting with the media, attending conferences and linking with other departments for the smooth running of the organisation. CM1 noted that PR is about actively engaging with internal and external publics of an organisation. According to her "The practice has shifted to become a management function where we attend meeting with the other managers on regular basis and contribute to key decision making in order to satisfy the needs of our customers." This also corroborate the definition of public relations by Dibb, Simkin, Ferrell and Pride (2006) as "managing and controlling the process of using publicity effectively and it is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its target publics."

Concept of Corporate Reputation: In the view of the two practitioners, corporate reputation is what people say about the organisation and it is normally based on the track record of the company. CM1 stressed that "reputation is something that is done repeatedly over time. This is something that people regularly know you for or what you do consistently

and what people know you for. For instance, if an organisation is known for its credibility, that is the organisation's reputation and it is not the other way round." According to CM2 "reputation is what an organisation is known for and how the people within and outside the organisation perceive it and it is built and managed through deliberate and planned efforts of strategies and programmes."

Reputation can therefore be defined in terms of (1) the general estimation in which a person is held by the public, (2) the state or situation of being held in high esteem, (3) a specific characteristic or trait recognized in a person or thing: a reputation for courtesy(Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011).

Public Relation and Corporate Reputation: Public relations is all about managing the reputation of one's organisation. It involves product quality, employee engagement, and good investor relations. It plays different roles in achieving the desired reputation of the organisation. One of the key strategies often used to build reputation is corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR is seen as a modern tool for establishing accountability in the business world, especially in a competitive environment. The idea of CSR is based on the reciprocal dependence between an organisation and society (Gholami, 2011). Companies now engage in CSR activities as a means of enhancing and strengthening the reputation of their brands and even boosting their bottom lines.Good corporate reputation has a strategic value for the organization that possesses it. Corporate reputation ensures acceptance and legitimacy from stakeholder groups, generates returns and may offer a competitive advantage as it creates or forms an asset that is difficult to imitate by competitors (Caven & Nomathema, 2014). The two communication managers pointed out that CSR is one of the mechanisms they use to build their organisations reputation. CM2 commented on this:

"CSR is one way that helps our company to build a very good reputation. For instance every year, we have different things we do here. Sometimes we bring in eye specialists from Spain to embark on free eye screening and eye care for the less privileged in the society and this has helped to raise how people especially our consumers see us to be and keep our brand in their minds."

Similarly CM1 made contributing remarks to this view that CSR is one clear way through which they build their reputation. She stated that in her organisation, one thing they stress is that helping others is very good for business and they also believe that an organisation cannot operate in an environment and not impact the community in which the organisation is situated, so definitely the company's presence should affect the community in a positive way:

"We have instituted a programme called the Local Raw Material Agenda where the brewery sources local raw materials such as cassava to produce beer. Previously, the farmers that grow the cassava usually cultivated on small scale because there was not a ready market for them but now they produce on large scale because we will need them to produce our beer. This is intended to sustain their livelihood so they do not become financially handicapped after marketing all their cultivations."

The communication managers of the two companies also emphasised that putting value on publicity helps to build and maintain a corporate reputation. In doing this, care is taken as to what goes out for the public knowledge. CM2 explained that "The biggest asset of every business is its reputation therefore putting a great value on publicity helps because that is what the public will know you for so if your reputation is gone, it's gone and you cannot place certain value on yourself as in the organisation."

Factors that drive reputation: The literature suggest a number of factors that drive positive organisational reputation. These include effective two-way communication (Murray & White, 2005; Men 2013), provision of good value and quality products and services (Dowling, 2004), strong financial performance (Fombrum et al., 200), workplace environment, (Dowling, 2004), social responsibility and accountability (Helm, 2005), and quality relationships with strategic publics (Yang, 2007). Men (2011) categorises these factors into three main domains: corporate capabilities, social accountability, and strategic capabilities. In line with these, the communication managers were asked about the factors that drive reputation in their respective organisations. Factors mentioned include

the desire for acceptance of the organisation's products and/ or service, positive feedback, being part of the organisation, interest from investors, and corporate social responsibility. CM2 added that the "responsiveness to the product or what the organisation is engaged in is one major determinant of how the public see your company to be. Another thing is that when there is innovativeness, it brings a sort of difference to the way the organisation is run. And I will also say that corporate social responsibility is a key variable that determines the reputation of a company."

The two-way Symmetrical model: The two-way symmetric model, which is described as practicing excellent public relations(Grunig and Hunt, 1984), focuses on ensuring that decisions of organisations are mutually beneficial between the organisation and its public. The model embraces negotiation between an organisation and its public as well as fostering mutual understanding. The two-way model provides an organization with the tools and path needed to create a strong organisational reputation built upon solid, long-lasting relationships, because both the organization and its audiences are provided with a voice in processes and developing issues or problems. The two-way symmetrical model for communication maintains both the organization's best interests and its audiences' best interests at the forefront in the most fair and balanced way possible. Through the use of this model, both the organization and its audiences can collaborate together to both grow and strengthen an overall organization, leading it to greater success (Grunig 2006).

Communication practices by the two organisations is mainly two-way. The respondents said they engaged in constant communication between customers and organisation. Customer feedback is taken seriously and worked on. This allows the organisation to build relationship with the

customers, leading to the creation of reputation for the organisation. In the words of CM1 "when our customers have issues with our products, there is a product complaints department where all complaints from our vendors and consumers are received and assessed and then feedback is given to the complainant. If there is the need for the customer to come to us, we arrange for that too. These, we believe help our stakeholders and consumers get close to us and subsequently raise our reputation." CM2 concurs with this view: "There are different stakeholders when it comes to what we do but we make sure we do not keep them afar. What we do is that, we occasionally have our promotions where we can get to interact with them through the various media platforms but most importantly, we have a customer service department where we give the numbers to the consumers to report to us anything and we do all we can to act upon what they request for or complain about."

Du Plessis (2000) notes that even though the two way symmetrical model seems at the kick-off to be the ideal model for public relations practitioners, Grunig and Grunig (1989:3) admit that few organizations apply this model in practice because their world-view of public relations does not correspond with the characteristics of this model. Grunig and Grunig (1996) however argue strongly that the model allows practitioners to "play key roles in adjusting or adapting behaviours of institutional dominant coalition, thus bringing publics and dominant coalition closer together." Through two way-way communication the two organisations have managed to build their reputation by constantly responding to customer issues and providing essential feedback as well as provision of CSR activities. They believe that when people are helped they tend to like the organisation and promote the organisation's products and services. Both parties benefit in the end.

Discussion

The finding from the in-depth interview sheds light on the activities of public relations department especially with regards to building reputation. It is evident that the building of reputation is a core

business of public relations. Public relations practitioners do not only manage information flow, they actively engage key publics, establish strong relationships, strive to maintain a sound reputation

at all times and through all circumstances and through PR measurement, help the organisation achieve strategic organisational goals (Public Relations Society of America – PRSA, 2012).

Public relations departments are often seen as playing the "boundary role". They operate at the edge of the organisation by serving as a link of communication between the organisation and its publics. They are able to represent the views of the external publics and their likely reactions to decisions. The boundary role of the public relations department therefore allows it to serve as a central-intelligence gathering function (Gregory, 2012). The two communication managers in the manufacturing companies demonstrated evidence of playing the boundary covering role. They do not only send information to the media for broadcast but they also draw strategies and place value on these strategies for them to be executed. Similarly, they do not just exist as a department but engage in the strategic role of environmental scanning and making key decisions. Available literature shows scanning and monitoring the environment through constant audits to identify threats and opportunities is a way for PR to contribute to organisational strategy, effectiveness and excellence and reputation as a whole (Steyn & Puth 2000). They also bring the public's view point to the organisation which helps in any decision making and also take the organisation's side of a story to the public. Thus it can be said that the major role public relations practitioners' play is to serve as intermediaries between an organisation and its stakeholders or publics.

What is clear from the study, as indicated by Broom and Dozier (1997), is that public relations practitioners are problem-solvers and they also serve as advisors to senior management. They are responsible for extensive programme results and therefore perform the role of a communication facilitators and problem solving facilitators. This further strengthens their boundary spanning roles. The ability to influence strategic decision making through the insight they offer to management about the organisation's environment, and in particular about the organisation's relationship with key stakeholders within its environment (Kitchen, 2006).

The outcome of the study reveals that the pursuit of reputation building is not without its challenges. A key challenge is getting budgets approved. Respondents expressed concern that approval of budget tend to take a long time compared to other departments such as marketing. Sometimes they are forced to defend their budget before management decide to approve. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2003) note that public relations departments can only succeed if management/ the dominant coalition places a high value on public relations. Fawkes (2004) suggests that in the integrated communication process, marketing or advertising tends to achieve a dominant share of resources and relegates other areas to support roles. Though public relations is highly valued in the organisations, it still appears to compete with marketing for recognition. The widening of the media landscape, especially the traditional media, and the attendant influx of non-professionals was also seen as a major challenge. Such journalists, according to the communication managers, are unable to properly tell the story of the organisation and sometimes create problems for the organisations with their reportage. A positive media coverage is key to effective reputation and where this fails, it can affect the organisation.

What is of interest is that most of the efforts aimed at building and managing reputation is centred on the external publics despite the comments by the two communication managers that reputation management is both internal and external. Fombrum and Van Riel (2004) stress the importance of looking at reputation from the internal perspective: "Internally, a good corporate reputation helps attract and retain talents, acculturate employees, engage them in dialogues, cooperation and citizenship behaviors, and generate greater employee productivity" In view of this, more effort should be put into promoting positive corporate reputation at the internal level as well.

There is also the need to ensure that two-way symmetrical communication is effectively practiced. The two organisations can ensure effective symmetrical communication by recruiting more professionals who have formal training in public relations and are aware of the value of symmetrical communication. Excellent public relations practice

was practiced in the two organisations although this was not predominant. Involvement in management meetings, integration of communication functions at the decision making level, and in some cases, two-way communication were present.

Conclusion

The study analysed how public relations is used to build reputation among manufacturing companies. This study has implications for theory and practice of public relations. It seems professionals focus more on CSR, sponsorships and customer service oriented programmes as a means to build and maintain reputation. Most of the drivers of reputation, with the exception of CSR, effective two-way communication, and provision of good value and quality products and services, tend to be missing from the practice of corporate reputation management in Ghana. There is the need for scholarship to broaden the global discussion on corporate reputation to cover other cultures especially in view of the fact that different socio-economic, political and cultural factors tend to affect the practice of public relations, as postulated by numerous research. The body of knowledge on this subject can only be complete with literature on the knowledge and practice in other cultural context. This also means practitioners must constantly measure and redefine the drivers of reputation in order to properly gauge public perception of their reputation.

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