

**Key strategies used by Armenian telecommunication companies to manage  
their corporate reputation through online platforms**

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## **Introduction**

For a company to be attractive to potential customers it is important to ensure high standards of product and service quality, to be accessible and available for any stratum of society. It needs to be transparent in terms of its operation, intentions and goals set. However with the development of the world the requirements and demands of the society towards any company also changes.

And those changes are partially connected to the development of technologies and to the appearance of newly established companies in the market.

It the 21st century, when there are thousands of companies providing the same goods and services, it is challenging for companies to stand out, be different and unique. Nowadays, customers pay much attention to and make their decisions based on reading other peoples' comments on the company's product and service quality, search the web for its CSR records or overall image of the company on the media sphere. Thus it is important to ensure that the company is resilient in the local or international markets and complies with international standards.

This is where corporate reputation comes into play. It is one of the most significant components that creates the corporate image and identity and makes it unique and different in the eyes of customers or consumers. Meanwhile it is one of the most vulnerable aspects of the company. It can be drastically affected by its achievements or failures, crisis situations or growth and expansion.

The Internet and new technologies have brought quite a new perspective of how corporate reputation is being perceived and interpreted. As it has also penetrated into the online sphere, corporations have the opportunity to reach a wider audience in a relatively short period of time. Media has given the opportunity not only to the corporations to create a certain image for people, but also for its faithful customers and consumers to promote their favorite companies. Any kind

of comments or references about a company can be shared with thousands of people instantly.

This operates like a word-of-mouth system, by which a person advocates and advertises a certain company either consciously or unconsciously.

But the above mentioned phenomena can also have the reverse effect, when a bad comment, false information or an act by a corporation that the society does not approve of can ruin its reputation that has been built through many years. Thus the corporations should address this type of crisis seriously and react immediately. They should remember that it is not only important to build a good reputation but also to be able to maintain it, and only by being present in the online media sphere and being active and attentive can the desired result be achieved.

In my research I will address this issue of corporate reputation management through online platform concentrating specifically on the Armenian market. I will analyze telecommunication corporations like Vivacell, Beeline and Ucom by looking at their level of presence in social media (Facebook and Twitter), by interpreting the news coverage about them on online platform, analyzing their commercials, and overall by looking at their advertisement techniques and methods.

The research will aim to find out whether media is an effective tool for such kind of corporations to build their image and if so what the most common strategies are that the companies use that bring the needed result.

### **Background Information on the companies:**

**VivaCell** received a license for the commencement of its operations in 2004. In 2006, the Company continued to build not just the coverage, but its organizational structure as well. By January 2006 the Company succeeded in reaching 50% of the market share with over 350,000 subscribers. In September 2006, network coverage was available in 90% of the populated areas of the country. In September 2007, Mobile TeleSystems ("MTS") – the largest mobile operator in CIS – acquired 80% of the Company's

shares. In 2008, VivaCell was co-branded and changed its name to VivaCell-MTS, revising its design. The year was marked by obtaining a significant market share that reached more than 78% with over a million subscribers.

**“Armenia Telephone Company”** CJSC (trademark Beeline) is the largest telecommunication company in Armenia. The Company was established in March 1995 by the decision of the Ministry of Communications jointly with the American Company “Trans-World Telecom”. Since November 3, 2006 “ArmenTel” CJSC is a member of “VimpelCom Ltd.” Group of companies, which is one of the world's largest integrated communication operator.

According to 2014 2nd quarter results the number of Beeline mobile network subscribers reached 700 thousand. In 2008 “ArmenTel” became the first Armenian mobile operator to launch 3G network. Beeline 3G network covers more than one hundred and fifty Armenian settlements with population of more than 2,9 million.

**Ucom** has entered the Armenian telecom market in 2009. Noeadays it is the only Armenian based telecommunication corporation in Armenia that does not operate as a branch of an international or foreign corporation. In 2013 the company received a license for provision of public mobile broadband internet services, and in 2015 acquired 100% shares of Orange Armenia, thus expanding its operation to the Armenian mobile market. This expansion prepared basis for implementation of the fastest 4G+ network in Armenia, as well as replenish company’s convergent services, with “4 in 1” package, providing customers with the access to a full range of IPTV, fixed and mobile voice and internet services.

## **Literature Review**

### **Corporate reputation**

Corporate reputation is a core element for any corporation to be resilient in the competitive international market. But as media has become a sphere of communication not only between

different individuals but also between sellers and consumers, corporations and customers, there is a need for using this sphere for building a strong reputation. Doorley and Garcia (2001), who see corporate reputation as an asset that has a certain value, have come up with a formula that gives a brief definition of what is corporate reputation. According to that formula reputation is the sum of performance, behavior, and communication. But the whole concept of corporate reputation cannot be housed in just one formula. There are many dimensions, branches, and direction depending on the sphere that is being used for reputation building, the kind of corporation that is conducting it and the type of target group or audience. There are two distinctive dimensions of corporate reputation: those are internal -- reputation in the eyes of business stakeholders and external -- reputation in the eyes of the consumers and customers (De Quevedo 2001) . This research will be concentrating on the external reputation management and the key strategies used by Armenian companies to achieve the desired results.

### **Types of Corporate Reputation**

There are four dimensions that together form the broad concept of “reputation.” Those are “corporate communication,” “corporate social reporting,” “corporate image,” and “corporate identity” (Hooghiemstra, 2000). Corporate communication aims to create a favorable image of a company for the stakeholders and the society with the help of effective internal and external communication. “Corporate communication” therefore is perceived as an “umbrella” concept under which the other three are placed. Corporate reporting, as defined by Hooghiemstra is “aimed at providing information that legitimizes company's behavior by intending to influence stakeholders' and eventually society's perceptions about the company” (Hooghiemstra, 2000). A result of such an effective reporting is the creation of “corporate image” and “corporate identity”. Corporate image, which is similar to the idea of corporate reputation, is the society’s own

perception of the company while corporate identity is the company's self-expression and representation.

### **Corporate image in media sphere**

It is more important how the company behaves and presents itself online than how well it operates, how much it donates to charities and even its CSR records (Neff 2001). This kind of attention to a corporation's online presence can have a two-sided effect on its reputation. The more the audience becomes media literate, the harder it becomes for the companies to hide their mistakes or blemishes. Public pressure and media attention are the main causes of social disclosures of crisis situations in companies (Hooghiemstra 2000). Thus the media can have the reverse effect for the corporation by harming its reputation and leading to overt intervention by not only stakeholders and partner companies but also consumers themselves.

### **Online corporate reputation management**

Out of 28.000 internet respondents that have been surveyed in 2015, 70% indicated that they trust online consumer reviews (C. Dijkmans, P. Kerkhof and C. J. Beukeboom, 2015). Those online platforms that give the opportunity for consumers to share their practices with certain companies are mainly Facebook and Twitter. Thus the social media also gives the opportunity for consumers and customers to share their ideas and affect positively or negatively on the reputation the company has. While discussing the news media influence on the corporation's reputation there are three agenda-setting hypotheses that need to be examined when looking at corporation's reputation management strategies and activities Carroll (2011). First is the public prominence: Carroll argues that while the media cannot be effective in telling the audience what to think about a specific company, it can be successful in telling them what companies to think of. Second is the

public esteem, the degree to which public trusts, respects and admires the company. And the last one is the series of attributes that are consciously or unconsciously ascribed to a firm. All these dimensions are the first to take into account while monitoring a company's reputation management and evaluating its online presence.

The online reputation management involves "...interacting with people online, creating shareable content, monitoring what stakeholders are saying, keeping track of their dialogue, addressing negative content found online, and following up on ideas that are shared through social media" (Dijkmans, P. Kerkhof and C. J. Beukeboom, 2015). All these activities should be seriously considered and even be perceived as a separate branch in company's operation. In the era of the web, even one consumer's negative comment on the company's products or services can seriously harm its reputation and cause future negative inclination towards the company by other consumers. This is why it is not only important to build a good reputation but also to be able to maintain it by immediately reacting to possible crisis situations, correct false information and communicate with the customers by answering their comments and questions. As indicated by the survey conducted by public relations firm Hill and Knowlton, only sixteen percent of all organizations systematically scan the Internet for finding and responding to the comments about them (Alsop, 2004). This relatively low number comes to prove that companies need to pay more attention to what is being written and published about them.

### **Difference in the approach to customers/non-customers**

There is a positive correlation between people's intensity of social media use and their engagement with the company's online activities (Leung and Bai, 2013). Therefore more specific and directed approach should be adopted by companies to tackle the audience who is not yet familiar with them. In fact, the perception of the company's reputation is different for customers from non-customers. Compared to the first group, who has a real-life experience with

the company's products and services and has rather distinguished and unaltered opinion shaped, the non-customers are more likely to shape their opinion based on online activities and corporation's online presence and representation. Therefore the main focus of the companies should be the non-customers' group who are not only potential customers but are more likely to be influenced by advertisements and social media activities.

### **Benefits of reputation management through media**

It is not a secret that media, especially social networks and sites like Facebook or Twitter, are giving the opportunity to share ideas, opinions, and news worldwide without time or border limitations. Thus, for the corporations who are trying to build a reliable and trustworthy image can use this opportunity to make their corporation's name distinguishable. Besides all the other forms of communication, communication through media (especially social media) gives the opportunity to communicate messages and news across the world instantly. As it was shown with the Primark example there is a certain need ".....within businesses to find ways to communicate "with" instead of only "to" a new empowered audience of clued up customers and 24/7 on-line writers and brand activists producing new content" (Jones, Temperley & Lima, 2009). The online sphere gives all these opportunities, because it not only ensures two-way communication of the companies with their audience, but also makes the communication easier, and the company more transparent: the customers and stakeholders can get information about the companies from the latest news to annual reports with all the details.



## **Research Question**

**Research Question:** What are the common key strategies that Armenian telecommunication corporations like Vivacell, Beeline and Ucom use to build their corporate reputation on online platform?

**Sub-Question 1:** Is media an effective sphere for reputation management?

**Sub-Question 2:** What is the difference of the three companies in terms of using media?

**Sub-Question 3:** Is there a different or biased media representation of these two companies? And if so, do the companies pay for those news articles themselves?

**Sub-Question 4:** Which one is more successful in image building?

**Sub-Question 5:** What is the level of presence in social media of each of the corporations?

**Sub-Question 6:** What opinion and perception does the society have on these companies?

## **Methodology**

The research methods used for analyzing the online presence and activities of the three telecommunication companies were the following:

- First there was a content analysis of the following aspects: all the ads and commercials of Vivacell, Beeline and Ucom from the beginning of their presence in the market, in the aim of finding out key aspects that the companies use strategically. All the comments left either on Facebook or on the official websites of the corporations have been analyzed as well to understand the company's ability to manage two-way communication. For understanding and measuring their level of activity in social media their responses and answers given to their customers' comments were also counted along with how often they react to the news articles about them. As another way of measuring online activity of the companies the research has

looked at the presence of ads of those three companies on the top social media outlets that have the biggest amount of readers and visits per day.

Then as a final step, all the data and results were summed up and brought to a certain conclusion the results of which will be provided below.

- Second, there has been a survey conducted for understanding the society's level of awareness of these corporations, their perceptions of the letters and what reputation do they have in the eyes of the society. The survey has been conducted through:

Ø "Facebook"

Here the survey has been conducted by posting the survey in my personal page for people to fill in, and also shared by others for reaching wider audience, thus more different results. Because of the "media bubble" effect the few results gotten from my friends' answers might present a biased result, as it is likely that they can share the same experience and opinion to some extent. This is why bigger audience and more respondents are needed for getting the whole image of what society thinks.

Ø E-mail (for the AUA community)

The e-mail version of the survey has been available for all the AUA students, faculty and staff. But because of the age-limitation some of the responses had been later taken out during the interpretation process of the results.

Ø Paper based version (for reaching wider scale of population)

The age limitation chosen for the survey was the population of Armenia between the ages of 18-40.

The paper based version of the survey has been conducted by snowball method. For the surveys conducted via e-mail and Facebook it has been insured that one individual would be able to fill in the form only once.

The survey questions have been formed in a way to gain an understanding of how successful are each of the corporations for people, what are their distinguishing characteristics, what is one thing they immediately relate to the company, what reputation they have in the society, how it has changed during the last few years (did it get better or worse) and what media content they have seen on each of the corporations that made them reshape their opinion in some way or the other.

- The data from the conducted survey has been analyzed through SPSS software, to make the correlations of two or more variables possible.

There have been conducted few correlations based on the responses gotten. The possible connections and dependence of the different variables (age, knowledge, online media activeness, etc.) have been examined to see whether any specific aspect or feature affects on people's decisions, opinion or interest towards the companies.

- For the ads and commercials the research has concentrated on a certain values that the corporation concentrates more attention on (for example family values, kindness or the product and service quality themselves). It has looked at how often the corporations use the same method and tactic. Besides the number of ads has also been taken into account. For example, how often the company creates ads or how much they are being broadcasted.

- The examination of the annual reports of both companies has also been included in the research methods. All the annual reports that are available online for Vivacell, for Beeline and for Ucom for at least last 3 years have been examined to find information about the investments they have put into the advertisement of their company: whether they started to spend more or less, what can be the possible cause of that changes and did the companies benefit from that.

- Finally there have been interviews conducted with the representatives of all three companies to understand their attitude toward the media, how much they spend on image establishment, reputation management and their brand recognition.

## **Research Findings & Analysis**

***What are the common key strategies that Armenian telecommunication corporations like Vivacell, Beeline and Ucom use to build their corporate reputation on online platform?***

*Ads and Commercials:*

For understanding the techniques and strategies used by Armenian telecommunication companies to build their reputation and identity the first most important and crucial step is to analyze their self-representation through the ads and commercials. As corporate reputation is an umbrella concept that includes various aspects, in order to get the full picture of the company's reputation there is a need to look at all of those elements separately. The corporate identity, which is the company's self expression and representation, can be evaluated by analyzing company's commercials through which they send a certain message to their target audience; that is they show the audience what they want them to notice and grasp about their corporation.

For this purpose all the ads and commercials of all the three companies (Vivacell MTS, Beeline and Ucom) that were displayed online: on their official websites, on Facebook, on online newspapers, YouTube. Overall there were twenty ads and commercials for Ucom (as this company operates started from 2009 in Armenia), seventy ads and commercials for Vivacell and forty for Beeline. All the ads and commercials were analyzed thoroughly for finding common aspects and factors for every company used for their advertisement.

While analyzing the advertisement of Ucom all the ads and commercials of Orange were excluded.

Although Ucom has bought Orange on 2015 and all the customers of Orange have built their trust and

image of Ucom based on the reputation Orange had, it was decided to exclude the advertisements of Orange as those are two different companies and the tactics used by Orange may not be applicable and favored by Ucom team.

The analysis of ads and commercials of Ucom have shown that Ucom focuses on the innovations and changes brought by the company to the telecommunication market of Armenia. It was the first to introduce the new 4G+ ultramodern network for 250Mbps data speed in Armenia providing the fastest Internet connection. It was also the first to introduce the FTTH (Fiber to the Home) solution to the Armenian consumer, which ensures provision of IPTV, broadband internet and digital phone services. This is why almost half of the commercials (45%) were about the special packages (Internet, TV channels and telephone) that the company provides.

The slogan of the company “Integrated communication operator” that is mentioned in the commercials itself implies the uniqueness of the company in providing IPTV, fixed telephony as well as mobile connection and Internet.

As for Vivacell MTS, it was the second operator in Armenia after Armentel (Beeline) and has passed a relatively long path as a telecommunication company in Armenia. All the seventy ads and commercials that were analyzed have brought about several characteristics and features that Vivacell emphasizes through advertisement. Those features are the bond between the operator and its customers, the importance of relationships (family, friends, love, etc.) and the special so called series of commercials that has become a tradition for the company.

First, the slogan “Դու կապ ունես” can be interpreted in two ways. One of them is “you have connection” which refers to the mobile connection everywhere and the second can be “you matter” which is another message transferred to the customer creating that sense of being special and having that bond with the company.

Secondly, Vivacell ads and commercials are standing out with their thematic preferences. The company creates the stories around special values like family, friends and relationship. Out of seventy commercials thirty of them were containing either family moments, friends spending time together or beloved once. All these ads that transfer the message of caring, sharing and loving are targeted to the customers of Vivacell who view the company as giving the opportunity to share your happy moments with your close ones.

And finally, Vivacell has implemented a so-called series of thematic commercials that transfer or are aimed towards the same message. Totally there were nine themes that have two to four series of ads each. These commercials all have the same message but are reflected in different situations of everyday life like at family, or in the workplace. This reflects the presence of the company's offered innovations, news and packages in all aspects of everyday life.

As for Beeline, the oldest telecommunication operator in Armenia (operating since 1995), it also differs from all the other operators in the market by focusing on filming its ads and commercials starring celebrities and famous people. Out of thirty commercials that were found on the Internet sixteen of them were featuring the same celebrity. This way a celebrity becomes the face of the company and creates customers' association with the corporation. In this case the celebrity's credibility, image and reputation can be transferred to the company, as customers reflect the thoughts they have of the celebrity to the company he or she works for.

Finally, the slogan "Simple, Convenient, For you" is directly addressing all the current and potential customers underlying the idea that it is right for everyone.

The way all the three corporations form their messages and ideas shows that each of them has chosen one or two key notions or characteristics that they want to draw their audience's attention to. For this purpose Ucom has chosen the innovations it has brought to the Armenian Market, Vivacell creates the story of the company around family and relationship values and Beeline delivers its messages through celebrities.

Two companies out of three: Vivacell and Beeline, have shaped their slogan as a direct reference to their customers using the pronouns you. This implies that the company refers to each and every customer individually and gives them the sense of being unique, valuable and important for the company.

### ***Online presence:***

Another important component for understanding the company's reputation management strategies is looking at the online presence of this company. With the developing popularity of such concepts as "corporate reputation", "corporate image" and "corporate visibility" there was a positive relationship found between the company's visibility online and its reputation (Deephouse, 2000). Finding the effect of corporate visibility of Armenian telecommunication companies means looking at what social websites the company is present at, how often and what kind of content the company posts on its official website or social media sites, how often do they respond to their customer's remarks, suggestions or complaints and how available they are for reach? All these components create the credibility and trustworthiness of the company in the eyes of the customers, which, in its turn positively affects on the company's reputation.

For measuring the online presence of the three companies, first there was a media monitoring conducted on the Facebook official pages of Vivacell, Beeline and Ucom to understand how often there is a content posted and how often the companies check and respond to the comments. Secondly, all the online media outlets of Armenia were searched for seeing if there are any ads posted on the news websites that are read the most. And third the Youtube channels of all the three corporations were also analyzed to understand the scope of their audience, and what kind of content is present on their pages.

Overall there were 25 online Armenian media outlets chosen according to their popularity and amount of visits per day. These are the websites that are available on average in three languages: Armenian, Russian and English. This in its turn provides bigger and more diverse audience.

The most visible telecommunication company in these criteria is Vivacell. Its ads were posted on eight news websites: News, Panarmenian, Tert, Mamul, Civilnet, Hetq, Panorama and Aysor.

The ads of other two companies: Beeline and Ucom, were found only in one of those media outlets. Those were Times and Panarmenian respectively.

In terms of online activity, according to the findings the most active telecommunication company is again Vivacell with 58,550 followers. On average the company posts once in two days with three posts a day. This ensures higher visibility for the company as its news and articles stay on top of the newsfeed and bring more readers and views.

The second company that operates actively on Facebook is Ucom with 86,178 followers. The company posts on average once in three to four days with two posts a day.

Finally, Beeline that has 52,429 followers posts on average once in three to four days with one to two posts per day.

From the analysis of all the above mentioned criteria for analyzing the company's online presence it is clear that Vivacell is the leading operator in this term. Although being active in online platform and posting content on the official pages brings more attention to the company hence increasing its popularity and visibility online, the company does not do the same when it comes to the communication with the customers and users on those social pages.

All the comments on Facebook official page of Vivacell for the past three years were analyzed to see the tendency of the two-way communication and how "available is the company in this term". Overall the proportion of comments was the following: 53% of the comments were negative and addressing the issues and problems connected to the quality of the service and product provided by Vivacell, 26% were the positive comments out of which 14% referred to the approval of the CSR that company conducts. The remaining 21% of the comments were questions addressed to the administrators of the page however only 8% of them were answered.

For the same analysis Ucom has showed the following results: 26% of the comments were negative related to the connection disorders, 22% were the positive comments mainly on the service provided and



the biggest 52% were either questions or remarks directed to the administrative staff. Overall about 94% of the comments were given an answer or comments by the company, which include also the negative and positive comments. The company also differs from others by providing individual approach to every comment and remark.

For Beeline the same results were the following: 42% of the comments were negative mainly addressing the problems and delays in services provided, 31% were the positive comment mainly on the services done outside the scope of its responsibilities (campaigns, funding, etc.) and 27% were questions addressed to the company out of which almost half (48%) were given an answer.

### ***What opinion and perception they have created in the eyes of the society?***

#### **Survey Results:**

In the aim of finding out societies perception of the three telecommunication companies that operate in Armenia there was a survey carried out among Yerevan citizens. The target publics of the survey are teenagers and middle aged people (16-40), who are more active on the online sphere, hence more aware of the present choices and alternatives in the market.

The survey was conducting by random sampling, which means that every citizen that belongs to the target public had equal chances of participating in the survey. Overall there were two hundred responses gathered which were analyzed through SPSS database. The questionnaire was formed in a way to understand citizen's preference of either of these companies, the reason why they have associated themselves with it, and one important characteristic that they would mention of the company. They were also asked to mention either of the companies that in their opinion society favors most.

According to the survey results almost half of the respondents (49,1%) uses products and services of Vivacell, 27,4% uses Ucom and the remaining 23,4% is using Beeline.

It is important to notice that 34,9% of the respondents mentioned that they get the recent news and information about their service provider from TV. But relatively high amount of people nowadays get

the needed information either from the official websites of the companies (22,3%) or from the online advertisements: posters, ads and news posted on social websites (22,9%).

Coming to the question of the company's reputation in the eyes of their customers it is important to know whether people consider them to be open to the remarks, positive or negative comments and suggestions of their customers. For this purpose people were asked whether they consider their operator to be open to the customers' remarks and suggestions?

Most people (47%) think that their company is open in terms of customers' needs and suggestions, 44,6% was not sure and only 8,6% thought that the company does not operate according to the customers' preferences and remarks.

The success of the corporation in managing good reputation is directly affecting its public perception and favoritism among the public. In aiming to find out public favoritism of the three companies (Vivacell, Ucom and Beeline) respondents were asked which telecommunication company they favor more.

It is interesting to notice that although as mentioned above 50% uses Vivacell, 27% uses Ucom and 23% uses Beeline, while asked about their favor 57% of the respondents gave their favor to Vivacell, 27% to Ucom and 16% to Beeline. While looking at these numbers it becomes clear that the number for Ucom has remained the same. This can probably mean that the exact amount of Ucom's customers and users favors this company among the three companies present in the market. But the numbers also show that some part of Beeline's customers (7%) favors another company although they are making use of Beeline's products and services. This can imply one thing that although these people are satisfied with the products and services of their operator, some other external factors affect their opinion on which company has better reputation and image. These factors can be corporate social responsibility (CSR), the online presence of the company, the market share or the association with the CEO. However this can only be suggested as a further research is needed to be conducted with bigger sample to give more exact and detailed analysis of these factors.

Another variable that is important to mention is the public opinion on whether social media helps the companies in building a good image and reputation in the eyes of the society. Almost half of the respondents (47 %) were sure that the social media do help in building good image and reputation, another 34,3% were thinking that it may have some effect.

This influence becomes obvious while looking at other variable. For example almost 20% of the respondents stated that the advertisements influenced their decision making process, which is they have chosen their operator based on the online advertisements. Another 17% stated that one most important characteristic of their chosen operator is the ability to attract customers. This can be either through ads and commercials, the content they choose to provide on the online sphere, their openness and availability or the way they picture themselves in social sphere.

By summing up all the research findings and analysis results few key remarks can be carried out.

Each of the telecommunication companies has adopted their own strategies for building their relationship with the customers and creating the image of trustworthiness of their company.

Vivacell has adopted a strategy of activism on online platform by constantly posting content on their web pages and being visible on the top online media outlets that have the most readers and visitors in Armenia.

Beeline has adopted a strategy of building reputation through concentrating their customer's attention on the improvement of product and service quality as well as shaping their image with the help of a "company face" whose favoritism from the side of the society reflects on the company as well.

And finally Ucom has adopted the strategy of individual approach to the customers by being available and open to the suggestions and remarks of their users. This tactic ensures the two-way communication of the operator with its users and affects positively on its reputation. Ucom also saves its place in the market by making advantage of its unique characteristic which is its complex service of providing fixed and mobile connection, Internet and TV channels.

All of the companies have succeeded in gaining the support and trust of their customers and have been loyal to their initial message that they wanted to communicate to their users. However one note should be taken into account. For reaching a better results all the three companies need to improve their PR strategies and tactics on multiple platforms and from different angles instead of concentrating only on one of them. However it is clear that building a good reputation is a matter of long term hard work and devotion and that all the three companies are going hand in hand with the changing trends and demand of 21 century and with the era of online platforms.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

The articles and books that are going to be used for the research are mainly either explanatory studies of what is corporate reputation and how it is being managed through media or they are case studies of specific companies, firms or corporations in developed and developing countries like France, Germany, Greece, Argentina, Brazil, Japan and others. But none of the studies have compared this phenomenon on the basis of comparing two or more companies in terms of their successful reputation management. Besides, so far there have been no studies conducted in the Armenian market and for its corporations. There are no records of whether Armenian companies are present online, how they are being represented, what media techniques they use and how successful they are in building or managing their reputation through media. Thus this research is the first in its aim type and format.

The techniques that have been used for some parts of the research are not perfect because of some aspects that cannot be controlled. First, the analysis of the comments have excluded all the fake users but there is still a high chance that most of the comments (either positive or negative) can be generated by the company itself or its opponents. This is something that cannot be totally controlled.

Second, the survey that has been conducted with 200 respondents is relatively small if one wants to get more detailed and objective view regarding public perception of those companies.

As this research has been conducted on three Armenian telecommunication companies, it is the first in its direction, in target questions and issues that has been examined and analyzed. It can feel the gap of understanding how companies are using media sphere to create their image and identity. Besides as an outcome of a research there are several strategies proposed that are common for all companies (Vivacell, Beeline and Ucom) and also ensure spotless and impeccable reputation. Based on the examples of corporate reputation examination that has been conducted for different countries like Armenia, similar steps and strategies have been adopted that have been applicable for the research. As the research is one that has not been conducted before, it gives an opportunity for already existing companies and corporations to improve or reshape their tactics and strategies used for image creation and to better understand how media can be a useful tool in this case, if used correctly and wisely. It can also be a useful guide for newly emerging companies to start gaining audience and potential customers that will be interested in their products and services.

However a further and more comprehensive research needs to be carried out to understand the whole picture and structure of the relationship between company's online presence and its reputation management. Maybe a special scheme or formula that could've been created would help to measure company's reputation and its fluctuations. In this case it would be easier to see the effect of company's online operation on its reputation increase or decrease.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

**1. Carroll, C. E. (2011). *Corporate reputation and the news media: Agenda-setting within business news coverage in developed, emerging, and frontier markets*. New York, NY: Routledge.**

**Summary:** In the second chapter of the book “Corporate reputation and the news media in Denmark” the author uses the case study of Denmark to show why the emergent need for managing reputation has been raised in companies. Here, as well, some key characteristics and definitions are given to reputation management.

The chapter also looks at news media and business relations. It examines what the news was covering about business or economy and what were the main themes kept. Besides it also states that different media outlets were covering the same news, but interpreting it differently, which, in its turn, was affecting the reputation of the business corporations.

**The use:** As I am also going to look at how different interpretation of media can have different impact on company’s reputation, this book will be a good source to look at before starting the research myself. Besides it is a source that talks about the relation between the reputation management and media, one of the core aspects of my capstone. And finally, as it uses the case study of Denmark and the background peculiarities that affect corporations operation, with the help of it I will look at the Armenian ones.

**2. Castro, G. M., López, J. E., & Sáez, P. L. (2006). *Business and Social Reputation: Exploring the Concept and Main Dimensions of Corporate Reputation*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 63(4), 361-370.**

**Summary:** The article starts off with highlighting the necessity of corporate reputation stating that it is born with the origination of the company itself and that corporate reputation is unique for each company.

The aim of the work is to provide a conceptual delimitation of corporate reputation and identify its main dimensions. There are two main dimensions of corporate reputation distinguished here: business reputation and social reputation. Later in the article two main dimensions of reputation are given by De Quevedo: internal (reputation in the eyes of business stakeholders) and external (reputation in the eyes of the society in general).

Later on the article goes on analyzing the survey (which has been sent to the CEO of Spanish biotechnology firms) with conducting correlations among different variables that come to confirm the 8 elements of corporate reputation by Fomburn and Shanley which had been stated in the article.

**The use:** Overall the huge portion of the article is dedicated to the analysis and the examination and interpretation of the survey and the correlations conducted, but, by defining what is corporate reputation, it also provides important information on the types of corporate reputation and its dimensions. For my capstone research I might be using this information for defining on what aspects and dimensions of corporate reputation I will be looking at. This way I will narrow my focus even more and avoid overlapping different types and dimensions.

**3. Chae P. (2010). *Emergent Practice in Online Corporate Reputation Management* (Master's**

thesis). *University of Oregon*.

**Summary:** This study concentrates on the key factors that influence stakeholders' perception of the organization. It also focuses on the new opportunities and practices that the online sphere has brought with itself. Thus the study concentrates on the online corporate reputation management strategies. It is done in a form of content analysis on the literature available on the topic.

It starts off with defining all the key phrases, such as what corporate reputation is and what reputation management is. Then, while talking about the reputation management the author comes to the idea of corporate communication. He looks at the letter in terms of company's responses to the actual comments left by the citizens in their address. The study examines the actions that corporations take for conducting this communication. As a conclusion and as an outcome the study represents three key principles that shape good online corporate reputation management.

**The use:** This capstone report is an example that I am going to base my capstone on. By looking at the overall structure of how it should be written, in which order and manner. Besides as my research is also going to be on specifically online reputation management, it provides helpful insights and strategies that can help me make my research conducting more effective and accurate. Finally here are some useful sources that can serve as secondary sources while conducting my research. They can help to create step-by-step research plan for looking at online presence of Armenian corporations.

**4. Deephouse, D. (2000). Media reputation as a strategic resource: An integration of mass communication and resource-based theories. *Journal of Management*, 26(6), 1091-1112.**

**Summary:** This paper is another source that talks about the media importance. More specifically it states that reputation building through media is a strategic resource that may lead to competitive advantage. It states the main ways that media helps to build reputation by representing the company to the audience (by press releases or opinion pieces). It concludes that media representation of a firm can also affect on the stakeholders' and partners' opinion and view on it.

Besides the paper provides a study conducted on banks to prove the idea that a more favorable media reputation increases performance. This was then proven to be true after examining the operation of the banks and the media coverage of them. As a conclusion and an outcome was the confirmation that indeed the media has an influence on the company's reputation, therefore also performance.

**The use:** I will be using this source during the evaluation of corporations' reputation and measurement of it. As one of the measuring factor of reputation I might take the increase in performance as mentioned in this work. Also the strategies used during the case study of banks might be useful in conducting the same procedure of evaluation for the Armenian companies.

**5. Dijkmans, C., Kerkhof, P., & Beukeboom, C. J. (2015). A stage to engage: Social media use and corporate reputation. *Tourism Management*, 47, 58-67.**

**Summary:** In this paper the authors have looked at the question how the company's presence in the online world and its consumer engagement affects on its reputation. The research is carried out through a survey conducted among 3531 people about an international airline that aimed to look at the bond between the consumer engagement in the social life of the corporations and their perception of them. After the interpretation of the results of the survey it was proven that the consumers' and also non-consumers' engagement in social media sites

to follow the activities of the company are positively connected with their perception of the company and its reputation.

**The use:** From this paper I might be mainly using the information connected with survey conduction and correlation conduction. Although it has been conducted in the field of tourism, there might be few general features that will also be applicable in the sphere of telecommunication. I would also adopt the idea of correlation between two most important variables for the study. In my case those would be the positive image represented through media for the audience, with the letters' perception of the corporation's real image.

**6. Doorley, J., & Garcia, H. F. (2011). *Reputation management: The key to successful public relations and corporate communication*. New York: Routledge.**

**Summary:** In this book another concept is brought up, which is "reputational capital". Here the reputation is brought up as an asset: something that has a value. Here a general formula is shown that comes to conclude what is reputation. According to it reputation is the sum of performance, behavior and communication. And only by working on all three a company will be able to manage its reputation.

There is also the issue of multiple identities discussed in this book. According to the book, corporations have several identities, but there is always the one that is the general identity that is paid the most attention.

By bringing real life examples the book explains how corporations themselves treat their reputation, how they perceive it and how they tackle the issues that pose concern to it.

The book also asks such important questions as can the reputation be managed? And can it be measured?

**The use:** I will be using the formula mentioned above while looking at the reputation management of Vivacell and Beeline. This way I can come to a general principle that is universal and by applying it to both companies I will be able to analyze the differences between them. Also I will try to find out what is one identity out of many that is generalized and mostly connected to the company name of each corporation. Besides measuring the reputation is an important part of my research, as I will have to look whether the reputation of the company has become better or stayed the same with the help of media. So I will use this book as a guiding source for these purposes.

**7. Hooghiemstra, R. (2000). *Corporate Communication and Impression Management — New Perspectives Why Companies Engage in Corporate Social Reporting*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 55-68**

**Summary:** In this work such concepts as "corporate communication", "corporate social reporting", "corporate image" and "corporate identity" are being discussed. The "corporate image" is defined as the society's perception, and the "corporate identity" is defined as the company's self-expression". The paper stresses the importance of corporate reporting as something that needs to correspond to the changing rules and norms of the society.

According to it the media attention and public pressure are the main causes of social disclosures of such cases as the Exxon Valdez oil spill. It then goes to define certain steps that the companies can take to respond to the pressure and conduct corporate reporting.

Overall the paper both examines the role that media place in shaping an image of a certain company in the eyes of the society, and defines some strategies and steps that companies and big corporations are taking toward creating that identity.

**The use:** This work may be very useful in applying those steps and strategies to the Armenian corporations that I am going to look at, and understand have they employed any of them, and how that affects their image. Also by understanding the concept of corporate



communication I will later on apply it to my research, as all the ads and commercials that I will look at can be perceived as part of corporate communication.

**8. Jones, B., Temperley, J., & Lima, A. (2009). Corporate reputation in the era of Web 2.0: The case of Primark. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25(9-10), 927-939.**

**Summary:** This article looks at the companies that are building their reputation in the era of social media, which is called Web 2.0. The article is written on the case study of Primark: how the company uses modern social media tools and advantages to build its reputation and name. The corporate communication need is highlighted in the study taking into account the fact that nowadays the information about the company out there on the internet can serve as a base for news coverage about them, which can have both good and bad effect on the reputation of the company. It all depends on the interpretation and selective strategy of the media outlets.

**The use:** This article is the one that looks at modern social media sites (Instagram, Twitter) and with the case of Primark shows all their advantages and disadvantages. So for my research I will also be looking at Vivacell's and Beeline's presence in social media sites, and their performance on them. How the corporations are making use of its tools and advantages for their benefit. Thus all the information about the case study of Primark can serve as background information.

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