COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS IN POSITIONING REPUTATION ON VALUE

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Abstract - The concept of reputation in corporate development comes to the fore as one of the most frequently discussed topics in recent years. Many organizations, which make worldwide investments, make effort in order to adapt themselves to the topics within the scope of this concept and to promote the name of the organization through the values that might become prominent. The stakeholder groups are considered as the most important actors determining reputation. Even, the effect of stakeholders is not evaluated as a direct factor, it is signed as indirect effects of their perception are very strong on ultimate reputation. It is foreseen that the parallelism between the projected reputation and ultimate reputation, which is established as a result of communication experiences perceived by stakeholders, has an important effect on achieving this objective.
Within this scope, this paper aims to examine the latest dynamics of reputation in the aspect of stakeholders. The main difference of this study is containing different stakeholders' point of view about the components that create the corporate reputation. Despite the fact, the other aspects of the reputation are studied widely, the communication aspect of reputation was not discussed enough. Under the umbrella of reputation components, this paper is an inspiring resource for positioning reputational value by using the influences of social stakeholders and collaboration with governmental stakeholders.

Index Terms - Collaborative Communication, Reputation Management, Stakeholders Engagement, Ultimate Reputation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Reputation is the most precious asset of our time for both global and local corporations. In addition to communication practices, reputation is also a popular area for researchers and academicians. The corporate world centralized reputation as "a vital element of an organization's sources together with its benefits in financial performance and social innovation"(Watson & Kitchen,2008:2). A strong reputation provides economic and social profits to a corporation by its proven associations such as trustworthy, credibility or quality.By the increasing awareness of managers about the vital role of the brands and corporations intangible elements, image and value become primary issues on annual strategic plans.
Reputation is defined as the sum of the associations, images and symbols about the corporations on target audience's mind (Aaker,2009). In a simple explanation reputation "is the stakeholders' composed perception on the corporate skills of meeting expectations" (Çakır,2016:23). As Fombrun put it, "the reputation is depicted as the general estimation of the association by its audiences, which can be communicated by the net emotional responses of customers, speculators, workforce, and furthermore the public at large"(1996:4). Communication efforts are the main device to transmit the created associations about the corporations on target audience's mind. Due to this reason, reputation became the most worked on the topic among the communications professionals.As well as the tangible components of reputation such as financial performance or compliance with laws and regulation, also the communication and marketing components such as corporate social responsibility has started to be considered significant factors in reputation management.

There is a much different type of communication strategies and efforts have been applied by corporations to create, provide and sustain a strong reputation. Especially, the key position of image makes the professional take into consideration of deeper researches about the components of reputation. Although the difficulties of measuring the reputation, it is clearly seen that there is a direct proportion between the reputation and the image(Genel,2017).As Fombrun(1996) noticed that there is difference between projected and ultimate image, which affects the last components of reputation on publics' mind. Therefore, stakeholders' perception, attitudes and thoughts generate most part of ultimate reputation. This situation leads the requirement of consideration about to measure the connotations of corporations' on stakeholders' mind.

Despite the corporate communication managers plan strategies to position reputation, in the end, the researchers that aim to classify the components of excellent reputation show that stakeholders' perception and attitude create the most associations with the corporate reputation (McGuire, Schneeweis, & Branch, 1990; Szwajkowski&Figlewicz, 1999). Although many researchers are trying to classify the components of corporate reputation, the components have constantly been changing by the differentiation and improvement of the consumer's experiences and perceptions (Fomburn,1996).In this aspect, many reputation measurements are based on stakeholders' perception and the components identified by stakeholders due to managers have no acknowledge the ultimate reputation (Doorley&Garcia,2007). The role of ultimate image on reputation brought the importance of stakeholders. Under the effects of them, the corporate identity managers needed to analyze their

marketing requirements and thus developed new approaches. The mentioned requirement stemmed from the differentiated approach and expectations of stakeholders.

II.THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS ON PROJECTED REPUTATION

Manukian(2015) explained stakeholders as the individual that has interest in the economic performance of an organization because of the benefits to be gained from this performance (8).The role of the perceived image on reputation brought the importance of stakeholders. Even if the stakeholders don't have direct effects on the efforts of the organization, it is known that their indirect effects on the corporate reputation are very powerful (Matuleviciene&Stravinskiene,2015).

Freeman (2004) emphasized that, beyond the interaction between the stakeholders and organizations, the effects of stakeholders on the organization are higher, because they represent a mass level of power. The indirect effects of stakeholders on the corporate reputation plays important role in reputational positioning. From this aspect, it can be seen that, for any organization, building the stakeholder communications and interactions accurately and maintaining the strong cooperation and communication with them play a positive role in organization's reputation. Besides that, the indirect effect of communicational efforts made towards the stakeholders on the reputation of an organization is thought to play important role in reputation positioning. From this aspect, accurate construction of stakeholder communication and interaction by the institution or organization, and maintaining strong cooperation and communication with them are projected to play a positive role in corporate reputation. As emphasized by Matuleviciene and Stravinskiene (2015), "the organization must try to maintain the relationships, to satisfy the stakeholder expectations, to coordinate the performance and to consider the stakeholder interests" (78). The positive and negative effects of stakeholders on the corporate reputation are thought to being provided through the collaborative communications. These effects give rise to the idea that the stakeholders have also effect on the positioning of corporate reputation in terms of the sustainability. Active participation of stakeholders in the efforts having an important place in plans of many organizations in recent years indicates that the organization would be able to advance more easily. Especially, the usage of mobile technologies and populated social media information lead the corporations rethink the importance of reputation more carefully.Reputation has become to consider with having and caring sustainable relationships with corporations' stakeholders. As Hodge and Hardi(1997) stated

"In general terms the idea of sustainability is the persistence of certain necessary and desired characteristics of people, their communities and organizations, and the surrounding ecosystem over a very long period of time. The idea expresses the interdependence between people and the surrounding world" (7).

Many of the fundamental components of good relationships such as trust, mutual respect, and understanding are intangible and they develop and evolve over time; individuals and organizations should design their engagement strategies in line with the needs of their respective projects (Klijn, Esheus&Braun, 2012). Therefore, the process requires strong leadership for a conscious participation of all stakeholders and to achieve a consensus and continuity of participation (Killbourne,2004).
Especially, the participation of social stakeholders is the most important and hard type of relationship. Social stakeholders are identified as the stakeholder group that organization has organic link or partnership with the stakeholders(Turker,2008).

There are many different groups of stakeholders for a corporation that it should have direct or indirect relationships, which is very important to sustain corporation's life cycle in the related market. Various values within the scope of strategic communication constitute the reputation, on which it is planned to place the corporate. It is foreseen that the parallelism between the projected reputation and the ultimate corporate reputation that is defined as the last opinion of stakeholders, which is established as a result of communication experiences perceived by the stakeholders, has an important effect on achieving these objectives. In assessing the effectiveness of these efforts, the opinions of stakeholders are widely utilized. In other words, the projected reputation, in which the positive and/or negative reflections of corporate communication play an effective role, is measured through how the stakeholders perceptively position the organization. From this perspective, it is thought that the interaction and cooperation of corporate communication professionals with different stakeholder groups during the reputation positioning efforts play a significant role in achieving the targeted reputation or in the sustainability of this value. It is asserted that especially, applying collaborative communications approachestowards governmental stakeholders is an important factor determining the mass reputation perception.

Governmental stakeholders are the one of the most crucial group among the stakeholders due to representing the legitimate procedures. Additionally, publics commonly have positive opinion about the corporation,if the corporation has a partnership with governmental institutions or if the corporations support the social projects of these institutions. From this

aspect, strong relationships and partnerships with governmental stakeholders consist a considerable force for creating or sustaining powerful reputation on publics' mind.

III. THE POWER OF COLLABORATION GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS IN POSITIONING REPUTATION ON VALUE

Nowadays, the stakeholder groups are considered as the most important actors determining the reputation. The most important reason of this is that the organizations, regarding which the governmental stakeholders have positive perception, inspire more confidence to the mass stakeholders. At this point, the organizations carrying out joint projects with governmental stakeholders in parallel with sustainable communication approach come to the fore as the organizations having strong reputation, whereas the reputation of organizations, which fall behind in this regard or which cannot establish the efficiency from this aspect, is thought to be perceived as weak. Similarly, the social responsibility campaigns, in which the governmental stakeholders are involved and which play an efficient role in strengthening the reputation, are thought to draw more attention.

The organizations, which aiming to position the reputation on period-specifically varying values, should determine a strategic communication approach regarding the cooperation with governmental stakeholders, and it is asserted that adopting a communications approach prioritizing the stakeholder participation for the sustainability and success of efforts regarding the awareness towards value, on which the reputation is to be positioned, is a prerequisite of achieving a positive feedback in relation with the aforementioned value. In contrast to their key role, the projects are very limited that is applied to being a partner of governmental stakeholders. Alongside, the characteristic of relationship with governmental stakeholders is a research area with limited studies. The importance of stakeholders' perception has been revealed in many studies grounded on RQ measurement dimensions (Galdberg,2006). As the Fombrun and Van Riel stress(1997), the compelling factor of stakeholders' perception and actions on company's reputation a study conducted by Gardberg in 2006 in different countries such as Athens and Netherlands shown that stakeholders have a dominant role in projected reputation and general perception. The RQ model has been adapted to Turkish national values by Kadıbeşegil(2015) to collect more detailed data about the stakeholders' consideration of corporations. Although the researchers have shown that the governmental stakeholders' impact on the public, the perception and expectations of this group of stakeholder is not measured enough. From this perspective, the role and effect of governmental stakeholders on the reputation positioning is discussed in this study. In parallel with this objective, it is aimed to reveal perspectives of seven governmental stakeholders towards the cooperation in reputation positioning. The sample group representing the governmental stakeholders is examined under the lights of results obtained from in-depth interviews with the executives of different ministries.

IV. THE PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS IN TURKEY

In scope of the study, the projected reputation, in which the positive and/or negative reflections of corporate communication play an effective role, is measured through how the stakeholders perceptively position the organization.In Turkey, however, it can be seen that there is a limited number of studies on the components of corporate reputation. Şatir and Sümer,who investigated the effects of healthcare facilities and services on the reputation, stated about "the insufficiency of country-based studies on this subject" (2006:18). Even, it is the most popular discussion issue of public relations area in both practically and academically, the researched based studies are very limited that monitor the perceptions and expectations of stakeholders. In the scope of the interviews applied to seven different Turkish ministries executives, it is clearly observed that collaborative communications approach is the most important issue of corporation's image. The results of the study shown that the corporations, which apply strong communication approaches or the corporations recurring their visits to governmental stakeholders frequently have a strong perception in terms of corporate reputation. Strong communication skills make the stakeholders think the corporation as a credible one and potential actor of the sector. The corporations that have a weak relationship with institutions perceived as an unknown corporation and identified as a corporation with a weak reputation. The main insight that is obtained by the interviews is having collaboration with governmental stakeholders in the projects that are designed for public profit such as healthy life campaigns or social responsibility campaigns that aims to increase public awareness. Despite the corporations apply lots of social responsibility campaigns, they are not volunteered to integrate their power to the campaigns that are organized by governmental institutions.Whereas, the capability of governmental stakeholders can help to strengthen position reputation on an emotional value such as social sensitivity.

The most of the participants mentioned that corporations are usually do not prefer to integrate their social responsibility resources into the governmental projects or campaigns. This makes the institutions rethink these types of corporations' role in the domain and position the corporation as a distant one.

Institutions expect to the partnership of corporations to the social sensitivity projects and public awareness campaigns to make a sense of collaboration on public's mind, which may help to solve the social issues more quickly and positively. When the corporate develop the positive and strong relationship with governmental stakeholders, it also provides to decrease the differences between projected and ultimate reputation. It is observed that the parallelism between the projected reputation and ultimate reputation, which is established as a result of communication experiences perceived by stakeholders, has an important effect on achieving these objectives. In assessing the effectiveness of these efforts, the opinions of stakeholders are widely utilized (Manzaranes,Correa,Sharma,2008). The other important point of collaboration is being effective to engage stakeholders' in the strategic communications campaigns.The collaboration communications approached that are applied to invest a partnership on a social issue is defined as an important leadership ability among the participants. The executives of institutions consider that these groups of corporations should de supported to increase masses' opinion about the corporate in order to sustain their contribution in the domain. This leads to gain governmental stakeholders' support for creating the masses' opinion on the corporate reputation on a positive value.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Changing communication technologies shorten the distance between the masses, and ease taking action in harmony with the same objective. The cooperation of business world with its close stakeholders, and the cooperative operation in harmony with the objectives, to which they can commit, and even the increase in recognition in this regard can be possible only through the communication. It is considered that the collaborative communications skills is effective on the reputation of organizations prioritizing the long-termed and consistent communication approach, the network relationships strengthen the organization's reputation, and the objectives of organization become more prominent and understandable. As in any field, relationship communications also has an important role in reputation, and it affects all other activities.

The governmental stakeholders having intense communication with mass stakeholder groups are within the most effective stakeholder groups of organization. The most important reason of this is that the organizations, regarding which the governmental stakeholders have positive perception, inspire more confidence to the mass stakeholders. At this point, the organizations carrying out joint projects with the governmental stakeholders in parallel with collaborative communication approaches come to the fore as the organizations having strong reputation, whereas the reputation of organizations, which is fall behind in this regard or which cannot establish the efficiency from this aspect, is thought to be perceived as weak. Similarly, the social responsibility campaigns, in which the governmental stakeholders are involved and which play efficient role in strengthening reputation, are accepted to draw more attention.

In conclusion, it is clear that collaboration with stakeholders is the key driver of public's motivation for the corporation. From this perspective, it is considered that the interaction and collaboration of corporate communication professionals with different stakeholders groups during the reputation positioning efforts play the significant role in achieving the targeted reputation or in sustainability positioned value. Additionally, the participation of these groups have impact on some of the reputational components such as credibility, sustainability, leadership.

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