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**Examining corporate reputation management in a local municipality in the Vaal region: a case study**

**Submitted in the fulfillment of the requirement for the degree  
Magister Technologiae: Public Relations Management  
in the Faculty of Human Sciences**

**Name of Student: Sibongile Bernadette Mokaeanne  
Student number: 9429301**

**Highest qualification of student: Baccalaureus Technologiae: Public Relations Management**

**Supervisor: Prof. KC Moloi (BA; B Ed; B Ed (Specialisation); F Ed; M Ed;  
Masters Dip HRM; D Ed)**

**Co-supervisor: Mrs. A Oksiutycz-Munyawiri (MCom; MBA)**

**Date: 31 May 2017**

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## **DEDICATION**

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## ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Corporate reputation refers to an organisation's past and present action, which has a huge impact on how the organisation is viewed by its internal and external stakeholders. In the context of business organisation, the importance of reputation in public service and government organisations needs to be recognised, especially in South Africa, where many problems are associated with local government. Coupled with this, there has been lack of emphasis on collaborative consultation processes and participation by the communities in matters that affect them.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:** The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to analyse personal experiences of employees at a local municipality, on the management of corporate reputation. Systems theory was adopted as a theoretical framework for the study.

**METHOD:** This research employs a qualitative research method and a case study design. The qualitative research was relevant for this research as it is naturalistic, which is research based in natural settings where communication occurs. The in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to get rich information from the participants, who are employees of the municipality and work within the broad frame of public relations, communications, event management and marketing. These participants engage with the external stakeholders on events management or on expertise, leadership and management skills with regard to corporate reputation management.

**RESULTS:** The results reveal that management of reputation is probably a multifaceted concept. Hence corporate social responsibility, emotional appeal, financial performance, products and services, vision and leadership and workplace environment all feature but it is unlikely that the participants perceive reputation as separate from image and identity as they use the terms synonymously. The responses reveal that a systems view of an organisation, being social in a social system, indicate that the various components in the internal environment cannot be separated from the external environment as they are continuously and dynamically interacting with one another with corporate communication acting as a 'glue', which holds them together. Corporate communication is thus an essential

part of the system as it serves to align the organisation's vision, culture and image that people have of an organisation.

**KEYWORDS:** corporate reputation management; local municipality; corporate social responsibility; public relations; communication and stakeholders.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study explores corporate reputation in Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM) in the Vaal Triangle, which is one of the three municipalities that fall under the Sedibeng district in Gauteng province. Corporate reputation is defined by Feldman, Bahamonde and Velasquez-Bellido (2014:55) as a collective representation of an organisation's past actions and results that are based on its assessment of financial, social, organisational performance and environmental impact by its multiple stakeholders, both internal and external. Reputation occurs as stakeholders evaluate their knowledge of or encounters with the organisation compared to their expectations, which are couched within individual values or collective norms (Llewellyn 2002:447). According to Heath (2007:146), reputation is a collective representation of images and perceptions.

De Vries (2013:2) defines good governance as nothing else than the conduct of government, this concept includes more and more phenomena related to the steering of societal developments. This is very vital to this study as conduct forms part of the reputation management. Koehler (2017:66) state that reputation management is a subject that has existed within the field of public relations since the mid-1980s, meaning that corporate reputation has become an increasingly important aspect in an organisation's strategic planning. Corporate reputation emerges as a key feature of local government strategic management processes, while reputation management becomes even more pivotal in managing stakeholder perceptions. Organisations can only stay competitive and prosper if they are viewed by their stakeholders as having a good reputation. A bad reputation destroys an organisation (Argenti & Druckemiller 2004:368).

Adeosun and Ganiyu (2013:210-223), conducted international studies in corporate reputation as a strategic asset in Nigeria by using a descriptive and explanatory research method. Their research measured the corporate reputation as perceived among employees working in public and private hospitals. It found that the hospitals did not give enough

attention to studies that can improve corporate reputation of the nurses who are the hospital's internal stakeholders. Another study by Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martínez-León (2014:223-241) looked at corporate reputation from a management style perspective. In South Africa, studies of corporate reputation were conducted by Kwatubana (2014:1439-1447) and Beneke (2011:29-44). These authors focused on corporate reputation in public schools and reputation management in higher institutions. Tlou and Govender (2015:62-73) investigated common reputation drivers by focusing on banks. Municipalities have a responsibility of ensuring good governance. Good governance go beyond the work performed in offices. Global occurrences and economic trends require that municipalities should amend their business practices to ensure future economic, social and environmental sustainability (Alley & Alley 2013:5). Although these studies are useful as a framework for this study, none of them have looked at corporate reputation in local municipalities in South Africa.

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to analyse personal experiences of employees at a local municipality, on the management of corporate reputation. Data were obtained through in-depth individual interviews at a location convenient to the participants. The data were managed through content analysis.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Meeting the expectations of multiple stakeholders and competing for reputational status in local governance is imperative in transforming the economies of communities. The survival of these municipalities depends on their ability to manage reputation risk for them to survive in harsh political conditions. South Africa's local government system has been heavily criticised for its poor service delivery, a situation that has led to service delivery protests emanating in every corner of this country (Pretorius & Schurink 2007:19). Fraud, corruption and mismanagement of public funds and general incompetence by municipal managers and their subordinates have been a challenge that has crippled most of the municipalities (Koma 2010:115-116). Lack of an adequate reporting system to support good governance may lead to bad reputation (Koma 2010:115). Associated with this has

been a lack of emphasis on collaborative consultation processes and participation by the communities in matters that affect them.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The inadequacy in management and communication of information in some sections of municipalities such as in Emfuleni Local Municipality has prompted the researcher to examine how corporate reputation is managed at this site. The researcher is also interested in investigating how local municipalities manage corporate reputation. She is also keen to examine how corporate reputation is understood by managers and subordinates within the local government under study.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study will be guided by the following key research question:

- What is the essence of corporate reputation in the Emfuleni local government?

This question translates into the following sub-questions:

- Why is corporate reputation management critical to good governance at the local government in the Vaal region?
- What strategies can be employed to enhance corporate reputation management at the Emfuleni local government?

### **1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this qualitative case study is to examine how the local government manages corporate reputation. In view of this statement the research objectives are to:

- explore the essence of corporate reputation management;
- determine how reputation is managed at Emfuleni Local Municipality;
- understand the perceptions of internal stakeholders on reputation management at Emfuleni Local Municipality; and
- suggest strategies that can be developed to enhance corporate reputation management at the Emfuleni Local Municipality.

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Given that corporate reputation management is the business of directing all aspects of an organisation's performance it was essential that the researcher locate her study within a theoretical framework that would best explain how complex systems such as corporate reputation could be managed within a dynamic internal and external environment. Von Bertalanffy's (1950:410) systems theory was found to be a suitable framework for this study. According to Von Bertalanffy (1950:410), systems theory enables generalisations across phenomena by using laws and principles at a high level of abstraction because systems are complex (Hatch & Cunliffe 2006:37). The choice of systems theory as a framework informs this study in terms of the assumptions about reality (ontology), and interpretation (epistemology) in qualitative research. The aim of a disciplined inquiry is to understand the construction of meanings as far as corporate reputation is understood and experienced by the selected participants.

### **1.6.1 Definition of terms**

These are the terms that are crucial to this research:

- **Corporate reputation**

Corporate reputation is defined as a collective representation of an organisation's past actions and results that describe the organisation's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders (Fombrun & Van Riel 1997:5).

- **Reputation management**

According to Schultz and Werner (2005:2), a reputation entails two main components, namely, how a company is perceived by all stakeholders, and the truth about a company's policies, practices, procedures, systems and performance.

- **Corporate image**

According to Skinner, Von Essen, Mersham and Motau (2010:8), corporate image is the net result of the interaction of all experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that people have about a company.

- **Local government**

Wilson and Game (2011:8) define local government as an administrative body for a small geographic area, such as a city, town, country, or state. A local government will typically only have control over their specific geographic region, and cannot pass or enforce laws that will affect a wider area. Local governments can elect officials and enact taxes, and do many other things that a national government will do on a smaller scale.

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Bechan (2008:2), reputation management can help to enhance the business objectives of an organisation by creating stakeholder support for public and policy issues, consumer loyalty and positive shareholder value for investors. Some studies investigate corporate reputation from stakeholder, employee and investor perspective (Maden, Arikan, Telci & Kantur 2012:658).

Furthermore, organisations are known by the perceptions they generate through reputations. Mitnick and Mahon (2007:324) state that reputation has a directional affect in the form of a perception targeted to a particular focal organisation by several stakeholders, where the perception is derived from or transferred from affective perceptions of particular performances by the focal actor or statuses or qualities in the actor. The group of stakeholders for a company is very extensive and can have a dramatic impact on a company, both positively or negatively. Managing the perceptions of this diverse set of interested groups is integral to managing that intangible corporate asset known as “reputation” (Rossides 2012:1). The term corporate reputation is reserved for judgements made by observers about a firm. While such judgements may have their source in perceptions of a company’s identity and image, they often occur as a consequence of a

triggering event, which may arise from a firm's more visible actions and mistakes or external events.

All systems can be classified in terms of the nature and amount of interchange with their environments. An organisation, therefore, is determined if it interacts with and depends upon both its specific and general environments. According to Rensburg and Cant (2009:49) an adaptive subsystem is a set of interacting entities, real or abstract, forming an integrated whole that together are able to respond to environmental changes in the interacting parts, therefore, public relations is part of the adaptive subsystem, as distinct from the production, maintenance and managerial subsystems. Meaning that an adaptive subsystems vary in sensitivity to their environments, just as do the public relations functions within organisations. Local government sets the overall direction for their municipalities through long term planning. Formulation of the vision and mission and ensuring their achievement is one of the most important roles of local government.

According to Wilcox and Cameron (2012:98), public relations practitioners serve as an intermediary between the organisation and all the publics that exist in the organisation. As indicated by Rensburg and Cant (2009:49), public relations does not exist as a function on its own but is an integral part of the communication function of an organisation. In such a role public relations does not play an advisory or decision making role, but is seen as an information distribution task. The result of this tactic is that environments and audiences are not measured. Vital occurrences go unnoticed until they affect the organisation severely, whereupon management attempts suitable action unilaterally, partially by using public relations again in the role of a representative. Public relations will always make an attempt to bring the environment into line with the organisation. It has an investigative function, that of identifying potential problems and opportunities, as well as having an information distribution role.

The developmental role for local government, challenges municipalities to be more proactive, inventive and effective in reputation management (Sarikas & Weerakkody 2007:152). Ettenson and Knowles (2008:19) indicate that reputation can be regarded as a



precondition for people's willingness to do business with a company. Corporate reputation is crucial for stakeholders to determine their own support for the institution. It is a social construction that can be based on observations of the consequences of actions as well as observations of the guides used to generate actions (Helm, Liehr-Gobber & Storck 2011:4). Observers will tend to give a net assessment of an organisation's reputation, which overall assessment may include both normative and instrumental concerns. While different stakeholders may hold varying views on an organisation's reputation, they nevertheless give an overall affective impression. How stakeholders perceive the organisation will influence their behaviour toward it for better or worse (Luoma-aho 2008: 448).

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research design and a case study design. Methods are tools that enable researchers to collect data about social reality from human beings as participants in the research, artefacts, documents and texts. The researcher opted for the qualitative approach because it is naturalistic, according to Nieuwenhuis (2016:53). Naturalistic research is based in natural settings where interaction occurs. Social settings and individuals or groups of people that inhabit these settings are examined. Nieuwenhuis (2016:53) argues that qualitative researchers are interested in how human beings arrange themselves and their settings and how they as inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings. Furthermore, qualitative research relies on words rather than numbers because emphasis is placed on understanding the phenomena from participants' points of view and meanings they assign to this understanding.

### **1.8.1 Research design**

A case study design is employed in this research. A case study is an empirical enquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real world context, a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context (Yin 2014:18). The focus of a case study design, according to Nieuwenhuis (2016:75), is to develop an in-depth understanding of a single case or multiple cases. The advantage of using a case study design is to enable collaboration between the researcher and the participants selected for this research, which will enable

them to share their stories freely without coercion. This aims to produce an in-depth understanding that will result in new learning about corporate reputation in their context and what it means to them (Nieuwenhuis 2016: 83). The rationale for using a case study design includes the fact that it can be especially suitable for learning more about little known or poorly understood situations (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:135).

### **1.8.2 Population and sampling**

The main purpose of population and sampling is to achieve representativeness. According to Babbie and Mouton (2010:12), the sample should be assembled in such a way as to represent the population from which it is taken. The population of this research is composed of employees and managers for each of the selected units of the Emfuleni Local Municipality: four managers and six employees.

10 participants were selected purposively to get a sample, which consists of one communications manager; two assistant managers and two employees in the department; one manager from the department of arts and one employee; one manager and one employee from the office of the mayor (political office) one events manager from the department of fire and rescue (n=10). This sample is sufficient for a qualitative study. For example, Creswell (2013:142) argues that when the sample size is too large, it becomes difficult to extract rich and thick data while at the same time the sample should not be too small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation.

### **1.8.3 Data collection method**

Individual in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted with selected participants, namely: one communications manager, two assistant managers, two employees, manager in arts and culture department and one employee, manager from the office of the mayor and one employee, one events manager from the fire and rescue department. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016:92), an individual in-depth interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn more about the phenomenon under investigation. These interviews allowed the researcher to see the

world through the eyes of the participants. The aim was to get rich descriptive data that enabled the researcher to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and reality with regard to corporate reputation within their context. The responses of the participants were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached. The venue and times for all the interviews were negotiated with the selected participants for fifteen individual in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting 60 minutes each.

#### **1.8.4 Data analysis**

Nieuwenhuis (2016:88) indicates that data analysis strategy focuses on all types of written communications and may shed light on the phenomenon under investigation. Data collected through in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews was analysed. Guba and Lincoln (1994:106) state that dependability seeks for qualitative analysis as a valuable data analysis method. Data gathered was transcribed by the researcher for all ten individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. Creswell (2009:151) explains qualitative data analysis as an on-going process that involves continual reflection about the data, asks analytic questions and writes memos throughout the study.

The process starts with the researcher reading the transcribed data then coding it. In analysing the data collected from the respondents this researcher made use of Tesch's (1990:154-156) approach where one interview was selected to reflect on the underlying meaning of the information given. These codes were grouped to form themes or categories. The various meanings identified were used to develop overall description of corporate reputation management as experienced by the participants (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:464). The data were analysed inductively with the aim of allowing the research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant themes inherent in raw data (Nieuwenhuis 2016:109). In this case, therefore, the themes or categories would not be formulated in advance.

### **1.8.5 Methods of achieving trustworthiness**

This research is a case study, which requires a set of standards that fit various assumptions and approaches to qualitative research. These are: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in order to ensure trustworthiness (Toma 2006:406). Trustworthiness is an essential factor in qualitative research. In order to maximise the trustworthiness of the results, the researcher will refer the transcribed data back to the managers and other informants to ensure that it represents a reasonable account of the information they provided in the interviews (Daymon & Holloway 2002:90).

- **Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985:8) suggest that the researcher should aim for credibility rather than internal validity. They state that a study is credible if the people in it recognise the truth of the findings in their own social context.

- **Transferability**

Many qualitative studies involve very small or single case studies when it is the role of the researcher to assist the reader to transfer specific knowledge gained from the research findings of one study to other settings or experiences of the participants (Daymon & Holloway 2002:91).

- **Dependability**

The findings of the study must be consistent and accurate. This means that the participants will be able to evaluate the adequacy of the analysis through following the decision-making process, and the context of the research must also be described in detail (Daymon & Holloway 2002:91).

- **Confirmability**

The research is judged by the way in which the findings and conclusions achieve the aim of the study and are not the result of prior assumptions and preconceptions. Therefore for a study to be confirmable, the researcher needs to show how the data is linked to sources

so that a reader can establish that the conclusions and interpretations arise directly from them (Daymon & Holloway 2002:91).

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher respected the privacy, confidentiality and autonomy of the selected research participants. The researcher was mindful of cultural and individual differences among them such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, language, and socio-economic status and not knowingly discriminate against them. The welfare of the selected participants was a major concern whilst conducting interviews and the researcher endeavoured to avoid or minimise any harm to respondents during their interaction. She carefully monitored the research procedure of the project so that the research participants were not adversely affected by it. Permission was requested to conduct the research from the municipality manager at the Emfuleni Local Municipality. The municipality manager was informed about the nature of the research and that the results will be made available to all participants. The researcher negotiated the date, time and venue for the envisaged interviews with the participants (Struwig & Stead 2001:66-67).

## **1.10 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The case study only focuses on Emfuleni Local Municipality in Vanderbijlpark. Other municipalities under Emfuleni will be excluded from the study. Information is gathered from the internal stakeholders only. The focus is from an organisational perspective only, restricted to the communications and marketing manager, two assistant managers, five employees, manager in arts and culture department and two employees, manager from the office of the mayor and two employees, one events coordinator from the fire and rescue department in the Emfuleni Local Municipality offices. The results of the study, therefore, cannot be generalised to a larger population.

## **1.11 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

This chapter provides the background and context of the study.

### **Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter focuses on the literature on reputation management and the concept contributing to corporate reputation in a local municipality such as relationship management theory, corporate communication roles, excellence theory, rhetorical theory and systems theory.

### **Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the research methodology and design.

### **Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The analysis and findings of the data are collected in this chapter. It provides codes and themes established from the data collected as well as the findings.

### **Chapter 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter gives the background to the study while this chapter provides the relevant research literature on corporate reputation management. The analysis of the concept of reputation management is based on the general systems theory with organisations as systems, communication in a system being the main focus. The stakeholder management theory is also discussed in relation to reputation management.

### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theories that underpin this study include systems theory and stakeholder management theory. According to Şeşen (2015:137), systems theory is important for public relations for three reasons. Firstly, organisations were previously very concerned with studying an organisation by focusing mostly on the internal workings of it. Systems theory moved this locus on the interdependence of an organisation and its environment. Secondly, systems theory guides research and theorising in scientific communities. This theory is prominent in defining and understanding public relations, which encapsulates an emerging organisational view of the field through the general systems theory. Thirdly, the systems theory serves as a useful heuristic tool in assisting the public relations function to conceptualise the complex nature of organisational interdependencies. It also provides a framework for thinking about aspects of importance to understand organisational public relations decision-making and effectiveness. According to Park and Rhee (2010:1), public relations has been redefined as a relationship management function between organisations and their publics. This type of thinking provides individuals with an understanding of the world as an interconnected whole.

#### **2.2.1 Systems theory**

Ng, Maull and Yip (2009:380) describe a system as a set of interrelating units that endures through time within a reputable boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures

from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states. According to Tien and Berg (2003:23-24), a system is a set of objectives, entities or elements that are connected or interrelate with one another to form a whole. This indicates that different entities have to work together or work towards a shared purpose (Golinelli 2009:11). Lubbe and Puth (2000:42) further state that a system comprises the following:

- Objects: these are parts, elements, or members and they may be physical, abstract or both.
- Attributes: qualities and properties of the system and its parts.
- Relationships: mutual effect and constraints of each part of a system upon the others.
- Environment: a system exists within an environment, which may affect the system and be affected by it.

A systems approach regards society as an integral whole, whose components work together in such a way that the whole is kept in balance. The equilibrium and interdependence of the various subsystems that make up society are of utmost importance. It is when a system is healthy that the various subsystems interact with one another bringing about stability and balance. The organisation can therefore at no stage regard one system as more important than the other as each has a pivotal role to play.

The qualities of wholeness are evident in all systems where the complex organisation of the whole creates manifestations, which do not exist where the parts of the system are considered separately. Systems are all seen as subsystems of greater systems and in turn as systems which comprise systems. Mele, Pels and Polese (2010:129) argue that a system is self-regulatory if it guides the operations of the system towards a goal state by steering towards it. These goals can be limited, predictable and simple at a lower level hierarchy and very complex, flexible and unpredictable at higher levels. A systems theory differentiates between open and closed systems, stating that a closed system is separated from its environment and an open system has permeable boundaries which permit the exchange of information, material, or energy with its environment. The dynamic nature of systems is emphasised in a systems approach, concentrating upon emerging processes rather than static structures.



An open system changes and adapts because of the constant interaction with their environments. These systems respond to environmental conditions and engage actively with the environment (Mele *et al.* 2010:128). The stability component allows the continued existence of the system as a whole over time and flexibility permits the alteration of the system, which allows appropriate operation of that system within a changing environment.

A business organisation or an institution is made up of interrelated functions or sub-systems, such as public relations, marketing, human resources and production. Each sub-system as well as the system as a whole has boundaries, which distinguish it from the rest of the environment.

#### **2.2.1.1 Organisations as systems**

According to Lubbe and Puth (2000:45), organisations are complex interaction systems of individual and group components, which relate to each other in a relatively stable but adjustable way. Some organisations actively monitor their social environments and make adjustments based on what is learned. The amount of resources, time and effort an organisation devotes to monitoring its environment is determined by the degrees of conflict or competition with the external environment that is typically related to the extent of involvement with and dependence on government; of dependence on internal support and unity and degrees to which internal operations and external environments are supposed to be rationalised. Monitoring of the environment is also regulated by the size and structure of the organisation, its heterogeneity of membership and variety of goals, and its centralisation of authority. Therefore, monitoring refers to gathering and selecting information from internal sources in order to monitor internal developments that affect activities or decisions of the public relations department.

There are different types of organisations. These include system organisations of state and economy, lifeworld organisations of the public sphere and boundary organisations, which have some characteristics of both the system and the lifeworld and operate across the system/lifeworld boundary. Leitch and Neilson (2001:130) contend that the organisations

of the lifeworld have a distinctive identity because they emerge from communicative exchanges that occur within the public sphere, while system organisations embody the strategic goals and rationality of the state economy. Within the above-mentioned typology, three categories of organisation-public relationships are further identified as the intersystem organisation relations comprising relations between the organisations of the state and the corporate sector, intra-organisational relations comprising relations within an organisation, and organisation-public relations comprising relations between an organisation and an external public that is not a system-based organisation.

### **2.2.1.2 Organisations and their environments**

The organisational adjustment and adaptation to new conditions depends in part on how open organisations are to their environments. Steyn and Puth (2000:57) define the environment as the sum total of all conditions and forces that affect the strategic options of the organisation and define its competitive situation but that are typically beyond its ability to control. An organisation's environment includes everything and everyone around and inside, all factors or forces which could have potential impact on the organisation's operations (Yang, Liu & Wang 2013:4472). These include not only the shareholders but other stakeholders affected by an organisation's actions, such as customers, suppliers, the government, unions, competitors, local communities and the general public. It also includes economic and cultural conditions of the organisation, as well as social change, political priorities and technological developments (Freeman, 2006:190). Freeman (2004:4) and Freeman, Harrison and Wicks (2007:18) define stakeholders as individuals, groups and organisations that have interest in the process and outcomes of the organisation, who are vital to the survival and success of the corporation. Social systems engage in exchanges with their environments, producing changes in both the systems and their environments. At the same time, the internal management of an organisation cannot ignore changes in the external environment. It is important for an organisation to monitor its environments, and incorporate the effects of environmental changes into corporate decision making and formulation of new strategies.

- **The external environment**

The external environment includes all the external stakeholders, such as competitors, government, the media, the community and the people who are represented in them (Botha, Chaka, Du Plessis, Krause, Rawjee, Porthen, Veerasamy & Wright 2007:60). The organisation functions as a system within the various external systems such as the social, technological, economic and political systems. The nature of the systems has a decisive influence on the nature of the organisation and the kind of adaptation that must be made regularly within it. Indeed, the literature has recognised that some external stakeholders want to be involved in shaping the organisation itself (Scott & Lane 2000:45; Schultz & de Chernatony 2002:30; Battacharya & Sen 2003:81). What follows emphasises how external systems can influence the organisation in various ways.

According to Steyn and Puth (2000:72), the external environment consists of five categories that can influence the organisation: the first is about social factors, which involve the beliefs, values, attitudes, opinions and lifestyles of persons, as developed from cultural, ecological, demographic, religious, educational and ethnic conditioning. Social forces are dynamic and subject to constant change. The second is about economic factors, at national and international level, including the general availability of credit, the level of disposable income, and the propensity of people to spend. Also vital in this category are prime interest rates, inflation rates, and trends in the growth of the gross national product. The influence of economic factors occur at two levels: in policy-making, which refers to the economic policy of the country in which the organisation operates, and in the need of consumers, which refers to the state of the economy, whether the consumer can afford the product or service. The third is about political factors that define the legal and regulatory parameters within which organisations must operate. The fourth is based on technological factors, which involve rapid change or sudden breakthroughs. Availability of technology in an organisation enable it to offer the consumer its products or services. This system has a determining influence on the quality and speed with which products and services are provided. The fifth, and last category pertains to the ecological factors, which refer to the relationship between human beings and other living things, and the air, soil and water that support them.

Awareness of these factors is important in order to avoid obsolescence and to promote innovation.

- **The Internal Environment**

It is imperative to comprehend that the internal environment includes all the functional departments such as public relations, marketing and accounting that make up the business organisation, employees, financial resources, information, capabilities, incentives (Freeman & Reid 2006:210). Internal environment refers to areas of specialisation within the organisation such as finance, human resources, operations, administration, marketing, corporate communication and research and development (Kinyua-Mjuguna, Munyoki & Kibera 2014:19). These factors have a direct impact on the organisation, and their importance is explained beneath.

Williams (2009:1) asserts that the internal environment of any organisation comprises firm-related factors that influence its capacity to achieve set objectives, develop and implement a viable plan, which consequently contributes to its performance (Amoako-Gyampah, 2003:287; Ghani, Nayan, Ghazali & Shafie 2010:51). Tolbert and Hall (2009:88) further state that internal environmental forces provide strengths and weaknesses to the business.

How employees perceive the organisation determines what they say publicly, and their opinions consequently become the basis for how other stakeholders and stockholders perceive the organisational reputation, because what employees say about the organisation is often perceived to be more credible and authentic than messages from senior management or the public relations team (Kim & Rhee 2011:247).

### **2.2.1.3 Communication in an organisation**

Skinner *et al.* (2010:73) define communication as a transactional process of exchanging messages and negotiating meaning to establish and maintain relationships. Furthermore, Steinberg and Angelopulo (2015:26) elaborate on a communication phenomenon as the actual communication event, as well as the relations of the communication event with the

context in which it takes place. Communication develops a relationship between the interlocutors (people who communicate), and to those who receive the message. Communication does not occur unless one person transmits a piece of information to another person, who receives the piece of information and the received information has meaning to the receiver (Babatunde 2015:80).

Communication is central to the practice of public relations; one cannot separate the two. Furman (2010:64) and Otubanjo, Amujo and Cornelius (2010:155) argue that the establishment of a trustworthy relationship helps firms interact with a wide range of stakeholders, both existing and potential, through communication processes expressly designed to establish and support the firm's reputation. Public relations means creating a dialogue with stakeholders to gain a better understanding of their interests (Forman & Argenti 2005:251). Public relations makes use of mass communication through mass media such as magazines, newspapers, film, radio, television and recent addition is social media as a way of communicating with a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Mass media provides easy communication between stakeholder groups. A large number of people are involved in producing the message. Gregory (2011:7) argues that mass communication is appropriate for PR practitioners, with little requirement for labour-intensive and/or expensive personal communication. There is little opportunity for feedback and delayed feedback may occur. It has a large audience, heterogeneous and anonymous to the source; it is often indirect, with a diverse nature of the recipients; communication is unilateral as the roles of communicator and receiver are not inter-changeable; it can be described as public and often fleeting. The communicator in mass communication makes use of a complex corporate organisation with a particular structure and accompanying costs in order to relay the message (Gregory 2011:7).

Therefore, Public relations can affect a corporate through its chosen messages, which enables stakeholders to understand the institution's operations. It positively loads the perception of the institution's activities, which can lead to an overall positive evaluation of the company (Wiedmann & Prauschke 2006:28). Lack of effective communication is a serious problem within an organisation, and can lead to confusion that can cause a good

plan to fail (Babatunde 2015:79). Cornelissen (2011:491) argues that corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent. Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016:492) identified three different conceptualisations of corporate communication: primary communication, which includes the various communication effects of product and service performance, firm policies and employee behaviour; secondary communication containing the formal communications of the organisation, which make use of traditional communication channels that include advertising, public relations and sponsorship; and tertiary communication using word of mouth, media interpretation and competitor communication. A study by Floreddu, Cabiddu and Evaristo (2014:209) demonstrated unambiguously that corporate communication has a direct impact on corporate reputation.

Organisational communication and corporate communication are used interchangeably in this study. Thus Steinberg and Angelopulo (2015:268) define organisational communication as an umbrella term for all the diverse acts of communication that happens in an organisation or business. Organisational communication takes place downward and upward (vertical) system and interactive (horizontal) systems in an organisation (Eneanya 2009:54). It is concerned with the flow of messages within a network of interdependent relationships (Bogdal 2013:21). It holds the organisational structure together by providing a basis for coordinating the relationships between individuals and reaching the organisation's ultimate objectives. It has a one-sided vision of the environment, which in some situations may be more effective because it allows to faster decision making process and announcing decisions and critical information in such situation as an unforeseen crisis (Bogdal 2013:22). According to Gregory (2011:6), stakeholders in this segment are unlikely to be seeking information actively, but the organisation may wish to stimulate interest.

The public communications management is a similar concept to communications management, it is highlighted as it is more relevant to this study in terms of local

government communication. The most complex model of public communications management is proposed by Liu and Horsley (2007:378-381). They differentiated eight factors that determine the way of communications in public sector: (1) political dimension is of great importance and can influence not only relations between institutions but also links between different lobby groups; (2) the goal behind establishing public institutions and agendas is public good, so there is less attention paid to market aspects of their activities; (3) legal constraints; (4) media scrutiny; (5) devaluation of communication, what results in cutting costs on activities in public budgets; (6) poor public perception - public opinion see communication processes as a form of propaganda; (7) lagging professional development of public sector behind private sectors; and (8) federalism.

- **Communication in local government**

Since the birth of a new democracy in the Republic of South Africa in 1994, municipalities across the country have embarked on several service-oriented programmes primarily to improve the quality of life of ordinary citizens within their areas of jurisdiction. Subsequently, these programmes, which include land use management (LUMS), integrated development planning (IDP), integrated sustainable rural development, local economic development (LED), and municipal infrastructure grant (MIG) have been tailored to fast track service delivery in municipalities by building capacity and promoting small, medium and micro enterprises in local communities as a means of alleviating poverty. The main purpose of these programmes was to improve service delivery and reputation of local municipalities (Yirenki 2006:66).

Presently it seems that there is lack of continuous two-way communication between the local government bodies and their citizens, which has resulted in poor service delivery, lack of understanding of the concerns of communities and insufficient disseminate of relevant information to communities. This study was conducted in a district municipality in Gauteng. At the time of the study there were no formal structures in place to facilitate internal communication. Formal structures such as Section 80 committees serve as a platform for political deliberations. Inability to form such structures is not in line with the notion that service delivery should be viewed as the mechanism to activate the

communication strategy. Moreover, according to Pretorius and Schurink (2007:26), the marketing of key services provided by the district municipality in the interest of integrated regional development should be the focus of the communication strategy.

In assessing international trends in local government, Stoker (2002:33) purports that there is a need for open communication, transparency, customer orientation and a concern for people's welfare with a sustained level of public debate and participation in order to enhance reputation at the local government level. Lumadi's (2014:171) research stipulates that the CEO's reputation impacts on all aspects of organisational existence, from internal communication to branding, from customer service to the external image and reputation and media exposure. Joosub (2006:98) states that all organisations are vulnerable to events that could impact their reputation. These events can arise from various factors, such as a company's employment practices, economics, natural disasters, pollution, poor governance or poor management.

#### **2.2.1.4 Public relations role in organisational systems**

According to Skinner *et al.* (2010:10), most corporate specialists fit into a well-established public relations department within the overall structure of the organisation. In service organisations, public relations may be split into product promotion and public affairs. Depending on the nature of the business, the function will be available in each department. The structure of in-house departments is fairly standard. In organisations with a sophisticated approach to public relations, the specialist is a member of the management team. These specialists must understand the business or industry in which their organisations operate. This is essential in order to ensure that they are able to assist an organisation to achieve its set objectives.

A systems approach simply implies an understanding of the glue which holds organisational systems together. This means that the communication process and underlying culture exist within an organisation (Kahan & Braman 2005:1396). Some understanding of these processes is called for as public relations incorporates aspects such as assimilation and dissemination of information, change and involvement with extremely



complex phenomena such as attributes and values (Lapsley & Wright 2003:356). The public relations specialist, therefore, must know the ends towards which the organisation strives, especially those aimed at the attainment of environmentally sourced values. This means better understanding of and interaction with management. Public relations may even define the desired objectives.

With regards to public relations, a systems approach entails proactive and reactive involvement with the organisation and its audiences. It is therefore imperative that the public relations efforts include the accumulation of information as well as the distribution thereof (Rensburg & Cant 2009:49). Successful organisations innovate hence, innovative organisations are effective learning systems, which maximise their ability to process information. Public relations from a systems perspective, therefore, incorporates thorough and effective communication within the organisation and with environmental audiences. The success of an institution in altering its corporate culture is a model of effective communication (Lubbe & Puth 2000:48).

### **2.3 CORPORATE REPUTATION**

Towards having an integrative view, Gabbioneta, Ravasi and Mazzola (2007:99) suggest that reputations constitute subjective, collective assessment of the trustworthiness and reliability of organisations. These authors indicate differences in types of reputation, mentioning those that:

- are derivative, with second-order characteristics of an industrial system that crystallise the emergent status of the organisations field, which Lange, Lee and Dai (2011:157) label as “being known for something”;
- are an external reflection of an organisations internal identity - itself the outcome of sense-making by employees about the company’s role in society;
- develop from the organisations prior resource allocations and histories and constitute nobility barriers that constrain both the organisation’s own actions and rival reactions;
- summarise assessment of past performance by diverse evaluators who assess the organisation’s ability and potential to satisfy diverse criteria;

- derive from multiple but related images of organisation among all of a organisation's stakeholders, and inform about their overall attractiveness to employees, consumers, investors and local communities; and
- embody two fundamental dimensions of the organisation's economic performance and an appraisal of its success in fulfilling social responsibilities.

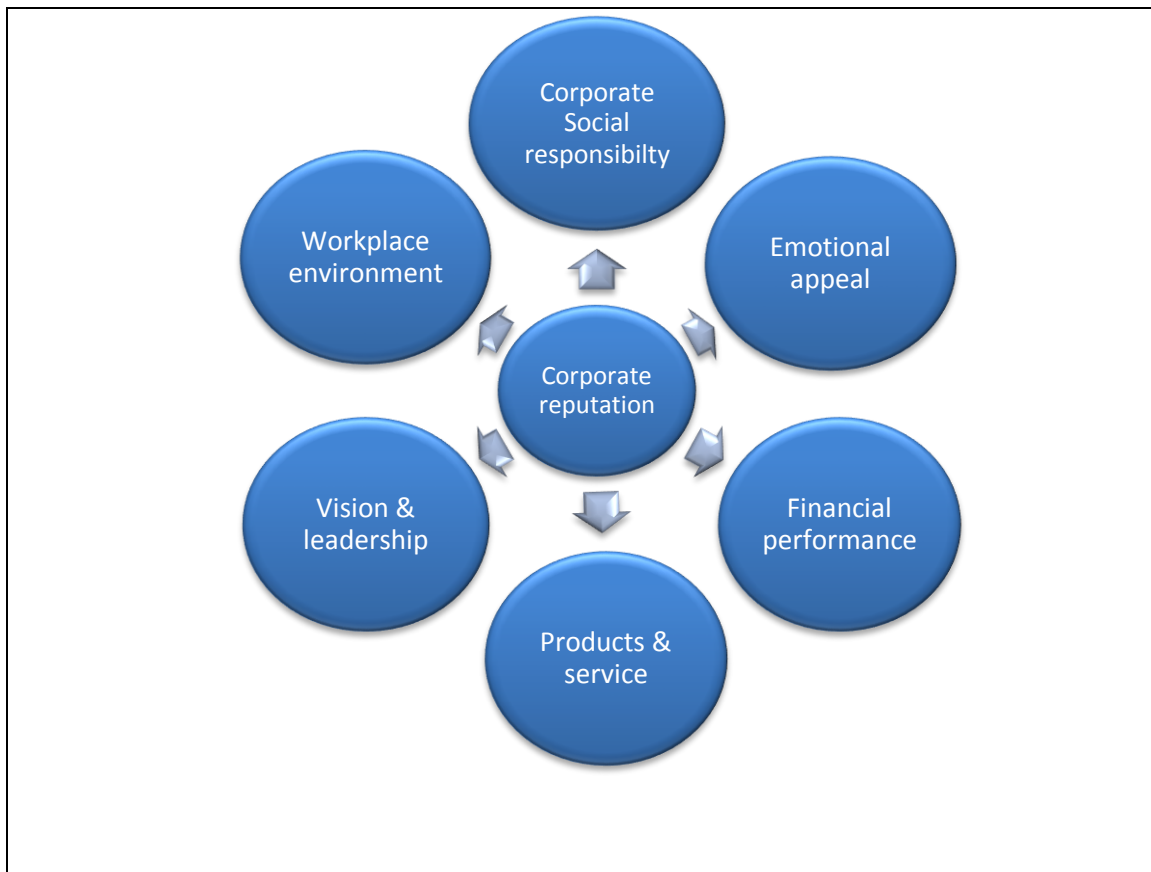
Consistent with these characteristics corporate reputation is defined as a collective representation of an organisation's past actions and results that describe its ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. It measures an organisation's relative standing, both internally with employees and externally with stakeholders, in both its competitive and institutional environments (Fombrun & Van Riel 1997:5).

Theaker (2001:68) stipulates that corporate reputation have bottom line effects. A good reputation enhances profitability because it attracts customers to the organisation's products, investors to its securities, and employees to its jobs.

Fombrun, cited by Gotsi and Wilson (2001:28), assign the following key characteristics to the concept of corporate reputation: corporate social responsibility, workplace environment, vision and leadership, products and services, financial performance and emotional appeal. They further make the point that different stakeholders may have different perceptions of reputations of the same company based on their own economic, social and personal backgrounds and also based on their experiences with the particular organisation.

Reputation relies on the attractiveness of the institution regarding diverse attributes (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty 2006:31). These criteria are indicated in the figure below.

**Figure 2.1 Criteria that influence corporate reputation**



Adapted from Weaver (2011:374)

Each of these characteristics of corporate reputation will be discussed in paragraphs that follow.

Furthermore, Scott and Walsham (2005:310) recommend a shift of attention from fixing the present-past to managing the present-future with reputable action. Their advice is that high-performance organisations should (a) reconceptualise reputation as a strategic boundary object, which offers a lens through which to analyse tensions between local values, reputation and the inputs and outputs needed to uphold coherence across intersecting communities; (b) clarify expectations and ongoing reflective assessments which help recognise the increased demands placed on strategic reputational boundary objects by changing trust relationships; and (c) define their stakes, which by shifting away

from fixed notions of stakeholders makes possible a social constructivist perspective of stake-making and stake-breaking.

### **2.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined by Andersen (2003:1) broadly to be about extending the immediate social interest from oneself to include one's fellow environmental citizens and the society one is living in and is a part of today, acting with respect for the future generation and nature. This definition incorporates stakeholders, their social status and the environment. The definition by Van Marrewijk (2003:98) indicates that corporate sustainability and CSR refer to a company's voluntary activities that demonstrate the inclusion of both environmental and social concerns in operations of business and in interactions with stakeholders. Although this definition includes some of the dimensions indicated by Anderson above, it also adds others such as economic, and voluntariness.

With companies practising CSR, compliance with legal and voluntary requirements for business and professional practice becomes imperative. Corporate social responsibility now forms part of the BBBEE scorecard and companies are able to score points to enhance their ability to do business with government and others by being good corporate citizens (Fig 2005:607). The company and its employees, the natural environment, the challenges posed by the needs of the economically and socially disadvantaged and responsible management to business activities demand effective strategies that curtail bad reputation.

Organisations must be seen to support good causes within the community in order to build relationships with the communities they operate in. They should portray excellent internal and external relations with the stakeholders, and contribute towards the development and upliftment of disadvantaged stakeholders. Scholars in the public relations field are very passionate about the role the organisations play in social responsibility initiatives that would link to the overall reputation of an organisation. Crane, Matten and Spence (2008:14) mention the core characteristics of corporate social responsibility as inclusive of voluntary activities that go beyond those prescribed by law. They advise internalising or

managing externalities by calculating the economic and social impacts in order to reduce the health impacts of multiple stakeholder orientation, which considers a range of interests and impacts among not only shareholders but a variety of different stakeholders. They suggest the following:

- Alignment of social and economic responsibilities – the business case for CSR and how can organisations benefit from being socially responsible (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010:11; Sen, Bhattacharya & Korschun 2006:161).
- Practices and values – underpinned by a philosophy or set of values, this dimension is the reason why the subject raises so much disagreement.

CSR has increasingly become a management function in public relations activities, with planned, deliberate communication directed towards targeted stakeholders for the purpose of achieving an understanding. CSR has become important to public relations because such programmes offer the opportunity to build goodwill by promoting the benefits of the organisation to its stakeholders (Peloza 2006:55). CSR communication falls within the public relations portfolio because it affects an organisation's stakeholders, image and reputation (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010:9).

Jones and Bartlett (2009:2) view corporate social responsibility as a facilitator of relationship management, building support networks for the organisation. Their perspective adds to the growing focus in the public relations literature on the role of relationship management as a central foundation. Their paper discusses the scope of social responsibility that includes three key pillars: ecological balance, economic growth, and social progress. According to Branco and Rodrigues (2006:111), the dominant conception of CSR implies that firms voluntarily integrate social and environmental concerns in their operations and interactions with stakeholders.

CSR involves not just making profit but examining the impact of business activities upon the social system, and going beyond economic and legal requirements that result in an early conceptualisation of business ethics and corporate citizenship (Branco & Rodrigues 2006:111). It includes voluntary activities, where the marginal return on business

expenditure on social responsibility is less than the returns available from alternative expenditure. Legal, economic, voluntary activities are of concern for the broader social system and give way to social responsiveness, the adaptation of corporate behaviour to social needs, and corporate behaviour compared to apparent social norms, values, and expectations of performance (Fig 2005:608; Smith 2003:53).

### **2.3.2 Products and Services**

The responsibility of an organisation is to ensure that it produces safe products for human use, offer high quality products and services, develop innovative products and services that give good value for money. As indicated by Walsh and Beatty (2007:130), a firm's reputation can become a surrogate indicator of the quality of goods or services.

Brammer and Pavelin (2006:443) argue that in light of this, one should expect corporate reputation to be augmented by those activities most closely associated with the vertical differentiation of products: technological advancement and the cultivation of a strong brand image. This component of reputation mainly applies to business organisations, although it can also be applied to other types of organisations, including government or public services. These services include maintenance of roads, water, electricity supply and recreational facilities.

### **2.3.3 Emotional Appeal**

An organisation must manage itself responsibly and to the advantage of its employees and society. According to Fombrun and van Riel (2004:95), strong reputations result "when companies build emotional appeal." The most significant characteristic of a strong reputation is the emotional attachment that customers feel towards it. Organisations with a strong brand or strong reputation have some sort of "charisma" (Wæraas 2009:312), "magnetism" (Fombrun & van Riel 2004), or "spiritual power" (Olins 2000:63).

According to Lubbe and Puth (2000:5), good corporate reputation sells an organisation to potential employees as a good place to work, one which appeals to emotions. The

organisation should therefore utilise internal corporate communication effectively to enhance the organisation's reputation among employees as stakeholders, since corporate reputation and values instilled through internal corporate communication reverberate beyond organisations. A positive reputation therefore is vital amongst employees because it affects decisions to engage, commit, stay and work hard. In turn, loyal and committed employees enhance an organisation's reputation in the market (Meyer & de Wet 2007:23).

#### **2.3.4 Vision and Leadership**

According to Yukl (2006:18), strategic leadership in an organisation directly or indirectly determines structural forms, organisational culture and climate and communications. When it comes to vision and leadership, management competence and leadership behaviours can drive public relations outcomes such as perceived organisational reputation and quality relationships. What is needed in organisations are managers with visionary leadership qualities, and these include transformational leadership (Lazenby 2014:341). Transformational leadership has been consistently found to be associated with superior work performance and employee attitudes such as trust in leaders, job satisfaction, team/organisational commitment, and loyalty (Judge & Piccolo 2004:757; Rowold & Rohmann 2009:49; Zagorsêk *et al.* 2009:149).

Transformational leadership positively influences employees' perception of organisational reputation, directly and indirectly by empowering them (Yukl 2006:21). This means that transactional leadership has a significantly negative direct effect on employees' perception of organisational reputation. Employees who feel more empowered in terms of perceived competence and decision-making control have a more favourable evaluation of organisational reputation.

#### **2.3.5 Financial Performance**

Positive financial performance may enhance corporate reputation instead of the reverse (Cravens & Oliver 2006:295). Their research supports the motion that good reputation enhancement is better able to sustain superior profit outcomes over time. Instead of

working through financial performance demonstrations and the signals that they generate some organisations have direct effects on reputation with flow through effects on profit persistence.

Rose and Thomsen (2004:201-10) agree that good corporate reputations are critical for reasons expressed by Roberts and Dowling (2002:179). They agree that there is a positive relationship between reputation and financial performance.

Strong financial performance generally signals an effective corporate strategy, good management, and good resource allocations, and so helps an organisation to establish and maintain a good reputation. This in local municipalities means that they have to adhere to the Public Finance Management Act (1999:1) to comply to financial requirements.

### **2.3.6 Workplace Environment**

Weaver (2011:275) stated that corporate reputation management is the process of tracking an organisation's action, tracking other entities opinions about those actions, reporting on those actions and opinions and reacting to that report and creating a feedback loop. The entities are normally stakeholders and the tracking and reporting may range from word-of-mouth to statistical analysis of thousands of data points.

## **2.4 REPUTATION MANAGEMENT**

Reputation management aims at creating shared interests with stakeholders (Helm *et al.* 2011:17). Reputation is managed in order to diagnose how their constituents perceive them. Corporate reputation management internationally is viewed as the capacity to configure an optimistic strategy for managing corporate reputation (Fieldman *et al.* 2014:56). It is thus considered in every decision making process of the organisation and along all its different departments. The management of corporate reputation entails everything that an organisation does or does not do in order to communicate plans of action that affect both internal and external stakeholders. Johnson and Scholes (2002:32) suggest that the importance of each stake holding group and the amount of attention that should be devoted



to them depends on where they are positioned in the power/interest matrix. Gregory (2011:80) argues that just because a stakeholding group appears not to have significant interest or power, does not mean that they are unimportant.

According to Cloete (2002:8), Rakodi (2001:346) and Stoker (2002:31), current trends regarding effective corporate reputation management indicate an emphasis on networks and collaboration between the local government, municipalities and other levels of government. Davies, Chun and Kamin (2010:541) have stressed the importance of managing external reputation through internal reputation that involves staff in the process of building a reputation, which resonates within the organisation. In the business world, risk reputation management relays to the development of influencing or controlling the reputation of an organisation. Management of reputational risk is part of corporate reputation management. It consists of providing the procedures and internal alignment necessary for detecting and minimising those gaps that can potentially compromise the fulfilment of strategic goals (Fieldman *et al.* 2014:58).

In managing reputation, organisations assess their corporate reputation by using benchmarking to understand their corporate reputation strength and weakness. They benchmark their reputation against both their competitors and other organisations with exceptional reputation (Williams & Omar 2014:240). Benchmarking helps organisations imitate good management practices as well as building valuable reputation capital. Reputation develops from a firm's uniqueness and from identity shaping practices that lead the constituent to perceive the firm as reliable and trustworthy. In turn, a firm's corporate reputation helps to protect it from competitors who try hard to imitate its practices (Schwaiger 2004:48).

#### **2.4.1 Importance of reputation management**

Organisations will tend to have different reputations with different stakeholder groups. The evaluation criteria stakeholders use to judge an organisation's reputation will differ depending on the particular stakeholder's expectations of the organisation's role. For example, investors may expect high returns on their investment, consumers may expect the

organisation to provide quality offerings, while environmental groups may expect sustainable environmental practices. Thus, the organisation will have a different reputation with each of the stakeholder groups, and may have different reputations with individual stakeholder group members as expectations vary from one member to the next. Furthermore, stakeholder expectations of an organisation's actions are dynamic and likely to change over time. As an organisation's reputation increases, so do stakeholder's expectations (Neville, Bell & Mengüç 2005:1189).

The findings of a study conducted by Maden *et al.* (2012:661) indicated that all stakeholder groups in their research perceived good reputation to those firms which they evaluated positively in terms of their social performance. Even in public sector organisations stakeholders can freely form their opinions on the competence and trustworthiness of public sector organisations (Luoma-aho 2008:448). Reputations are formed differently in public sector organisations than in corporations, as their functions, scope, publics and aims differ (Luoma-aho 2008:449). Assessments are formed individually in the eye of the beholder, whether the target actively attempts to influence them or not.

Firestein (2006:25) states that reputation is the strongest determinant of any corporation sustainability. The stock price can always come back and business strategies can always be changed, for instance. However, when an organisation's reputation is gravely injured its recovery is difficult long-term and uncertain. A risk to an organisations reputation is a threat to the survival of the organisation. Additionally, Firestein emphasises that organisational leaders who have built a strong corporate reputation know that it takes an internal culture that forges a positive opinion of the organisation to successfully cope with both expected and unanticipated challenges. They know that public relations is not a bandage that will cover risky behaviour. Most of all organisations must understand their stakeholders and that every organisational solution must be unique. An approach to reputation management by an organisation must include structured engagement with investors, communities, regulators, the media and activist organisations. The primary feature of this engagement is active listening, which provides a means to develop a trained intelligence that enables leaders to anticipate external responses to their actions. When

necessary, organisations deliver a perspective that helps protect them from the kind of competition driven excesses that seem to arise so easily in a pressurised market environment. Firestein (2006:25) and Bevan (2008:16) agree that failure to build a culture of attentive engagement can prove devastating. Management has discovered that corporate culture and communication with employees is the most difficult factor to achieve other than financial results and growth. This can be attributed to differences in employees' cultures even though a diverse workforce can have many positive elements. Bevan (2008:16) suggests that the public relations departments engage in programmes with employees to create better teamwork and open channels of communication. Firestein (2006:27) concludes that organisational listening is achievable only through carefully developed feedback structures by which stakeholder opinion can be gathered and processed for use by senior decision makers. Such mechanisms include forums and a regular cycle of perception that brings about the views of significant constituencies. Essential to this process is a leadership culture that recognises adherence to stakeholder values as a pillar of the organisation's sustainability.

#### **2.4.2 The role of public relations in reputation management**

Theaker (2001:67) agrees with Fombrun (1997:13) that well regarded organisations build their reputations by developing practices that integrate economic and social considerations into their competitive strategies. They not only do things right – they do right things. In doing so, they act like good citizens. They initiate policies that reflect their core values; that consider the joint welfare of investors, customers and employees; that invoke concern for the development of local communities; and that ensure the quality and environmental soundness of their technologies, products and services.

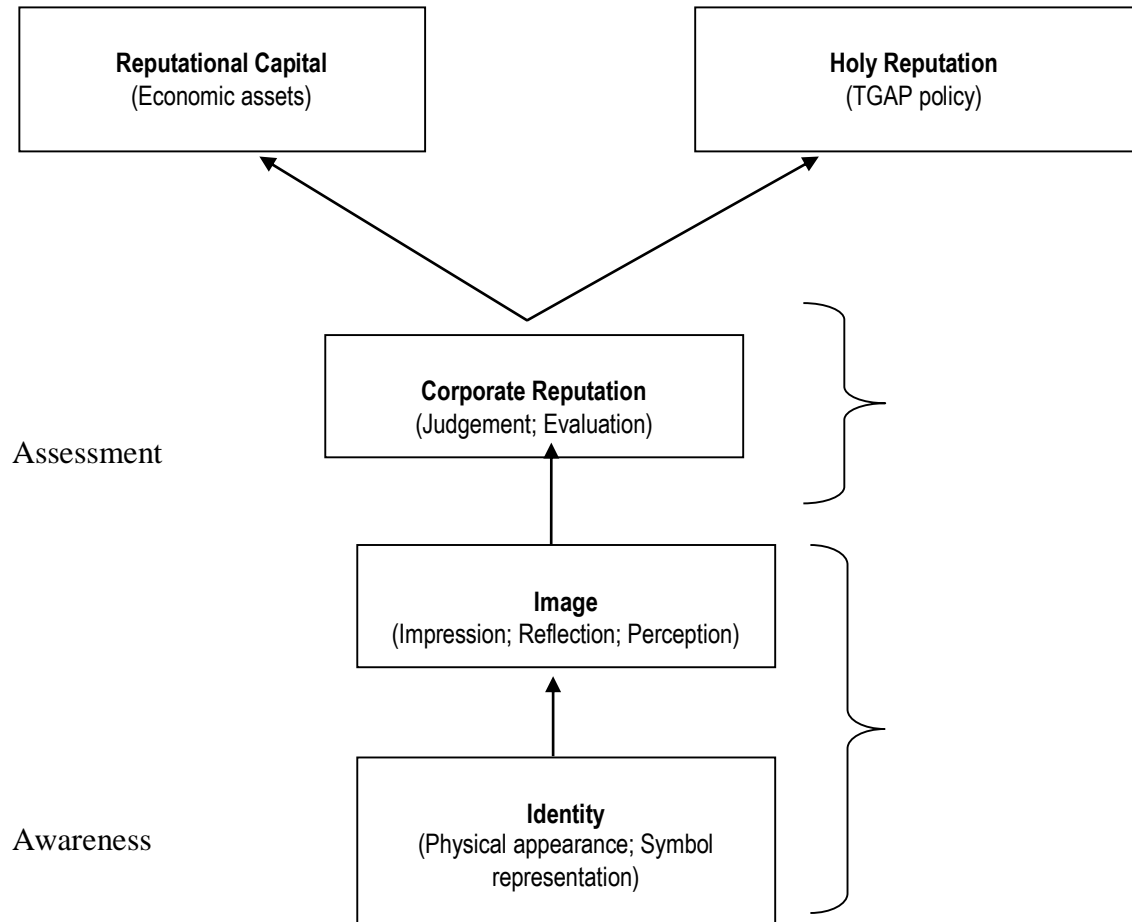
Lackey and Rusert (2013:2) continue to define reputation management as creating influencer strategies that deepen understanding, build trust and mitigate risk. They argue that reputation rests at the intersection of the three key areas of business strategy and governance that build trust and incorporate:

- Responsible business operations, which translate into minimal negative impact and maximum positive impact. This includes areas such as environmental, health and safety, and human rights.
- Positive social impact, which ensures that an organisation's expertise and assets address social issues and support social well-being that engages the organisation's communities.
- Financial stability, which is the result of providing products and services that are both socially beneficial and economically profitable for the organisation and its stakeholders.

Furthermore, they argue that building, protecting and maintaining reputation is undeniably the most important responsibility of today's senior executives, and that transparency has taken on a new meaning and level of importance.

Abdullah (2008:290) in his study proposed a theoretical approach to reputation management from multiculturalism and strategic management perspective to fill a gap between practice and theory with regard to the strategic role of today's corporate communication. Abdullah (2008:180) took several conclusions concerning the theoretical approach. First, this approach probably may have the strong organisational capability needed to foster the strategic programmes of corporate communications. Thus, it may gain proper recognition from top management and benefit society as a whole. Reputation management focus goes beyond corporate events or running publicity. Second, the root of the model discussed is strongly based on universal principles of trust, integrity and transparency, which may enhance the professionalism of communication practitioners. Third, unlike other conventional communication and public relations models that have been influenced by western philosophy, this adaptive model sketched below may fit into cultural sensitivity and local norms, which suits local people and their environment in a transitional country.

**Figure 2.2 A re-conceptualised model of reputation**



Adopted from Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty (2006:33)

The researcher gives more detail on these contrasts in the sections below

### **2.4.3 Corporate identity and image in reputation management**

Zulhamri (2009:171) says that it is vital to clarify these three different concepts: corporate image, reputation and identity because these interrelated concepts are sometimes misunderstood.

- **Corporate image**

Zulhamri (2009:171) defines image as the perception of constituencies on how an organisation actually presents itself, whilst corporate identity refers to the self-presentation of an organisation through corporate colour, logo and any signal that can be easily be seen

by stakeholders. According to Skinner *et al.* (2010:8), corporate image is the net result of the interaction of all experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that people have about a company. This means that everything that an organisation does or does not do all adds or detract from its image.

Botha *et al.* (2007:259) explain corporate image as the collection of all the perceptions a person has of an organisation. The image belongs to the people who perceive or experience it. Furthermore, Botha *et al.* (2007:259) argue that an organisation cannot change its corporate image at will or have total control over it. They identify a number of factors that influence corporate image including the size of the organisation, the buildings or factories of an organisation, the behaviour of staff, its social involvement and social responsibility, its management style, marketing and advertising practices and its public relations practices. Public relations is still looked at as a tool for the organisation to foster its image through public information and publicity.

The different types of image are crucial to this study. The first one is mirror image, which is how people within the organisation think the outside world sees it. Often those within the organisation, especially its leaders, develop a false impression of what the outside world thinks of their organisation. This can be borne from wishful thinking or self-delusion caused by lack of unbiased opinion from outside the organisation. The second image is the current image, held by people outside the organisation which may be slightly accurate, based either on experience, misunderstanding or half-truths. This image is not always as positive as the organisation might want it to be. The third image is the wish image, which is the image desired by management. It often it relates to a vision statement, defined when the organisation was founded and is the image the organisation is working towards. The truth is that wish images are not always realised. The fourth is corporate image, which is the image of the organisation as opposed to the image of its services or products. Corporate image is composed of organisational history, financial stability, reputation as an employer and history of corporate citizenship. It is often argued that it is possible to have a good corporate image and a poor reputation for products and services and vice versa. The fifth is the multiple image, which happens when various branches of the business or even

individuals within the organisation create their own image within that of the whole corporation. These are the many images put forward by the individual working within the organisation. These may or may not be coordinated successfully.

Melewar (2008:142) suggests that image and reputation, while overlapping, are not the same. Furthermore, he states that they are those elements over which the business has no direct control but which still influence public perception of the organisation and help create the establishment of corporate image through interaction or experience. On the other hand, corporate reputation emerges over time through repeated impressions of corporate image, whether they be positive or negative. In addition, business, whether it be local or global, has a personality or image that infuses its reputation. Many researchers have pointed out that reputation is a major factor in achieving organisational goals and competitively differentiates one corporation from another. There seems to be a general agreement that a “corporate brand” as well as specific product brand names have value ‘brand equity’. However, individual perceptions of an organisation may differ depending on the conditions and these many images can complicate our understanding of what a corporate reputation is. The organisation’s reputation is among its most valuable corporate resources. It is viewed as a priceless asset which must be nurtured and readjusted in keeping with events and times and changing business realities. That is why the management of image and reputation is one of the vital responsibilities of a public relations specialist (Skinner *et al.* 2010:266).

- **Corporate identity**

Corporate identity also contributes to institutions by differentiating them from their competitors (Balmer & Greyser 2002:80), creating strong relationships with stakeholders (Lorange 2005:47), and delivering value, which in turn will enable them to obtain their strategic objectives (Melewar 2008:145). Identity is concerned with institutionalisation of status, perceptions and the extent of congruence between professional and personal values and the practice requirements (Brunton & Jeffrey 2013:45). Corporate identity, according to Otubanjo and Melewar (2007:417), is conceived as the planned expression of the corporate personality through a variety of channels of the corporate identity mix. It is mostly a mixture of qualities that no other organisation has and some that is shared with

others. It is the visual system for controlling how institutions look (Skinner *et al.* 2010:264). The nature of corporate identity is broadly viewed as having an evolving character (Melewar 2008:148).

Corporate identity deals with the essence of the organisation and its unique characteristics: its philosophy, values, history, strategy, business scope and communication. Corporate identity is therefore receiving increasing attention from practitioners and academics alike, because it is believed to have a positive influence on corporate reputation, which in turn, spawns superior financial performance (Broomhill 2007:82). Corporate identity is also recognised as a strategic source and a valuable tool for addressing the needs of the organisation's stakeholders. Furthermore, corporate identity and related concepts such as corporate communication and organisational identity are the result of permanent interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders. Because stakeholders have interests and demands, the way in which an organisation manages these claims contributes to the shaping of its corporate identity in relation to its values and actions, and differentiates organisations. The findings of a study conducted by Brunton and Jeffrey (2013:49) in local government in Australia, indicate that positive identification arose from an ability to influence, emulate the professional value of peers and cohesion with the wider practitioners' community, and that dis-identification arose from perceptions that communication managers are spinners of information, paid to deceive or exaggerate, their advice not being taken and manipulated in unethical practice by professional colleagues.

Corporate personality as part of the corporate identity mix refers to the formal expression of who and what a firm is; where the firm was and why it was there; where the firm is currently and where it is going; what it does; what it is good at doing; how it is run; what it stands for; what the firm believes in; how it operates (Melewar 2003:210).

Corporate image is in the mind of the public and not under the total control of the organisation, but corporate identity is under the total control of the organisation. The organisation can use corporate identity to influence and thereby have some control of its corporate image. This is a clear indication that scholars have different perspectives on the



question of importance of image or identity as a symbol or illustration that portrays the good reputation of organisations to the public. A good image of the organisation alone is not enough. Understanding the competencies' profile of corporations may yield distinctiveness to achieve a truly good reputation (Zulhamri 2009:172).

The transition from identity to image is a function of public relations, marketing and other organisational developments that shape the impression people have about the organisation. Image can be shaped but not controlled by an organisation because factors such as media coverage, governmental regulations and surveillance, industry dynamics and other external forces also influence impressions of the organisation.

Corporate reputation has a unique meaning and is more long lasting than corporate image. More importantly, it requires a constantly harmonious series of programmes and should be thoroughly crafted in line with the strategy development of an organisation. Thus, reputation should be seen as a key source of distinctiveness to gain competitive advantage in the changing business environment (Zulhamri 2009:172).

#### **2.4.4 Reputational capital and holy reputation**

Literature defines reputational capital as signifying the value created by an organisation's image in a stakeholder's mind because of their interaction with the organisation. It is also related to positive outcomes in organisations, such as the customers' intention to buy a service, attraction for employees and employees' strong identification with the organisations (Saeed & Arshad 2012:220).

### **2.5 THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES**

One of the main challenges facing public relations professionals employed by local municipalities is internal communications. They need to understand the role that they play in the public sector and its impact on the corporate reputation of the local municipality. Theaker (2001:176) stipulates the following objectives of the public relations function in a local municipality:

- to create understanding of the policies, procedures and activities of an authority, by keeping customers as fully informed as possible;
- to manage the authority's public relations function and to advise on the public relations implications of the policies and activities of the authority and on the formulation of public relations policies;
- to respond where appropriate to criticism of the authority;
- to maintain and establish effective channels of public communication available to the authority and to develop a full range of appropriate techniques;
- to establish, project and maintain the municipality's corporate character and identity;
- to maintain and create within the authority an awareness of the need to communicate with its various customer groups and to ensure a sustained level of responsiveness to customer opinions and needs.

Scholars outline the task of local government as providing services that are essential to uplifting society at large (Mathekga & Buccus 2006:11; Van der Waldt 2006:16; Rogerson 2010:482) subject to national and provincial legislation as provided for in the Constitution (Cameron 2001:102). Promoting the wellbeing of the communities within its limits and all people have the right to primary health care, electricity, sanitation, transportation, water, education, housing and the right to live within a safe and healthy environment (Municipal Structures Act 1998; Roux 2005:69; Koma 2010:113). The provision of services by municipalities is a constitutional obligation. As indicated by Toerien (2005:1), South African local authorities became the wardens of economic growth in their jurisdictions. The recent outburst by communities due to lack of these services has a detrimental effect on the corporate reputation of the local municipalities that are supposed to serve them (Hough 2008:8). Communities have a sense of entitlement as local municipalities are democratically elected by them, using a national voting system in order to make provision for proportional representation.

According to Cutlip, Center, Broom and Du Plessis (2002:266), government touches every part of society and virtually every component of government is closely tied to and reliant upon public relations. This view is also articulated by Thornhill (2008:492) by stating that

local government is often the first point of contact between an individual and a government institution. Therefore, successful democratic government maintains responsive relationships with constituents that is based on mutual understanding and a two-way communication. Most authors on local government and public relations agree that without an informed and active citizenry, elected and appointed officials may lose touch with the true needs and interests of their stakeholders. Local municipalities are under pressure to perform and are constantly monitored by the media for the general public and internally by their employees. These problems and pressures of society increasingly strain the machinery of government. Government is intended to provide services that would otherwise be impossible or impractical for individuals to provide. This is directly related to stakeholder management and its impact on the reputation of a local municipality.

Gilligan (2011:32) argues that government affairs and public relations are intertwined in China and effective public relations strategies must acknowledge this fact. Many foreign companies separate their public relations and government affairs in China as they would in their home markets. Furthermore, Gilligan (2011:32) observed that in order to get a message across, companies should treat public relations as they would treat government relations; institutions should factor recent trends into their public relations strategies, including government, social media and the marketisation of the media; and effective public relations require that companies clearly and effectively demonstrate their contribution to the society.

Simmons (2014:313) says that local government communicators individually and as a professional group ponder their relationship to the central business of their organisation, and often feel insecure about that relationship. An enduring theme of concern, common to communicators is the pressure they perceive to advocate on behalf of both their organisation and the stakeholders of the organisation, and the conflict that arises when a variety of interests are not reconciled. In other words, communicators can experience tension between pressures to facilitate participation by communities in processes and pressures to control communication and its outcomes.

It is the researcher's opinion that communication and public relations managers have long been concerned with improved clarification of their role and their contribution to organisations (Moss, Newman & DeSanto 2005:879; Heath 2006:73; Grunig 2009:159). This has been their focus for decades. Now there is a 'growing interest' in the reputation and professionalism of communication management because of a demand for increasingly sophisticated understanding and approaches to strategic corporate communication (Papathanassopoulos, Negrine, Mancini & Holtz-Bacha 2007:12; Gupta 2007:1; Abdullah 2009:41). Therefore they must focus on a communication manager's professional identity, arguing that identity is concerned with institutionalisation of status and perceptions, the extent of similarity between personal and professional values and the requirements of practice in general.

## **2.6 STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

Stakeholders are defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Fassin 2012:85). Stakeholders are defined as individuals and entities/institutions who may influence or be affected by the functioning of the company: shareholders, employees, customers, pressure groups, civic institutions (Goodijk 2003:227 & Broomhill 2007:21). Stakeholders are a group of people who have a direct interest in the organisation's activities and have made some investment of money, time or reputation in the organisation (Fassin 2009:85). Because they have a real commitment to the organisation, their opinions are important. They can be viewed as creators as well as consumers of it.

The stakeholder management perspective views the organisation as the centre of a network of relationships with various stakeholders. This is an institution's obligation to consider the effects of its decisions and actions on the whole system. Stakeholder theory suggests that managing for stakeholders involves attending to the interests and well-being of these stakeholders, at a minimum (Harrison, Bosse & Phillips 2010:58).

A local municipality serves diverse communities with a variety of vocal and competing interests (Simmons 2014:314). From this perspective an organisation is viewed as being

dependant on various stakeholders for the critical resources that enable it to operate, thus, its success, according to Ihlen (2008:136), depends on how it manages its relationship with key stakeholder groups such as consumers, employees, suppliers, communities, politicians and others.

In this regard, Fassin (2012:109) advocates a strategic approach to managing public relations based on research into stakeholder perceptions. An organisation has a relationship with its stakeholders when the behaviour of the organisation or of a stakeholder has a consequence on the other. Reasonable demand for being a stakeholder is to have a stake in the company. This is to be understood as making a significant input to the company and also being a part of its output. A relationship is built based on such responsibilities. Public relations should do formative research to scan the environment and the behaviour of the organisation to identify these consequences. On-going communication with these stakeholders helps to build a stable, long-term relationship that manages conflict that may occur in the relationship. Birth, Illia, Lurati and Zamparini (2008:192) indicate that such communication would aim to provide information that legitimises an organisation's behaviour by trying to influence stakeholders' and community's image of the institution. Ihlen (2008:137) states that legitimacy is the perception or assumption that the actions of a stakeholder are desirable, proper or appropriate. Communication to involve publics in the decision process of the organisation helps to manage conflict before communication campaigns become necessary. Lackey and Rusert (2013:313) argue that the challenge for today's corporations is not only to meet and satisfy all stakeholder groups' needs but also get them involved directly in its relevant business activities. Public relations should anticipate issues coming out of these engagements and manage the organisation's response to them. However, Lackey and Rusert (2013:313) cautions researchers by indicating that corporate reputation goes beyond image building derived from a public relations "stunt" but believe that corporate reputation is an intangible asset to bring the institution to the top of the global and corporate world. According to these authors, managing internal and external stakeholder groups is vital for institutions to remain vital, transparent and distinctive among their top competitors. Stakeholder relations have highest stakes in their top priority of corporate performance.

According to stakeholder concept, a plan should be in place for each stakeholder group, because in order to survive in the economic jungle an organisation must win the loyalty of all key stakeholder groups, not only its shareholders. Loyalty is bound to go towards whichever organisation that offers the most current value and commitment to future value for all their stakeholders (Laplume, Sonpar & Litz 2008:159). The growing interdependence between organisations and other societal groups must be realised. Organisations must realise that stakeholder groups have the power to affect organisations; managing relationships with them, therefore, is an essential role that must be taken very seriously by organisational management (Fassin 2012:89). It is important to maintain that effective democracy requires community voice in decisions which shape their destiny and that intractable problems require co-produced solutions with citizens.

Different groups have different degrees of power, which depends on the organisation's dependency on the stakeholder group, the degree of access the group has to political processes, as well as their access to the mass media. Negotiating paths to decisions that are acceptable and balanced for the community's benefit requires deliberate processes and an appropriate balance of qualities and skills in those who manage the process (Simmons 2014:313). Significantly, because of limited resources, managers pay attention to the most powerful stakeholder groups first. Issues are therefore sorted on the basis of the perceived importance of the stakeholder group that is behind the issue. Simmons (2014:314) opines that complex choices and issues about developments or scarce resources demand that the representatives be sensitive to different perspectives and responses to adapt for evidence and emotions, and to balance both the short-term and long-term consequences.

Any issue without a stakeholder group is no issue at all, because issues are connected to stakeholder groups that apply pressure, using whatever means of influence they have at hand. In this regard successful managers must be able to identify stakeholder groups and evaluate their sources of power. Managers who fail to respond to powerful stakeholder groups, risk having these groups exercise their power to affect the organisation negatively. An example of such a situation is service delivery protests, which according to Akinboade, Mokwena and Kinfack (2013:465) indicate community responses of collective voice

pressure politics. These protests have become a characteristic feature of ordinary people's response when municipal governments fail to take action regarding community challenges. According to Municipal IQ (2012), Gauteng province has the highest number of service delivery protests (28%). The management of social issues is therefore really closely related to the management of stakeholder relations and involves a process of negotiation and communication to satisfy critical stakeholder groups.

An organisation's production or operating methods can influence a range of stakeholder opinion, such as when knowledge of the organisation's operating characteristics are not easily accessed by consumers, when activists play an important information dissemination role, and when stakeholder actions can alter the operating decisions of the organisation (Jones & Bartlett 2009:14). Access, according to Park and Rhee (2010:2), is an organisation's willingness to provide access to publics and answer publics' queries and questions rather than negative reactions. The activists are most visible during service delivery protests. Alexander (2010:77) concurs with this statement adding that in practice, the politics of the unrest can simultaneously involve various strands, with different activists having different motivations. These activists communicate a particular message in a protest, which might contain both a popular antipathy to corruption and a struggle for patronage. People listen to such messages. When stakeholders are denied access they react either positively or negatively

The notion of relationship management represents a fundamental change in the function and direction of public relations, a movement away from the traditional impact measures, such as the quantity of communication messages produced or number of stories placed in the mass media and toward evaluation of public relations initiatives based on their impact on the quality of the relationship between an organisation and the publics with which it interacts (Botan & Hazleton 2006:466). The relationship management theory shifts the central focus of public relations from communication to relationships, with communication acting as a tool in the initiation, nurturing and maintenance of organisation-public relationships, which is why Grunig and Huang (2000:39) suggest that the study of these relationships should include each of the three components of the model: relationship

antecedents, relationship maintenance strategies, and outcomes of the strategies. Relationship antecedents may cause specific relationships between an organisation and its publics to develop. Relationship maintenance strategies are communication efforts used by public relations practitioners to establish and maintain favourable relationships between organisations and their publics (Park & Rhee 2010:2). Within that framework, the value of the communication rests on its contribution to the quality of the organisation-public relationship.

Interactivity has a natural consequence on relationships. The most important way that communication practitioners can contribute to organisational effectiveness is through building and maintaining excellent relationships with strategic stakeholders. If what the stakeholder wants does not match the needs of the organisation, the long-term viability of the organisation may be at stake. The management of stakeholder concern for responsible and irresponsible acts related to environmental, ethical and social phenomena in a way that creates corporate benefit positive matching of the needs and objectives of stakeholder and organisation is required for a lasting good relationship. The damage to a relationship tends to be a result of either an incongruence between the public and private definitions of a relationship, or the people involved in the relationship have different expectations of each other. The theory of relationship management responds to the concerns about corporate sustainability (Sloan 2009:26) in that it identifies the elements of an organisation, public relationship organisation, as well as the phenomenon of mutual understanding and benefit.

The relational perspective is consistent with the notion that public relations initiatives should generate understanding and benefit both organisations and stakeholders. Furthermore, the concept of relationship management underscores the need for a public relations specialist to be conversant with strategic planning and other managerial processes. Ledingham and Brunig (2001:15) demonstrated that relationship scores can be used to predict levels of customer or stakeholder satisfaction. Accordingly, they advised that the relationship between an organisation and its kept publics should be considered when developing customer satisfaction initiatives and should be included in future models of research.



Depending on the nature and impact of the services offered by an organisation, there is always a need to inform the media and, by extension, the stakeholders. The public relations management should be involved at all levels of response due to development into academic discipline and a professional field, public relations have experienced noticeable growth in its body of knowledge and theoretical foundation.

Jones and Bartlett (2009:12) argue that the core of relationship management to public relations practice has been advanced in public relations theory, and that relationship management changes the focus of public relations from output-based activities to a management function that uses communication strategically to meet the organisation's objectives, and emphasises building, nurturing and maintaining organisational-public relationships.

Furthermore, Bruning and Galloway (2003:316) added that by comparing alternatives as a relationship dimension should be measured to evaluate organisation-public relationship attitudes. The comparison of alternatives refers to a combination of the cognitive evaluation of the corporation and the level of substitutability of the relationship, the costs and inconvenience incurred through changing to another provider of the product or service offered by the organisation, and also the emotional component regarding how stakeholders may feel about changing to another supplier.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter explores the literature pertaining to reputation management, arguing the important role of reputation management and its influence on an organisation. It is evident from the contents of the chapter that systems theory, reputation management theory and stakeholder management theory play a vital role in keeping the balance in any organisation. These include system organisation of state and economy, life world organisations of the public sphere, which have some characteristics of both systems and operate across a system and life world boundary.

The literature explored also indicates that corporate communication can affect an organisation through chosen messages, which enable stakeholders to understand the organisation's operations. This chapter further explains the public relations role in organisational systems as part of the adaptive subsystems and that public relations serves as an intermediary between an organisation and all its stakeholders. The discussion then turns to corporate reputation in organisations describing it as the perceptions they generate through different activities that in turn have an impact on their reputation.

It furthermore indicates that there are certain criteria that influence corporate reputation in an organisation. They need to be explored in order to ensure that the relations between an organisation's internal and external stakeholders go beyond profit making. Therefore, reputation management aims to create shared interests with stakeholders.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provides the relevant research literature on corporate reputation management. The analysis of the concept of reputation management based on the general systems theory and the stakeholder management theory is discussed in relation to reputation management. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the selected research method and the case study design adopted for this study.

### **3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016:2), the phrase qualitative design refers to the way of approaching the empirical world, which means that in the broadest sense to research that which produces descriptive data. That is, people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. It was the researcher's view that a qualitative design would allow the collection of a qualitative data to determine the understanding of corporate reputation management in an organisation, in this case a local municipality and how the selected participants interpret it.

Furthermore, Creswell (2009:4) agrees with Taylor *et al.* (2015:3) that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis inductively built from particulars to general themes, and the researcher noting particulars to general themes as well as interpreting the data.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2010:193) state that qualitative research originates in the ethnographic methods applied by cultural and socialists in their field of studies of social groups and communities. The common thread amongst all these researchers is that qualitative research can be described as an essentially descriptive design used in

investigations amongst individuals or groups within the given community, group or organisation.

How the above explored characteristics applicable to this study is indicated in table 3.1 below:

<b>Table 3.1 Characteristics of qualitative research design:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning people attach to things in their lives.</li><li>2. Qualitative research is inductive.</li><li>3. In qualitative methodology the researcher looks at settings and people holistically, people, settings, or groups are not reduced to variables, but are viewed as a whole.</li><li>4. Qualitative researchers are concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives.</li><li>5. For the qualitative researcher, all perspectives are worthy of the study.</li><li>6. Qualitative researchers emphasise the meaningfulness of their research.</li><li>7. For the qualitative researcher, there is something to be learned in all settings and groups.</li><li>8. Qualitative research is a craft.</li></ol>

Source: Adopted from Taylor *et al.* (2016:5)

### **3.3 CASE STUDY**

In this study, the researcher used a case study design. Creswell (2009:13) describes a case study as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The study uses individuals in the municipality as units of analysis, but uses an organisation as the focus of the study. This allows the researcher to speculate as to the transferability or theoretical generalisability of the study.

Yin (2014:4) is one of the experts on case study design although it has evolved from how he defined it as an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon, a case, set within

its real world context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. To Gerring (2008:645), it provides a useful breakdown of four different rationales applicable in selecting a case study. Typical, this is probably the most commonly used rationale, particularly for time intensive in depth ethnographic studies, where practicalities dictate that it is only possible to study one setting. Diverse, the design attempts to cover the full anticipated variation with regard to a specific feature. Extreme, the design is selected because of their capacity to highlight what is involved at one end of the chosen spectrum. Lastly, deviant – this relates to the notion that the exception proves the case, in this instance it is necessary to have fairly detailed background knowledge, informed by extensive preparatory field work or by analysis of relevant documents. This case study is the typical rationale as it was based on one setting of the Emfuleni Local Municipality. There is no doubt that the researcher chose the case study as it is extremely useful in terms of enhancing the comparative and thus analytic research.

### **3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

There are numerous alternative ways of sampling. Researchers seldom study the entire population, but usually a sample of the population. Convenience sampling was used in this research. When using this method the researcher chooses whom they want to participate in the research (Rensburg & Cant 2009:82). Struwig and Stead (2001:22) agree with the latter that participants are accessible and articulate in convenience sampling. The total population of this study is made up of 10 employees of Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The sample comprised of one communications manager; two assistant managers and two employees in the department; one manager from the department of arts and one employee; one manager and one employee from the office of the mayor (political office) one events manager from the department of fire and rescue, within the Emfuleni Local Municipality. A sampling frame is a list or other device used to define a researcher's population of interest. The sampling frame defines a set of elements from which a researcher can select a sample of the target population. 10 participants at the research site, where all purposively selected, as purposive sampling enables the researcher to rely on their experience, ingenuity and to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a manner that the sample

obtained may be regarded as representatives of the relevant population (Welman *et al.* 2010:69).

### **3.5 UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

The unit of analysis was the employees of Emfuleni Local Municipality.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

In-depth individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 10 participants sampled. They were carefully selected based on their expertise in the field of public relations, communications, event management and marketing as these have a high impact and influence on corporate reputation management. Data collected through in-depth individual semi-structured interviews was organised and analysed by means of themes. Data for this qualitative case study was gathered through 10 in-depth individual semi-structured interviews to answer the interview questions that the researcher developed.

The ten questions were divided into four themes:

Question 1: How do you define corporate reputation in your municipality (ELM)?

Question 2: In your opinion what are the main factors affecting the reputation of ELM?

Question 3: In your opinion who is responsible for ELM's overall reputation?

Question 4: Does your department have measures in place to manage ELM's reputation?  
What are they? Or what should they be?

Question 5: How would you describe CSR in ELM?

Question 6: How do you align your employees in the creation of stakeholder support for reputation?

Question 7: How do you engage with your stakeholders in ways that makes them trust and feel positively about ELM?

Question 8: How would you describe ELM media relations?

Question 9: What are your challenges when dealing with the media?

Question 10: What is ELM's approach to managing the social media and online reputation?  
What are the challenges in this area?

The in-depth individual semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to get more comprehensive information from the participants who are employees of the municipality and work within the broad frame of public relations, communications, event management and marketing. These participants engage with the external stakeholders on events management or on expertise, leadership and management skills with regard to corporate reputation management. The wording of the questions is particularly important for this study because corporate reputation in the local municipality encompasses issues of policy and practice and it is thus significant to ensure rigour in data collection (Toma 2006:406). The various meanings identified will be used to develop overall description as seen by the respondents (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:464). Responses were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The researcher first read the transcribed data then code-identified common themes and categorised them. The researcher selected semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument clarified below.

### **3.6.1 In-depth individual semi-structured interviews as data collection methods**

The aim of the in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews in this study is to: explore the essence of corporate reputation management; determine how reputation is managed at Emfuleni Local Municipality; understand the perceptions of internal stakeholders on reputation management at Emfuleni Local Municipality; and suggest strategies that can be developed to enhance corporate reputation management at the Emfuleni Local Municipality as clearly stipulated in chapter one of this study. The in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with all the participants at their respective places of work. An interview protocol was used for asking and recording answers. The researcher's protocol included: the introduction of the researcher and the reason for the interviews; reading the consent letter to the participants requesting permission to record the interviews, and briefing the participants on the themes guiding the line of questioning (Creswell 2009:183). This technique enabled the researcher to obtain

multiple responses to the questions and allowed for very detailed responses and that enabled the researcher to probe in order to get more from the answers this was very crucial to this study as it allowed the researcher to gather more extensive and saturated data from the participants.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

After completion of the data collection process, the researcher transcribed the information from the interviews. By personally transcribing this information, the researcher was able to become intimately acquainted with the data. This assisted with analysing the data in an inductive manner. To ensure that the meaning was not compromised in the transcripts, the analysis and categorisation of themes was discussed with the participants. The initial analysis of the data collected was to address the main research question, which is, what is the essence of corporate reputation in the Emfuleni local government? From each of the 10 participants, the recorded responses for each question were categorised into sub-theme, theme and dimensions.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study was conducted at the local municipality offices at Emfuleni, in Vanderbijlpark. Permission was granted by the Municipal Manager to conduct the individual in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. 10 in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews lasting 60 minutes each was conducted with the participants at the selected site (offices). The first in-depth individual, semi-structured interviews was conducted with five employees working in the communications and marketing department and their immediate subordinate. The second interview was conducted with other employees who are responsible for the other events and delivery of services at department of arts and culture. The third interview was conducted at the office of the speaker, which is the political office responsible for media relations and liaison with the ward councillors, and the fourth one was conducted with the events manager at the department of fire and rescue at the Emfuleni Local Municipality. The venue and times for all the interviews was explained to the management and negotiated with the selected participants.



### **3.8.1 Obtaining respondents' informed consent (respect to persons)**

Before the beginning of each in-depth individual, semi-structured interview, each participant signed a consent form, granting the researcher permission to conduct the interviews. A separate consent form was also signed by each participant granting the researcher permission to use a recording device to ensure accurate recording and transcription of collected data.

## **3.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

The quality of research may be questioned, therefore a discussion regarding the reliability and validity of the research conducted is vital. Yin (2014:8) suggests that qualitative researchers need to document the procedures of their case studies and to document as many of the steps of the procedures as possible. Gibbs (2007:44) suggested the following reliability procedures:

- Check the transcripts to ensure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription. The researcher in this study did the proof reading to check during the process of transcribing.
- Make sure that there is not a drift in the definition of codes, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding. This was accomplished in this study by constantly comparing data with the codes and by writing memos about the codes and their definitions.

According to Creswell (2009:190), qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Therefore in this study the researcher ensured reliability by recording each interview (with permission) and personally transcribing them. This was done immediately after the interviews were conducted. The use of an audio recorder provided the researcher with the possibility of replaying the recordings to ensure that accurate responses were transcribed.

### **3.10 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The case study only focused on Emfuleni Local Municipality in Vanderbijlpark; other municipalities under Emfuleni were excluded. The focus was from an organisational perspective only, restricted to the communications, art and culture, office of the speaker and the fire and rescue department of the Emfuleni Local Municipality. The results of the study cannot be generalised or predicted. Qualitative research was used by the researcher to gain knowledge and understanding of the communication practices of the Emfuleni Local Municipality and their impact on the corporate reputation of the Emfuleni Local Municipality. According to Horvat (2013:7), qualitative research studies are not supposed to be representative of a larger group, yet a common challenge is that they are restricted in their conclusions. By providing rich descriptions of what goes on in a particular context helps to illuminate important issues in a specific case or regarding a particular group of people. In this case, therefore, a theory-based generalisation can be presented.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter explores the research methodology utilised in this study. It also highlights the researcher's motivation for choosing qualitative research design. Data gathering and sampling techniques are discussed. Ethical considerations underlying the study were also discussed. The next chapter presents the data analysed from the transcripts of the participants in the study.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the analysis of data followed by a discussion of the research findings. The findings relate to the research questions that guided the study. Data were analysed to identify, describe and explore corporate reputation management of a local municipality in the Vaal region. Qualitative research is concerned with trying to achieve a clear understanding of the problem under review in a more complex way than in the generalised way that is the outcome of questionnaires. This methodology is used to get information about how people think, feel and act and what they know. This section of the research was conducted through individual interviews consisting of 10 employees of the Emfuleni Local Municipality. The information collected was presented in a narrative form that includes the description and analysis of data.

The research questions that guided this study are:

- What is the essence of corporate reputation in the Emfuleni local government?
- Why is corporate reputation management critical at the local government in the Vaal region?
- What strategies can be employed to enhance corporate reputation management at the Emfuleni local government?

In the next section, the researcher presents the methodology utilised to analyse the data, and the discussion of the theme that emerges.

### **4.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis, organisation and interpretation was done using Creswell's method of data analysis for qualitative research (Creswell 2014:196-200). When engaging in qualitative data analysis, the researcher not only wishes to highlight recurring features, but also different steps, procedures and processes that are at the disposal of a researcher. Six main stages were followed in the process. Each stage discussed with relevant quotations from the participants and the relevant literature quoted as a control to the findings of this

research. The verbatim transcripts are presented, without any attempt by the researcher to correct the grammatical errors, and is coded to facilitate audit trailing. Although Creswell (2014:196) presents his approach as a linear, hierarchical process, he states categorically that the six steps are interrelated and do not necessarily follow in the order they are given.

### **Organise and prepare the data for analysis**

This refers to the transcribing of the interviews and the sorting and arranging of the data if different sources of information are used. The researcher carefully read through all the transcriptions, making notes of ideas that came from the rich data. It involved collecting open-ended data based on asking general questions, transcribing the data, reading and re-reading of the text, coding and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants.

### **Read through all the data**

By doing this, the researchers get a general sense of the information and possibly it's overall meaning. The researcher writes down general ideas about the data. The researcher selected one interview and read it to try and get meaning in the information, writing down common thoughts that emerge from the data. Meaning, the researcher seeks to describe the various relevant aspects of the research, which include inter alia the setting, both temporally and physically; individuals being studied; the purpose of any activities examined; the viewpoints of participants and the effects of any activities on the participants.

### **Coding of the data**

It is the process of organising the data into chunks of information and writing a word that represents a category in the margin. After going through the transcripts, the researcher arranged the similar topics in the groups by forming themes. The researcher then abbreviated the topics as codes and wrote the codes next to the appropriate segment of the text. The researcher then observed the organisation of data to check if new categories or codes emerged. Coding or classifying field notes, observations or interview transcripts by either inferring from the words being examined what is significant, or from the repeated use of words (phrases) whether a pattern is developing (i.e. that all activities which have been recorded are being understood in a similar way).

**Description of the setting or people and categories or themes for analysis**

During the coding process, the researchers give detailed descriptions of the setting or the people involved as well as descriptions of the categories or themes for analysis. The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the topics and converted them into categories. The aim was to reduce the total list of categories by grouping topics together that relate to each other. Once the data have been organised, the researcher can proceed to the following stage in data analysis, namely description.

**Present the results of the analysis**

This is often done in a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis. It may include a chronology of events, a detailed discussion of several themes or a discussion of interconnecting themes. Participants you interviewed and the information that comes forth from the process of data analysis, ultimately, the conclusions drawn from the information should contribute to the body of knowledge and represent new meaning and insight in the research question.

**Interpretation of the results of the analysis**

The reporting and writing up of research entails to put words on paper, in the form of a report, constructing an argument based on the findings of what you have done, what you have seen and heard, participants you interviewed and the information that comes forth from the process of data analysis. Ultimately, the conclusions drawn from the information should contribute to the body of knowledge and represent new meaning and insight in the research.

### **4.3 THE METHODOLOGY AND THE DISCUSSION OF THEMES THAT EMERGED**

The actual interviewing was conducted in a conversational manner. Participants were allowed to elaborate on the questions in order to clarify their responses on the essence of corporate reputation management. The questions asked were used for clarification, affirmation of participants' views and opinions and to prompt clarifications if the need arose. According to De Vos (2002: 28), techniques such as asking open-ended questions, tracking, requesting clarification and narrative summaries were all used to encourage the participants to provide thick descriptions of the data gathered. The open-ended questions not only provided the participants with ample room to express their knowledge and experience but allowed them to respond in their own words. The themes were formulated in accordance with the purpose and the research questions guiding the research, and focused on the important aspects of corporate reputation management. The researcher identifies the themes guiding this research below, and provides a brief understanding on each theme respectively:

#### **Themes that emerged from the study are as follows:**

Theme 1: Defining corporate reputation.

Theme 2: Measuring reputation.

Theme 3: Internal stakeholders.

Theme 4: Media relations and branding.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: defining corporate reputation**

The relationship between communication strategies and corporate reputation is a subject of substantial interest to the organisation and management researchers. Previous research has focused primarily on how corporate communication can support or affect corporate reputation, enabling stakeholders to know and appropriate the organisation's activities (Floreddu and Cabiddu 2016:490). Hence the researcher developed this theme in order to understand how the participants that work in corporate communications defined corporate

reputation in their working environment. The questions that follow in the findings were verbalised in accordance with the latter.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: measuring reputation**

In public relations, what gets measured gets managed. According to Steyn and Puth (2000:95), measurement is the process of assigning numerical values to some or all attributed study objects. Industry shows that public relations and corporate communicators continue to use research to plan and measure their activities, which is because of the pressure from management to produce progressive results on the money spent. Therefore, reputation management can provide public relations with an opportunity to prove and confirm its value to an organisation (Rensburg and Cant 2009:99). The questions that follow on the theme try to measure the value of reputation amongst the employees of ELM.

#### **4.3.3 Theme 3: internal stakeholders**

Daymon and Holloway (2011:14) urged public relations and communication management practitioners to use qualitative approaches to understand and interpret stakeholders and issues. Furthermore, they stipulate that although government communicators are often reluctant to describe their roles as those of persuasion, facilitating involvement and of learning from communities', these correspond well with contemporary concepts of better public relations and communication management practice. The questions that follow addressed the theme of internal stakeholders.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: media relations and branding**

Media relations and branding form part of the important aspects in any public relations or communication management. They are of paramount importance on determining the corporate reputation of an organisation. As far as management is concerned, media organisations are business enterprises like every other business enterprise, but in some respects, they are special (Fourie 2008:360). In any organisation all media objectives and activities flow from the brand's marketing objectives. Therefore, it is crucial that the media planner in any organisation monitors very closely the overall effect of the media exposure

on the brand's performance (Koekemoer 2013:97). It is necessary then that the research includes questions on media relations and branding of ELM respectively.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this section the researcher discusses the research findings that emerged from the data collected. The findings incorporate the responses from the participants and the literature guiding the research. Each theme is discussed separately to allow the participants responses to be clarified and supported by the literature on corporate reputation.

##### **4.4.1 Theme 1: Defining corporate reputation**

The participants indicated unanimously that corporate reputation in ELM has to do with the perceptions of the internal and external stakeholders through upholding the BATHO-PELE principles. According to the participants, corporate reputation is at the lowest level, even amongst its employees. Some of them align the reputation with poor service delivery by its departments. For example, participants had this to say about corporate reputation:

*Reputation is usually how the public perceive your organisation. Any information that they get about your organisation has an impact on your reputation. It's like what people know and what they think they know about the municipality.*

Another participant expressed the following:

*In my eyes corporate reputation in Emfuleni is that we don't deliver service. We have a lot of things that people are unhappy about. At the moment corporate reputation is the lowest. Internally employees are kind of demoralised because we think that the municipality is not doing well. Our reputation is at the lowest even with employees.*

In view of the above, from the elaborate description in chapter two, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997:10) sought to incorporate image and identity within reputation. From their perspective, image and identity are the basic components of reputation. This integrative perspective applies only to the perceptions which employees and managers hold about the nature of their organisation. To include external public perceptions they suggested that “a



corporate reputation is a collective representation which assesses the firms' relative standing both internally with employees and externally with its stakeholders.”

The in-depth interviews below show that main factors affecting the reputation of the municipality include corruption, political interference, poor service delivery, overlapping responsibilities, correct implementation of policies and community involvement.

One of the participants further noted:

*One of the main factors is that the political figures or our political heads interfering in most of the processes and you know with politicians it is very difficult to tell him that this is right or wrong another thing I think is that the municipality is actually struggling with service delivery issues because if you can realise the steps or procedures that they follow when they appoint people, it's very rare where you will find people who have been appointed are people who are skilled in those particular positions like what happened to us recently and you won't be able to question it, it becomes an instruction and it becomes like that and it becomes a problem with us officials because now you are instructed to work with this person when you look at this person is not the kind of a person I'll be able to help with this because this person doesn't understand anything about communications or branding.*

This clearly indicates that the internal environment predominates the thinking of employees and the external environment does not really feature. However, the internal and external environments are part of the same system and employees need to be made aware of this. Genuine application of the BATHO-PELE principles of consultation, courtesy, access to information and openness and transparency are aspects which need to be emphasised as these help to build a genuine caring environment. Some participants had the perception that the public believed that selection procedures were selectively biased and hence unfair.

As one participant noted:

*Mainly corruption. That is the opinion of the participants about our municipality. Like if I'm recently employed by ELM they think I paid for the job or got the job otherwise.*

Such selective appointments could be due to an undue emphasis being given to persons belonging to the same in-group which predominates in the organisation.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: measuring reputation**

The data suggests that the participants have the perception that the ELM's overall reputation is something which is situated in the internal environment and varies from the responsibility of all employees to that of being situated with the municipal manager as senior employee.

One participant noted:

*I think all the employees of Emfuleni but now going through the hierarchy [of] politicians it's very important for them to work on the reputation of the institution. It's everybody's responsibility within the institution to try and address the issue of reputation.*

Their views on measuring reputation have a common ground as they identify the political office and the communications department as the ones responsible for measuring the reputation of the municipality as a whole. As noted by the following participant:

*I think communications is at the helm of reputation management of the municipality because between political administration and the people we must be able to do we are well positioned and well-resourced to be a link between the people and the municipality. Communication must be at the helm.*

The next participant noted:

*We are as communication. We are the custodians. That's why if there is anything that has to go internally or externally we have our own systems or standards operating procedure or systems that we have to check first.*

Some of the frustrations experienced by the participant was very evident in their responses as the one below noted:

*I don't think there is anybody who cares except communications and communications is just a lone voice somewhere there. The Municipal Manager is the one responsible because he is the main man who has the right to say yes or no.*

In the literature review in Chapter two it was stated that the internal environment refers to areas of specialisation within the organisation such as finance, human resources, operations, administration, marketing, corporate communication and research and development (Kinyua-Mjuguna *et al.* 2014:1857). All the departments in the municipality, therefore, should work towards managing the reputation of ELM.

Furthermore, participants believe that ELM has measures in place to manage the reputation, which include amended communication policies for social media and branding. They also recognise the financial limitations faced by the municipality as a hindrance to the effective implementation of these measures. PMT (political management team) and IDP projects are viewed by participants as some of the measures in place to manage the reputation of ELM.

One participant noted that:

*We don't have measures in place to manage the reputation. I think we should have a social medial policy because people go on Facebook and say whatever they want ... we have an incident of one employee who was suspended for posting on Facebook. We don't have a policy at all but I think the policy will be the first step we take.*

Another participants said:

*One I would say no we don't have, but I will believe because we are in a political office one of the things that we should do is that we have systems in place like your ward committees which are currently taking place, those are people who are supporting structures to councillors and remember, we are dealing with council so we are responsible for councillors so protest or anything that has to do with service delivery or anything that*

*affects the community it always comes to us and we communicate with the Mayor's office, we have systems like ward committees.*

There is a clear indication that measures to guard the reputation vary somewhat but the majority of responses emphasise a hierarchical structure, which attempts to place an emphasis on the reliability of communication. Management do this by increasing the control and compliance in order to increase the reliability of decision-making processes. This is normally done via policies and standard operating procedures designed to guide people with minimum confusion and conflict. However, the good intentions of policies and procedures is often undermined by dysfunctional consequences such as “blaming others” if things go wrong. Other dysfunctional consequences of such an hierarchical structure is that it increases the visibility of power and authority based on one's position in the hierarchy and this increases levels of dissatisfaction and frustration among stakeholders.

From the interviews, the researcher observed that there are divergent opinions, especially about the CSR initiatives initiated by the municipality. If these initiatives are done regularly, then most of the employees are not aware of what is being done by the municipality. Participants mentioned Mandela Day, which seems to be done separately by certain departments, the issuing of bursaries, and assistance by the Mayor by covering burial costs of under privileged families.

For example one participant said:

*Not talking from this department alone but Emfuleni as a whole we have a lot of programmes I can say a few departments that we working with Local Economic Development. They do have ways of uplifting upcoming businesses within Emfuleni they assist them how they host a number of workshops to aid upcoming businesses to basically educate them on how to go about taking their businesses to greater heights. I know of this other department - Sports, Arts and Culture, they hosted one workshop for free for artists, performers and actors as a social responsibility initiative saying to the them we bringing these famous names closer to you, we are exposing you today to people who are already*

*out there that could have come at a fee but via Emfuleni it comes for free and people got to know about advancing in their respective careers so that's just the two departments..*

Another participant said:

*I've never seen corporate social responsibility in Emfuleni. We only see it on Mandela day. Bursaries are offered to needy matriculants but this year it did not happen. I think between service and corporate social responsibility for me is quite a thin line because we serve the society so we are responsible for the society that's social responsibility. I think factors in automatically you know because everything that we do that is why our resources I think in as far as like you will see that most of our resources if we have to priorities, obviously service delivery will be core for me - it's all linked in that.*

In chapter two, Corporate Social Responsibility is defined by Andersen (2003:1) broadly to be about extending the immediate social interest from oneself to include one's fellow environmental citizens and the society one is living in and is a part of today, acting with respect for the future generation and nature. This definition incorporates stakeholders, their social status and the environment.

The next participant noted that:

*The municipality is a public institution, it's supposed to be serving the people. Social responsibility for me it says for private business we must do social responsibility, take your money and invest in some project but government basically [is] its own function is to do that, mainly to give service to the people. I don't see us playing a different role other than that. Like the programmes the Mayor has, like handing out vegetables to kids, visiting new born babies, those are what we classify as corporate social responsibility.*

Furthermore, organisations must be seen as supporting good causes within the community in order for them to build relationships with the communities they operate in; portray excellent internal and external relations with stakeholders; And contributing towards the development and upliftment of disadvantaged stakeholders (Skinner et al 2016: 268). Generally, scholars in the public relations field feel strongly about the role organisations

play in social responsibility initiatives and their link to the overall reputation of an organisation.

The next participant said:

*I think corporate social responsibility from what I understand is when we give back to the community. The Mayor's office has started a programme of bursaries which I think it's a good one. Even us when we call our communities to make time and sit down with them, advise them, take them by hand to make whatever they plan to do a success I think it's also social responsibility.*

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: internal stakeholders**

Most of the employees understand that they are also the custodians of the reputation of the organisation that employs them. Their actions outside the organisation will have a negative impact on the reputation of the municipality. How they conduct themselves in and outside the organisation, has consequences on the reputation of the organisation. There are measures in place to ensure that the employee's actions support the reputation of ELM.

For example, one participant said:

*I think once again as communication looking at that, we tried to establish a forum. The chairperson of the forum is our manager in that forum we had representatives from different departments and in that forum what we normally emphasis is issues of media that if they are not handled in a proper way they affect the reputation of the municipality. In that particular forum he tried to address with those particular representatives to address different issues that talks to reputation like issues of media and branding. In that forum he tried to touch base on different things that affect the reputation of the municipality even the issue of general workers like your waste people - those are people that are not educated and who don't know how to behave, a municipal worker parking a car in Vaal Mall wearing the municipality uniform or one is at a tavern. If you're a supervisor working with this category try to workshop the people, show them the importance of the reputation of the municipality so in that forum he tries to touch base on issues that affect the reputation of the municipality.*

The majority of participants feel that the workplace environment is crucial in creating stakeholder support. Aligning employees with stakeholder support is seen by some as something that needs to be trained and developed in employees whilst others believe it is the senior management as highest hierarchical level which needs to do this.

The next participant noted that:

*Previously Assistant Management tried workshops to empower managers but the response was not there to support the initiative and the plug was pulled off and was cancelled. If managers are not responsible how would subordinates behave, if managers are not leading by example and clearly explain to subordinate on how to respond to media relation sides and interviews conducted by radio stations.*

However, Weaver (2011:374) in chapter two shows that a type of collaborative communication is necessary between all employees if an alignment between vision, organisational culture and corporate responsibility is to be obtained.

Another participant said:

*The office of the Speaker which I'm currently in mainly deals with stakeholder engagement amongst others .. we make that all kinds of stakeholders are brought on board, we all engage in trying to make sure that they understand what this organization is doing for them also to ensure that they assist in ensuring a strong relationship.*

Hence, the suggestion by Puth (2001:21) that social communication probably comes closest to that which is needed to achieve alignment of vision, organisational culture and corporate responsibility. This form of communication stems from the systems approach and indicates that because structures are held together by a system of attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, expectations and motivations shared by people who are part of the system, a form of social communication is essential. The open social systems theory also supports the idea of open communication and healthy interaction with the external environment.

The next participant said:

*Like right now today since the new cabinet, the councillors have been changed and new cabinet has been elected even in the communities there are new ward committee members that have been elected so today they are launching the ward committees.. all stakeholders have been invited from the entire Emfuleni region. They know how they selected the representative after this launch - they will embark on a campaign which will last for the entire month where they will be informing the community regarding their new ward committee members. Normally we use campaigns and roadshows to inform community members. We have internal and external newsletters to inform them of the new development, changes and project we have achieved.*

Most of the respondents linked the important role of communication in an organisation to the stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement plays a very crucial role in managing the reputation of established institutions. According to Fassin (2012:83), stakeholder theory advocates that organisations bear responsibility for the implications of their actions. Several methods of stakeholder engagement were mentioned by the participants, ward committee meetings, internal and external newsletters, ELM website, IDP projects, public meetings, mayoral imbizo's, local radio stations, national and regional newspapers.

Another participant said:

*We engage them through the IDP, we go and see them, convene a public meeting and as and when they protest we engage them again. And when the Mayor invites them. In a nutshell I would say the public meetings or Mayoral Imbizo there is no meaningful constructive engagement except when they protest. We always sit in meetings as officers with the external stakeholder, we first look at what they have planned and if going to work for us. We've had people come and promise so many things. We are very strict in partnerships because we want our communities to benefit. When there is a person who wants to do a local event we make sure priority is given to local artists so that's how we safe guard our communities when stakeholders come. We partner with financial institutions that are providing funding to SMME's and we also partner with provincial*



*governments, we partner with individual companies but then we check the level and profile of the company. We try and partner mostly with private sectors in order for communities to benefit.*

Based on these narratives, the participants believe that corporate communication is an inherent part of corporate reputation. Information distribution is often seen as a sub-section of public relations. Irrespective of where public relations is situated it should be realised that information distribution is part of corporate communication as it is an essential part of relationship building and forming relationships of trust between the persons involved. This is corroborated by Furman (2010:66) and Otubanjo *et al.* (2010:155) who argue that the establishment of a trustworthy relationship helps firms interact with a wide range of stakeholders, both existing and potential, through communication processes expressly designed to establish and support the firm's reputation.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: media relations and branding**

There is a clear indication that most participants believe that the relationship that ELM has with the media is good. However, some do indicate that only certain persons are responsible for liaising with the media, which is probably the result of the hierarchical structure with rules and regulations as to who may do what. Such hierarchical communication may facilitate reliability of decisions made but it can also be stifling to others.

The participant below agrees with the latter:

*I would say the relationship that we have with media people, locally we have a very good relationship with our local media. We try at all times to respond to them timeously when they have media enquiries and we try to inform them at all times that we are not only relying on positive things even negative things we inform them. We will ensure that we don't run away from our issues. With national media we do have a relationship but it's not the same as local media. When we have things we invite them like your Sowetan so we do have a good relationship with media people.*

Some participants have the perception that relationships with the media are poor as there is biased reporting and the ELM only gets media coverage if someone reports something negative about the ELM. Unfortunately, this does sometimes happen and is usually caused by reporting only ‘one side of the story’ and hence the evidence is seen as subjective and is often viewed as unfair by the organisation that is exposed. However, the media have a great deal of power and are also selective in that which they report, which brings the whole issue of ethical reporting on board.

One participant noted that:

*The relations are very good locally and nationally they are good though nationally we have a serious challenge as Emfuleni but not Emfuleni alone - Vaal as a whole. Vaal is not covered by the national media, they only come on Human Rights Day and when we have some seriously negative stories. If people complain on air I believe that as the radio station, part of your social responsibility is to try and resolve the issue as the mouth piece of the community and not aggravate the situation further. Relations are good with most of the media houses.*

Most of the participants acknowledge that dealing with the media should be the responsibility of the communications department, although in some instances the political office engages with the media regularly. Furthermore, more some participants are not content with the representation from the communications department as the information publicised will not highlight some of the most important aspects that they need published.

Another participant said:

*I think the national media sees us as some form of rural municipality. We have that tag that we are a rural part of Gauteng, that how national media sees us, that's why you would find not much being covered in terms of national media because it is far from where everything that happened. Media should be writing about developmental projects but we have less of those. Our relationship with national media is just a cold neglected kind of a relationship unless we are doing advertising with them.*

Non-response and non-attendance by the media when invited to press conferences or events hosted by the ELM is a challenge. According to Rensburg and Cant (2009:222), these are the main aspects of controlled and uncontrolled media communication. The use of controlled media involves communication about the organisation that is paid for by the media. The wording of the material, its format and its placement in the media are at the discretion of the organisation. Whereas uncontrolled media means the communication of news about the organisation to the mass media and to specialised media outlets is at the discretion of the media outlet. This means that the organisation loses control of messages at the media outlet itself. How the article will be written, in this instance it becomes a problem as ELM will not be able to fulfill the financial obligation, which is a major challenge.

The next participant noted that:

*Challenges when dealing with the media as communication enquiries will come in, the enquiry will be waste related.. obviously for us to answer that we will need information from the waste manager and you know media are people who work on a time frame. A media person will tell you that if he doesn't have the response they will publish what they have so it becomes difficult for us as communications because we rely on sources to give us information and we sit down to see how we work it out so most of the problems is that normally we struggle to get information on time and the media will write whatever they have. There are still some people who still don't understand, especially our political head when dealing with the media. With some political heads they are able to say when they receive an enquiry because the media will call them directly and that relevant political head will tell them to contact the relevant communication person but some will put the reputation of the municipality at stake.*

The latter clearly shows that people often observe actions using selective perception and hence tend to miss the holistic picture. In addition, the media often publishes that which is sensational and then expect an immediate answer to their perception. This places the communications department at a disadvantage as you first need to gather information from others involved with the problem before one can comment on the media enquiry. As most

complaints received by ELM are probably about poor service delivery issues this requires a pro-active management stance of some kind. On the other hand, local municipalities are notoriously slow when it comes to making payments and hence the media may be reluctant to publicise occasions sponsored by local municipalities. This gives rise to a relationship where trust is absent, which in turn influences both the reputation of the local municipality and the media responsible for the reporting. Consequently, such media coverage might not only impact on the reputation of the municipality, but also on the ELM brand.

There are many diverse ideas from the participants when it comes to the ELM brand. Branding forms an integral part of the corporate identity of an organisation. Skinner, Mersham and Benecke (2016:258) state that corporate identity is what sets your organisation apart from the competitors; it is that which makes an organisation easily recognisable to the stakeholders.

For example, one participant said:

*The current Emfuleni brand is a brand that it is well known to its users, internal and external stakeholders. They are aware of the brand and me as the branding custodian I always ensure that we visible and known. Even this morning before I came in I tried to ensure that within our roots we are visible but in terms of the internal stakeholder understanding our brand is difficult. We came up a corporate identity manual, manual that enforces compliance and understanding to the employees that this is our brand and you need to understand it in this way. As a branding custodian you need to know your colour codes, if they are not sure they must ask from the branding office because I'm the one who understands everything regarding branding.*

Participants feel that the brand should be well known and recognised amongst the stakeholders. They stipulate that branding efforts are evident at events hosted by the ELM, although some participants feel that what they as custodians of communication are doing is not enough. They recognise the logos printed incorrectly on some T-shirts and that communications is solely responsible for the brand and branding effort.

One participant said:

*Positive, negative, mild and neutral. It's just in between to be honest with you, in a sense that an ordinary person at times when he or she is confronted with a particular situation he or she may not know where to go between Sedibeng and Emfuleni no matter how hard you try to elevate or raise your brand so that people get to know who is who and who is doing what. It's a complicated situation but then the only way of rectifying it is keep on making massive drives to outreach programmes to try to understand. I cannot say it's completely negative or completely positive, it depends. It's forever in a movement. Again at times it becomes issues of red tape that's one typical example.*

Branding for Emfuleni seems to be characterised by the logo “Vaal River City; Cradle of Human Rights”. The most successful corporate brands are universal and so paradoxically facilitate differences of interpretation that appeal to different groups. This is particularly true of corporate brands whose symbolism is robust enough to allow people across cultures to share symbols even when they don't share the same meaning (Hatch & Schultz 2001:123). The Vaal river part of the logo is visible to all but the Cradle of Human Rights is not directly observable and hence employees need to take human rights to heart and deliver service accordingly. In the participants' view, branding as something tangible or observable. Furthermore, participants in this research mainly believed that branding was only about displaying visual symbols and the values which the organisation stands for are hidden or latent.

#### **4.5 OVERALL FINDINGS**

The following findings were drawn from the results of the in-depth individual interviews held with the employees of the Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The results reveal that management of reputation is probably a multifaceted concept and consists of numerous sub-categories. Hence corporate social responsibility, emotional appeal, financial performance, products and services, vision and leadership and workplace environment all feature. However, it is unlikely that the participants perceive reputation as separate from image and identity, as they use the terms synonymously.

The responses further reveal that the systems view of an organisation, being social in a social system, indicate that the various components in the internal environment cannot be separated from the external environment as they are continuously and dynamically interacting with one another, with corporate communication acting as a 'glue' which holds them together. Corporate communication is thus an essential part of the system as it serves to align the organisation's vision, culture and image that people hold of an organisation.

Effective corporate communication should facilitate understanding among persons, influence people in a positive manner, serve to enhance dialogue between people, make use of appropriate forms of power and makes use of skills of emotional intelligence to build relationships between different stakeholders.

Furthermore, both individual and social perception play an important role in the management of corporate reputation. Perceptions are composed of an intertwining of peoples' perceptions, feelings and ways of thinking (Riege 2005:22). Such an intertwined system is also influenced by, among other things, individual personalities, and the ways one learns to use language, to express emotions, to think and establish relationships and the number of identities one takes on through participation in varied cultural communities. They all indicate that how one perceives something is largely subjective, hence corporate reputation management should be particularly aware of selective perception and stereotyping.

Employers, particularly government institutions, should henceforth begin to realise that social media has brought with it the freedom to write what you want to and then to place it in a public platform for all to see and react to. In this instance, there is lack of proper management of this platform. No one is taking the responsibility to manage and utilise it to its best advantage for the organisation. The results show that a policy is in place to manage a social media platform. The participants revealed that corporate management is busy with the process of selecting and appointing a work force to manage this platform. Hence this necessitates that corporate management responds in a rapid and accurate way, especially if the information could harm the image and reputation of the local authority.

However, local authorities are political, hierarchical structures, which necessitates a uniform response from the political head. This is not conducive to rapid communication and hence the criticism of ‘unnecessary red tape’, which serves to delay responses.

Honest and objective answers to such items may be difficult to obtain via surveys and focus group interviews, hence in-depth individual interviews proved to be useful.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

Now that we are living in a time of rapid and radical change, we seek to encourage a change of attitude and perceptions towards corporate reputation, service delivery, CSR, workplace environment, vision and leadership. It is also important that external stakeholders should be informed via an intense communication strategy of all the public services offered by the municipality, of the standards of service delivery they can expect and of the importance that one pays for services delivered.

It can be concluded that corporate reputation in the local municipality seems to be perceived as a general perception based on how the local authority contributes to the well-being of the community it serves or to its corporate social responsibility. However, some participants also indicated that it was only in reaction to complaints received from the public that ELM responded and hence they were managing their reputation in a reactive way.

In this chapter, data analysis methods, study results and a discussion of the findings are presented. Findings from this study have been found to be consistent with the findings of several related studies on corporate reputation. In the next chapter, the implications of the findings for corporate reputation are discussed. Limitations of this study are also presented.

## **CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the results of the empirical study are tabled and the findings discussed in detail. In this chapter, an overview of the study is given. Final conclusions are drawn and recommendations made. The limitations of the study and possible avenues for future research are mentioned and the chapter is concluded with a summary of the value of this research study.

### **5.2 SUMMARY**

**Chapter One** provides an orientation to this research and background context of the research. It outlines some of the problems experienced by local municipalities as criticism for poor service delivery, fraud, corruption, mismanagement of public funds. Lack of an adequate reporting system to support good governance that may lead to bad reputation is stressed. Lack of emphasis on a collaborative consultation process and participation by the communities in matters that affect them is also noted. The chapter also introduced the concept of corporate reputation, the significant role of stakeholders in reputation management and perceptions generated through reputation.

**Chapter Two** discusses the scholarly literature on the nature of corporate reputation management. This section provides the structure for this chapter in which corporate reputation management and the systems theory are explored. The literature review sets the scene for the study, helping to situate it in the extant literature on the topic, and provides an understanding of the criteria for reputation management practices in the context of local government in South Africa.

**Chapter Three** chapter explores the research methodology utilised in this study. It also highlights the researcher's motivation for choosing qualitative research design. Data gathering and sampling techniques are discussed. Ethical considerations underlying the study are also discussed. Ontologically, the researcher worked from the premise which



aims to understand the construction of meanings as far as corporate reputation is understood and experienced by the selected participants. Epistemologically, the researcher worked from the premise that knowledge is constructed through lived experiences of those responsible for managing the reputation of the local municipality who are tasked with developing and implementing communication strategies that favour a positive reputation of the local municipality.

**Chapter Four** explores the analysis and findings of the data collected. It provides codes and themes established from the data collected as well as the findings, presenting the data analysed from the transcripts of the participants. The data analysis is compiled in response to the main research questions of the study. An analysis of the data enabled the researcher to advance an explanation of how corporate reputation is understood by the employees of ELM, how they experienced the dynamics of an organisation's communication as a system and their endeavours to establish a dynamic reputation for the municipality.

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher's fourth aim, after an extensive research of the ELM, is to suggest strategies that can develop and enhance corporate reputation management at the ELM.

Organisations who approach communication from a subjectivist open systems angle should not only allow for the 'regular flow of candid information', but also comply with the following communication dynamics as key processes of reputation building:

- Enhancing reputation should be one of the most important objectives of corporate communication departments, meaning that the organisation needs to work harder to build and manage productive relationships with its stakeholders. Communication should be dialogic with the emphasis on communication as a tool for negotiating and managing relationships.
- A good reputation is earned. Management must have a communication programme that will focus on the community and corporate social responsibility initiatives. This can

be done by appointing management and employees with relevant skills, qualifications and expertise to effectively manage the internal and external environment of the municipality, and who will automatically have an impact on the financial soundness of ELM. This will add value of long term investment and relationships with the surrounding external institutions and play a major role in ensuring that ELM sustains itself as a corporate citizen.

- ELM needs to apply an open systems approach to communications tasks. An open systems approach in which components work together in such a way that the whole is kept in balance. This can be done by the decisive scanning of the environment to anticipate issues and detect changes that affect the organisation's relationships with its stakeholders. By following an open systems approach, communications must be sensitive to those stakeholders that are mutually affected or involved in the organisation's policies, procedures, actions and implementations, which not only calls for specifically defined stakeholders but also for research skills to monitor stakeholders as well as the organisation itself.
- Lastly, ELM should embrace CSR initiatives and have a strategic focus to adapt and align their value systems to reflect such commitment. Initiatives are currently done by departments separately and don't have the any impact on ELM.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The case study only focused on Emfuleni Local Municipality in Vanderbijlpark; other municipalities under Emfuleni were excluded from this research. Information was gathered from the internal stakeholders only. The focus was from an organisational perspective only, restricted to communications and marketing, arts and culture, office of the mayor and fire and rescue department in the Emfuleni Local Municipality offices. The results of the study cannot be generalised to a larger population.

#### **5.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research is motivated by the view that qualitative research can provide an understanding on how the current corporate reputation of a municipality is viewed and

received by its internal stakeholders. The research contributes to literature on corporate reputation management in local government entities, focusing on the six pillars of corporate reputation which in turn focuses on emotional appeal, workplace environment, corporate social responsibility, products and services, financial performance, vision and leadership.

Contributions of this research offer Emfuleni Local Municipality an opportunity for introspection from an objective perspective. The results of the study can be used towards improving the relationship between the organisation and its internal and external stakeholders. The study provides insight into the underlying factors that have an impact on managing the reputation of ELM. It can be utilised to start a process of transformation on aspects of communication between the organisation and its stakeholders, CSR initiatives, media relations, corporate citizenship and the vital role of communication in reputation management. For every communications initiative, extensive research needs to be conducted to ensure the effectiveness and better utilisation of the resources. This study therefore can be used as a starting point towards effective strategic communication management in ELM.

## **5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH**

Possibility for future research from this study can be on examining the use of social media to improve communication and reputation of local municipalities. It can also be an approach for ELMs to manage their social media and online reputation. This research has identified a gap in the organisation on the management of the social media platform.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

The management of reputation is a multifaceted concept consisting of numerous sub-categories. Hence corporate social responsibility, emotional appeal, financial performance, products and services, vision and leadership and workplace environment all feature. However, it is unlikely that the participants perceive reputation as separate from image and identity as they use the terms synonymously. The systems view of an organisation being a social system indicates that the various components in the internal environment cannot be

separated from the external environment as they are continuously and dynamically interacting with one another, with corporate communication acting as a 'glue', which holds them together. Corporate communication is thus an essential part of the system as it serves to align the organisation's vision, culture and image that people hold of an organisation.

Effective corporate communication should facilitate understanding among persons, influence people in a positive manner, serve to enhance dialogue between people, make use of appropriate forms of power and make use of skills of emotional intelligence to build relationships between different stakeholders. Furthermore, both individual and social perception play an important role in the management of corporate reputation. Perceptions are also composed of an intertwining of people's perceptions, feelings and ways of thinking. Such an intertwined system is also influenced by, among other things, individual personalities, and the ways one learns to use language, to express emotions, to think and establish relationships and the myriad of identities one takes on through participation in varied cultural communities. This indicates that how one perceives something is largely subjective, and hence corporate management should be particularly aware of selective perception and stereotyping.

Social media have brought with it the freedom to write what one wants to on a public platform where all can see and react to it. Hence, it is necessary that corporate management respond in a rapid and accurate way, especially if the information could harm the image and reputation of the local municipality. However, local authorities are political hierarchical structures, which necessitates a uniform response from the political head. This is not conducive to rapid communication and hence the criticism of 'unnecessary red tape', which serves to delay responses. It is also important that the public should be informed via an intense communication strategy of all the public services offered by the municipality, of the standards of service delivery they can expect and of the importance that one pays for services delivered.

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## ANNEXURE A: Permission letter granting permission to conduct research in ELM

Page 1 of 1

### MM Emfuleni Chamda - Access letter to conduct Research

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**From:** Sibongile Mokaane <mokaaneb@vut.ac.za>  
**To:** "mm@emfuleni.gov.za" <mm@emfuleni.gov.za>  
**Date:** 2016/09/08 11:00 AM  
**Subject:** Access letter to conduct Research  
**Attachments:** Access letter 08 September 2016.pdf

---

Good Morning,

Please receive my letter requesting permission to conduct Research as per telephonic advise.

Thank you very much

Bongi



Bongi Mokaane  
Lecturer & WIL Coordinator: Public Relations  
Management  
Department: Hospitality, Tourism & Public  
Relations  
Faculty of Human Science  
t +27 (0)16 950 9423  
f +27 (0)16 950 9788  
[mokaaneb@vut.ac.za](mailto:mokaaneb@vut.ac.za)

[www.vut.ac.za](http://www.vut.ac.za)

Vanderbijlpark Campus

Private Bag X021 - Vanderbijlpark - 1911 - Andries Potgieter Blvd - South Africa

Tel: +27(0)16 950 9000 - Fax: +27(0)16 950 9999



Free!



**ACCESS LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

3329 Mafea Street  
P O Sharpeville  
1928

Emfuleni Local Municipality  
Box 3  
VANDERBIJLPARK  
1900

08 September 2016

To: Municipal Manager

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Hospitality, Tourism & PR Management at the Vaal University of Technology. My supervisor is Professor Connie Moloi from Vaal University of Technology (VUT), and co supervisor is Mrs. Anna Munyawiri from University of Johannesburg (UJ).

The proposed topic of my research is: Examining Corporate Reputation Management of a Local Municipality in the Vaal Region: A case study.

The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To explore the essence of corporate reputation management
- (b) To determine how reputation is managed at Emfuleni Local Municipality
- (c) To understand the perceptions of internal stakeholders on reputation management at Emfuleni Local Municipality
- (d) To suggest strategies that can be developed to enhance corporate reputation management at the Emfuleni Local Municipality

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct a research study based on the outlined topic and objectives. I wish to conduct interviews with all the staff members in the Department of Communications. All 10 members. The interviews will be conducted towards the end of September, as per availability of the staff members. Each interview will take approximately 1 hour depending on the responses and clarity that may be required from the interviewee. The interviews will be conducted at the offices of the Emfuleni Local Municipality's communications department.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**Bongi Mokaeanne:** 082 3406 206 [Mokaeaneb@vut.ac.za](mailto:Mokaeaneb@vut.ac.za)

**Prof Connie Moloi (Supervisor):** 082 681 6864 [Conniem@vut.ac.za](mailto:Conniem@vut.ac.za)

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to give you feedback on my study and provide you with recommendations to manage the reputation in the Municipality. The information collected will solely be used for this research study and will not be made public.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

**Signature**

**Name: Sibongile Mokaeanne**

## ANNEXURE B: Language editing certificate

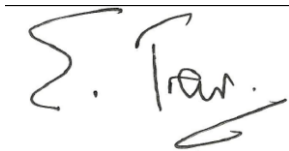
8 Belle Ombre Road  
Tamboerskloof  
Cape Town  
8001.

Public Relations Management  
Vaal University of Technology  
Vanderbijlpark.

25 May 2017

### **LANGUAGE EDITING**

This is to certify that I language-edited the dissertation “Examining corporate reputation management in a local municipality in the Vaal region: a case study”, by Sibongile Mokaeanne for her M. Tech. degree in Public Relations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Trew', is positioned below a horizontal line.

Elizabeth Trew  
[Trew.eliz@gmail.com](mailto:Trew.eliz@gmail.com)  
021 424 6135  
073 235 1147



## **PARTICIPANT LETTER OF CONSENT**

### **EXAMINING CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT OF A LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN THE VAAL REGION: A CASE STUDY**

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research undertaking that aims to examine corporate reputation management in a municipality.

You are kindly requested to participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher during which your ideas and thoughts about corporate reputation management will be explored. All interviews are to be recorded on audiotape to ensure an accurate recording of participants' views and to ensure that no information is lost. The purpose of this study is to examine how the local government manages its corporate reputation. The Municipal manager is aware of the interviews, and has granted permission, has accepted that the information will only be used for developmental purposes, and therefore acknowledges the right to anonymity and confidentiality.

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Data will be treated confidentially and anonymity will be guaranteed by the researcher. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide to withdraw from the research at any stage during the data collection process. Feedback on the research findings will be communicated with you via oral discussion. The benefits are that the study will assist the department in managing its corporate reputation effectively. The recommendations will be discussed with the department and the researcher will assist on a regular basis to explain the recommendations.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you have read the study's aim to realise that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Under no circumstances will your identity be made known in the reporting of the research results in any format.

Hereby I undersigned give consent to be part of this research project.

Participant Signature:.....

Date:.....

Yours sincerely, SB Mokaeanne (Researcher)

**PARTICIPANT LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE USE OF VOICE RECORDING EQUIPMENT**

**EXAMINING CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT OF A LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN  
THE VAAL REGION: A CASE STUDY**

Dear Participant,

You are kindly requested to participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher during which your ideas and thoughts about corporate reputation management will be explored. All interviews are to be recorded on audiotape to ensure an accurate recording of participants' views and to ensure that no information is lost.

Hereby I undersigned give consent for the use of voice recording equipment such as audio taping.

Participant Signature:.....

Date:.....

Yours sincerely

SB Mokaeanne (Researcher)

Date:.....

## **TRANSCRIPTS FROM IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

### **THEME 1: DEFINING CORPORATE REPUTATION**

#### **QUESTION ONE: TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY CORPORATE REPUTATION?**

**Participant one:** Reputation is usually how the public perceive your organisation. Any information that they get about your organisation has an impact on your reputation. It's like what people know and what they think they know about the municipality. In my eyes corporate reputation in Emfuleni is that we don't deliver service. We have a lot of things that people are unhappy about. At the moment corporate reputation is the lowest. Participant two: Internally employees are kind of demoralized because we think that the municipality is not doing well. Our reputation is at the lowest even with employees.

**Participant two:** It's going to be very difficult but we are running a very broad municipality we have a lots of departments, we have department the likes of Metsi-a Lekoa which is an extension of Emfuleni we've got fire. To actually define what they represent it's going to be difficult. In my eyes corporate reputation in Emfuleni is that we don't deliver service. We have a lot of things that people are unhappy about. At the moment corporate reputation is the lowest. Internally employees are kind of demoralized because we think that the municipality is not doing well. Our reputation is at the lowest even with employees.

**Participant three:** In the context Emfuleni is a public entity established through various government legislation but at the centre of its existence everything and anything that we do as a municipality must find its expression within the clear defined government goals as enshrined in BATHO PELE principles consultation one of the key important aspect as you unpack the reputation within it. The second one for you obviously I don't know if should I

go further on one this one of them I just want to give the fact that we are a public entity that is working on a mandate to break even a clear mind it must have a community we serving the community it must be around evolving around the principal of BATHO PELE.

**Participant four:** Consultation what it does what does that says it means basically you are govern on the courtesy of the residents anything that we do they must be dubbed cross communication one we need to make sure that you consult with the residents are the stakeholders and equally so we need to get a feedback and once we have received a feedback from the community we then need to see from our original plans and their submissions that we have received your community how do we can bring both together to be one thing to give us one common product does one thing around consultation it means consultation and in a way it can be consultation through public participation it could be through issues of what you call compliance notices.

**Participant five:** I think personally feel that the corporate reputation of the municipality is that it has to abide by the BATHO PELE principles and really focusing on making sure that the community is given priority. How we engage with the community I would say it speaks to reputation. As municipality we have to make sure that the community must be involved and get views on what the people want and also projects that we do must be budgeted for. To make sure the whole community benefits. We have to strive to make sure that we are seen as the municipality that cares about the community. Put the municipality on the map.

**Participant six:** To me it's the way people see the municipality, the reflection of the municipality in the eyes of its communities and in the eyes of everyone.

**Participant seven:** I think personally feel that the corporate reputation of the municipality is that it has to abide by the BATHO PELE principles and really focusing on making sure that the community is given priority. How we engage with the community I would say it speaks to reputation. As municipality we have to make sure that the community must be involved and get views on what the people want and also projects that we do must be budgeted for. To make sure the whole community benefits. We have to strive to make sure

that we are seen as the municipality that cares about the community. Put the municipality on the map.

**Participant eight:** Because I'm in the political office, at least I can give you an academic understating. The one thing that people understand how does corporate reputation works. Here it's a political office we mainly deal with perceptions that maybe sometimes are wrong, lack of information and when you talk to people about the municipality they have a different understanding. I wouldn't say that we have a good corporate reputation with the community. In all honesty here many people who are here including our managers and everything are not even worried about corporate reputation because many of them didn't even go to school, they don't understand and they don't care. The negative perception that is there may be wrong and right about the municipality and I'm sure the communication would have shared the same views but maybe not also wanting to protect themselves like for example there's even power struggle about who handles communications of the municipality which does not give proper corporate reputation like if there are problems you will find out that Stanley has to come in or the Mayors Spokesperson also must come in. we just come to work because we have to work but there are still a lot of things to be done.

**Participant nine:** From the Fire and Rescue perspective is a department that has its own mission and vision. In our division we have fire and rescue, firefighting, fire safety site, public training and disaster management. The most thing that the fire department is focusing on is to protect the life of the community. I think for our department as part of the municipality we are playing the most important part in terms of making sure that there is safety within the municipality for the image of the municipality.

**Participant ten:** To me it's the way people see the municipality, the reflection of the municipality in the eyes of its communities and in the eyes of everyone.



## **QUESTION TWO: IN YOUR OPINION WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS AFFECTING THE REPUTATION OF ELM?**

**Participant one:** One of the main factors is that the political figures or our political heads interfering in most of the processes and you know with politicians it is very difficult to tell him that this is right or wrong another thing I think is that the municipality is actually struggling with service delivery issues because if you can realize the steps or procedures that they follow when they appoint people, it's very rare where you will find people who have been appointed are people who are skilled in those particular positions like what happened to us recently and you won't be able to question it, it becomes an instruction and it becomes like that and it becomes a problem with us official because now you are instructed to work with this person when you look at this person is not the kind of a person I'll be able to help with this because this person doesn't understand anything about communications or branding.

**Participant two:** Another thing is that I think us as communications in each organisation communication must be the first point of contact but this is not how it's happening because in an institution it's like we need to fight for them to understand why we are here and who we are and its actually few political heads who understand who we are and why we are here. As we talking right now we have our manager who is supposed to be the spokesperson of the institution but it not like that we have another spokesperson who is based in the Mayor's office when you hear she on radio talking about issues that we know nothing about when she struggles with them they are being redirected to us so it's that battle that I don't know when are we going to win it. Those are the things that are affecting the reputation of the municipality because I will tell you why I'm saying that at this present moment there are media people in that office, they are confused because they don't know who to talk to when they have media enquiry. They end up being confused, who is the main person we are supposed to talk to but by law or protocol it should be manager communication but it's not how it's happening.

**Participant three:** Corruption, mainly corruption that the opinion of a lot of people about our municipality. Like if I'm recently employed by Emfuleni Local Municipality they think I paid for the job or got the job otherwise.

**Participant four:** I would start with the main thing which is our service delivery aspects that is the core mandate of a locality of us is service delivery so whether we doing it we are delivery services or we not it's going to affected our reputation in the eyes of the community. I think that the employees have got to do with that these are the people that I like us how we conduct ourselves, how we handle our customers or clients it speaks to a large extent on how people perceive us as a municipality.

**Participant five:** Reputation is an important thing because remember we as officials or employees we are employed to serve the Emfuleni people but equally so over and above as this is what we call we've got councillors here they happen to be our own employer, as officials and councillors we are employed by this local community reputation relates to make sure one important things to make sure that there is that continuous engagement between the three parties but importantly that it happens there's a whole lot of things that are happening within an environment and carry on and I want say something that emerge as perceptions some issues start as a perception but as you follow them up you come to realise that or to find that no they cannot be confirmed. What is important for reputation we must be able it is under very severe operating under severe or difficult environment within the context of a municipality to not be able to get hundred percent satisfy almost all stakeholders but what you need to strive for is to make sure that it is maximum trust we don't have to reach a stage of trust deficit. People's confidence is very important to what we are doing you know it's just so unfortunately I know we are expected to conduct on an annual basis what we call customer satisfaction survey which in a way it's one of the measuring tool to engage what is the level of satisfaction and in that way it will give you a sense of how people are gauging us in terms of reputation. Reputation is not static thing in a sensory that anything that you do as a government entity it triggers a reaction negative or positive.

**Participant six:** I think the community themselves they are not cooperating with certain by-laws within the municipality. You find people relocate themselves everywhere.

Participant seven: Basically the most important thing in the municipality is the political figure because they are the ones running the Municipality the Mayor and the PMT so if politically it's not standing right if there are some scandals corruptions and all that then it affects the reputation of the municipality because of official don't reflect much most of the time is politicians these politicians that so our reputation depends highly on politicians.

**Participant seven:** Communication, how we as an institution communicate to our communities because in most cases there are those issues of communication what we trying to do and also the issue of service delivery, our key responsibility is to ensure that services are delivered but what breaks the chain is that communication.

Issue of payment of services some of the community cannot afford to pay and that hampers on the services that the municipality must provide. We events but we don't get much support from the Vaal community, people who get interested in our events are people from outside. Emfuleni is regarded as a secret kept place that people are not able to access because we not actually marketing Emfuleni enough to be that place that tourist can be able to visit. Politics is another issue that is affecting our communities and us an institution as you know we are an institution that is govern by the politics and ever since I've been here I've seen politicians taking the lead and being involved in the administration issues of the municipality and to you know when politics are involved you going to compromised a lot of things that will affect the community. Us as employees, people are really demoralized because of politics. People have been here for a long time they are qualified and they are not recognized you get someone just because of politics who doesn't understand anything and you as a subordinate must teach that person work.

**Participant eight:** Its political interference in administration and to apply politics across even when there's no need and then the perceptions of corruption which are truthful in anyway, you cannot say that they just perceptions. That's what affects the municipality mostly. As you know we are always on headlines are lack of money but if you look at

workers in general they are living large. I think those are the main factors but mostly corruption.

**Participant nine:** I think the community themselves they are not cooperating with certain by-laws within the municipality. You find people relocate themselves everywhere.

**Participant ten:** Basically the most important thing in the municipality is the political figure because they are the ones running the Municipality the Mayor and the PMT so if politically it's not standing right if there are some scandals corruptions and all that then it affects the reputation of the municipality because of official don't reflect much most of the time is politicians these politicians that so our reputation depends highly on politicians.

## **THEME 2: MEASURING REPUTATION**

### **QUESTION THREE: IN YOUR OPINION WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ELM'S OVERALL REPUTATION?**

**Participant one:** I would say the management, senior management together with commination because it a task as communication we come up with policies, strategies but it's the responsibility of management as a whole to assist us in ensuring that the policies are implemented effectively so without their support as communication we cannot win so it's important for Emfuleni management to support us in implementing or helping to come up with other systems that can help to assist in ensuring the we enhance the overall reputation of Emfuleni.

**Participant two:** I think all the employees of Emfuleni but now going through the hierarchy politicians it's very important for them to work on the reputation of the institution. It's everybody's responsibility within the institution to try and address the issue of reputation.

**Participant three:** I think all employees should be responsible because it's our brand that we are trying to promote but with us as communication I think we should be the custodian and people should learn from us.

**Participant four:** I think communications is at the helm of reputation management of the municipality because between political administration and the people we must be able to do we are well positioned and well-resourced to be a link between the people and the municipality. Communication must be at the helm.

**Participant five:** We are as communication. We are the custodian. That's why if there is anything that has to go internally or externally we have our own systems or standards operating procedure or systems that we have to check first. We do quality assurance so communications department is in a way but equally so it also poses a challenge to us being working in this environment of an organization with close to 300 employees divided into five clusters and a whole lot of departments and units one of our heavy duties to do is to make sure that we provide consistent education on issues of reputation, the importance of reputation. One thing that we keep on emphasizing to our fellow colleagues both either ordinary or professional workers is to say to them consider us as a chain, consider your work as part of chain and every aspect of this chain remember a chain is something that is linked so we need to pull together we need to make sure that when we communicate or act we communicate in a particular way because once one part of the chain breaks down then everything is going to be a mess, it's not an easy thing but we are trying. It's not a perfect situation we are not in a perfect environment to say that everything is superb. We may have the policies or strategies but they must be tested against the practical environment. It's not an issue of ticking a box and getting it right. Issues of ethical conduct if one of us happens to be found in something that is unethical we happen to be generalized, saying Emfuleni employees are corrupt. The brand itself gets damaged.

**Participant six:** For me it should be the entire executive. It can't be a singular person's task if you hold the executive accountable for reputation the entire institution would be able to manage it as it stands I don't think there is anybody who cares except communications and

communications is just a lone voice somewhere there. Remember the reputation is also looked in terms of how do our own staff appears and how does our fleet also look like it's not only about you having the logo in the fleet, what is the fleet being used for, how is it being used. It takes the municipality to manage its own affairs. Its only communication that must manage that and it clearly shows that reputation to us is something else.

**Participant seven:** In think all of us but the main person is the Municipal Manager and the Mayor. If there are other employees who are not satisfied they will drag their feet and it will impact on the reputation of the institution. Also political heads and ward councillors as they engage regularly with the community and then they have to make sure that when they represent the municipality they hold the reputation of the municipality in a high position.

**Participant eight:** Communication I think it encapsulate corporate department because I don't know of any corporate department. I think communication because corporate department is also under communications so it's them who are responsible for that and they should be working hand in hand with Mayor's office but I think I can say the Mayor's office, MM and Communications.

**Participant nine:** The Municipal Manager is the one responsible because. He is the main man who has the right to say yes or no.

**Participant ten:** I would again say it's the PR department because they know all about reputation other departments just know about their work and what their departments is responsible for but for them to get education about the reputation the PR department is the one that is responsible to educate them on the importance of the reputation of the municipality.

**QUESTION FOUR: DOES YOUR DEPARTMENT HAVE MEASURES IN PLACE TO MANAGE ELM'S REPUTATION? WHAT ARE THEY? OR WHAT SHOULD THEY BE?**

**Participant one:** We have the media policy in place and also on my side we developed a corporate identity manual which will help in ensuring the consistency of branding the consistency of when we use corporate colours the use of fonts on official documents. Those are the two documents I think for now have been approved by council. We are trying to come up with a social media policy which I hope that before the end of December it will be approved, social media policy and also internal communication policy because with internal communication we experience problems of chain emails people don't understand protocol when it comes to internal communications. When it comes to social media in think we have issues of staff capacity we have a webmaster who it's not his job to look at the social media things but because we are short staffed he's looking at it but then we in a process of appointing people or youth specifically to deal with social media. Apparently one of the guys that we instructed to takeover who came few weeks back is going to be one of the guys dealing with social media issues hence I'm saying with me marketing and branding I have corporate identity manual, media relations they have a policy, social media because we did not have enough staff but with the absence of those people we trying to develop a policy which we hope by December it will be approved same applies to internal communications.

**Participant two:** We do have measure in place, one example we once had a big water pipe burst in Vereeniging one of the biggest industries and then we had a news crew from SABC coming in to cover the story because apparently the property owner has been complaining about that for months and we couldn't really attend to it and when the team got there they found our water technicians on site working on the problem and they were struggling to fix the problem that's when the four men decided to answer on behalf of the municipality and just said we don't have money to buy some of the fixtures we need to fix the problem in as much as that is true but I think communications department could have handled it better so now what we do is we do have sort of workshops for employees so that everybody does

what they hired for like in this case we did tell the four men that next time when this happens you refer dispute to communications for them to respond on the matter. So I know with what's this marketing and branding they have their ways of dealing with reputation. Some of the logos are very old and that works on our reputation. We still have very old building that the municipality was using then in the apartheid era some of the still bear the old logos and that affects our reputation. So we do have measure in place to try and deal with the municipality's reputation.

**Participant three:** We don't have measure in place to manage the reputation. I think we should have a social medial policy because people go on Facebook and say whatever they want we have an incident of one employee who was suspended for posting on Facebook. We don't have a policy at all but I think the policy will be the first step we take.

**Participant four:** At this present moment our department is comprised into three units' internal and external communication unit, marketing and branding unit and media relations unit. Internal and external communication reputation is not necessarily you know internally as well you know there must be that a good reputation with me talking now within the employees and then we have so many employees you know we have to constantly you speak to the employees in the top management speaking to the employee speaking to management we do that there is the part of the media wherein we will constantly update the media space because we take our messages across to the people we also have our own depot on public areas like our Library we conduct IDP public participation to try and speak to our people in anything that needs to be spoken about. We If there are enquiries we respond immediately as possible you know who try to respond on time we give people we keep them posted on the progress and what the municipality wants to achieve you know we do that, that's what we are doing.

**Participant five:** I don't think we have measure in place but maybe they exist but I don't know. I think there should be one person managing that, one person should communication on behalf of the municipality.



**Participant six:** We only have the policy and committees we also do workshops departmentally to try and take to issues I've just highlighted. In all the marketing we try to inform and standardize them put them in a better way also it remain our sole responsibility as communications to manage that. It's tough because also on the ICT part of it it's not managed properly. Firstly I think we should internally look at what should be there that is not there, you start with your ambassadors, make sure that they actually understand the institutions, understand the corporate reputation of the institution, they understand it properly, you enforce it within them, maintain maximum discipline towards that, make sure that you instruments are used properly. We have to reinvent ourselves, reengineer itself totally overall. Firstly Emfuleni does not have a coat of arms as a government institution, it has a logo that symbolizes that it is a business not a government institution. People don't understand that there is a coat of arms and a logo those are two different things. So as an institution we have to find a coat of arms that talk to people, that identifies this as an institution. You then develop policies on how the coat of arms is supposed to be used. Sadly Emfuleni has got paramilitary institutions with, this paramilitary have coat of arms in which this coat of arms are preceded by logo. We need to get that correct. Once we have been able to reengineer that we will have other things in place. We will be able to channel everybody and the systems in place.

**Participant seven:** Yes I think so far we have started in this project of events were we sit with community members. The reasons we have an events committee is to ensure that we guide our community in making sure that they follow the correct procedure especially if they want their events to be a successful so at least we are doing something. We not actually looking at the aspect of success but also looking at the safety of the communities at large, when there's an event safety of the patrons is important. We have to make sure that the compliance issues are there and we comply. Our department and safety are trying to show the communities what is expected of them. And then we have staff meeting even though at the end of the day it like nothing its happening we don't see changes, you talk to people but still no change, the attitude.

**Participant eight:** One I would say no we don't have but I will believe because we are in a political office one of the things that we should do is that we have systems in place like

your ward committees which are currently taking place those are people who are supporting structures to councillors and remember we are dealing with council so we are responsible for councillors so protest or anything that has to do with service delivery or anything that affects the community it always comes to us and we communicate with the Mayor's office, we have systems like ward committees.

**Participant nine:** I think our department we are ready with all the resources that we have, you know in most of the municipality we've got the challenges with finance and have limited resources but at least we manage to be ready for whatever incident that we may have.

**Participant ten:** What we do is because I'm from a political office, our politicians we don't speak to them directly we have a spokesperson who represents the PMT (Political Management Team) so if the media or anyone else wants to know about the municipality or our leaders from the political office they go via the spokesperson so that they don't say things that will come back to them or affect the reputation of the municipality. So the media or whoever wants to know speaks to the spokesperson first and then the spokesperson goes and does research on things that the media wants to know or anyone wants to know about the municipality after that they get back to the community so normally you don't speak to us directly or the politicians because we might say things that will harm the municipality or its reputation so you go via our spokesperson first and our PR department and then they come back to us and we give permission I'm able to speak but then you are guided you have to send questions first to say these are the questions that I'm going to ask him and then they prepare answers and then that's when you can get direct contact with them besides that you won't have contact with them its via certain people.

#### **QUESTION FIVE: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ELM?**

**Participant one:** It does exist in a municipality but in a different way because like what we do I will try to refer to the current program that is running, Vaal River Carnival it's a

brand of Emfuleni Municipality but if you can look at it, inside this program we have about 23 events but only 8 events belong to the municipality and those events belonging to the municipality they are the kinds of events that the municipality is not generating income in those events and these other events they are events owned by product owners and these are ordinary people from our community that we are trying to empower. Same applies to Sunday Soul Sessions this people won't be able to solicit sponsorship if they go on their own but I will base my argument on Jazz by the River, without us Jazz won't happen without Emfuleni so we partner with most of the people to assist them through such event. We do corporate social responsibility in an indirect way through events.

Not talking from this department alone but Emfuleni as a whole we have a lot of programmes I can cite a few departments that we are working with Local Economic

**Participant two:** Development is one they do have ways of uplifting upcoming businesses within Emfuleni they assist them how they host a number of workshops to aid upcoming businesses to basically educate them on how to go about taking their businesses to greater heights. I know of this other department Sports, Arts and Culture they hosted one workshop for free for artists, performers and actors as a social responsibility initiative saying to them we are bringing these famous names closer to you we are exposing you today to people who are already out there that could have come at a fee but via Emfuleni it comes for free and people get to know about advancing in their respective careers so that's just the two departments.

**Participant three:** I've never seen corporate social responsibility in Emfuleni. We only see it on Mandela day. Bursaries are offered to needy matriculants but this year it did not happen.

**Participant four:** I think between service and corporate social responsibility for me is quite a thin line because we serve the society so we are responsible for the society that's social responsibility I think factors in automatically you know because everything that we do that's why our resources I think in as far as like you will see that most of our resources if we have to prioritise obviously service delivery will be core for me it's all linked in that.

**Participant five:** We are a government and we are here to provide service. The motive or the essence of this entity is not to do what in a private sector they call profit making, it's about improving the quality of life, improving the conditions. How could we use this particular space to do what social responsibility that is done a classical example is that if you look at the month of August and September we have a public social partnership in a form of this product called Vaal River Carnival and in that product there are a number different people who are specialist in their own fields, they come and pitch their business or product proposal and in that way as a municipality through relevant structures that we have we sit down and assess then ultimately the person will make a pitch or presentation.

**Participant six:** The municipality is public institution it's supposed to be serving the people. Social responsibility for me it says for private business we must do social responsibility, take your money and invest in some project but government basically its own function is to do that mainly to give service to the people. I don't see us playing a different role other than that. Like the programmes the Mayor has, like handing out vegetables to kids, visiting new born babies, those are what we classify as corporate social responsibility.

**Participant seven:** I think corporate social from what I understand is when we give back to the community. The Mayor's office has started a programme of bursaries which I think it's a good one. Even us when we call our communities to make time and sit down with them, advise them, take them by hand to make whatever they plan to do a success I think it's also social responsibility, I've seen people come and go with big successful events because we make time for them, we don't only sit down with them we actually go to extent of linking them with who can help them. Also part of our job which will falls as our work and social responsibility, when we call people who are funding to come and engage our communities to tell them how they can access funding. Not forgetting Mandela Day. When we have people who pass away and their families don't have money to bury their loved ones the Mayor's office takeover and bury that person. We also assist kids who are disadvantaged in schools, educational talk, we entertain them this year we got Takalani for

the, we gave them bags and other things. Also the project that we don't with the inmates, we do it during October we spend a week inside, we take our local artist and they interact with the inmates especially those who are into arts and there cultural exchange I think that's also a good programme. They also need the support, and it also helps them not to be afraid to engage with the community.

**Participant eight:** Our corporate social responsibility I would think is working very well because we do a lot partnerships sports, schools, the Mayor's office is only responsible for that although even our office we also do it partly but I have notice that the problem what we do here is that we do it mainly for political purposes or towards the elections, which is something we should be doing actually every year, every month or every quarter because we do have resources to can do it visiting schools giving them laptops, tablets, uniforms, sport and supporting them in arts and culture. We have the departments and even the province does give us money, we have sponsors, we have relationships with business people. There is a lot that has been done, there is a school that has been built in Bophelong which we built without a cent we got a donation from national government.

**Participant nine:** Firstly, we have the public training, people are training for free. We train all the ward committees members, all day care centres are trained so that when there is fire they know how to use fire extinguishers. We want everybody in the region to know how to deal with fire. We give shelter and blankets to those affected by fire or disasters. We fix their houses where we can. We also communicate with food bank to give food as part of a relieve programme, also home affairs and social development to assist us.

**Participant ten:** Yes we do, we've got projects like EPWP expanded Public Works, CWP and then we've got Internships and Learnerships and besides that every year during Christmas we give groceries even during the year we give groceries and also have the bursary fund from the Mayor's office whereby by students who have just passed their grade 12 but with certain requirements they get bursaries from the Mayor's office and normally we also get students maybe during the year who can't pay their fees and then we pay for them we help, we do a lot. I think mainly that's what the municipality does throughout its

existence but then there's so many things that we do that we help people even the Tshepo 1000 projects or is it 10000 project it was giving people jobs but then CWP mainly gives you a training it's not basically a job it gives training for about 12 months and then after that you get stipend during the process and then after 12 months you go into the database the municipal database where you be hired and all that and EPWP is also the same as CWP those are things we do, lately we had internships that were hired by SITA but then the municipality had to go back and say that we will hire them ourselves after the President said you must not fire anyone meaning everybody whose within the municipality so we are presently paying them from the municipality's budget so every year we hiring young people and the databases always available for people who needs jobs it's just that our communities are not educated enough or literates enough to read newspapers because opportunities are there the municipality is always hiring is giving people jobs.

### **THEME 3: INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS**

#### **QUESTION SIX: HOW DO YOU ALIGN YOUR EMPLOYEES IN THE CREATION OF STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT FOR REPUTATION?**

**Participant one:** I think once again as communication looking at that, we tried to establish a forum. The chairperson of the forum is our manager in that forum we had representatives from different department and in that forum what we normally emphasis is issues of media will have issues of media that if they are not handled in a proper way they affect the reputation of the municipality. In that particular forum he tried to address with those particular representative to address different issues that talks to reputation like issues of media and branding. In that forum he tries to touch base on different things that affect the reputation of the municipality even the issue of general workers like your waste people, those are people that are not educated and who don't know how to behave, a municipal worker parking a car in Vaal Mall wearing the municipality uniform or one is at a tavern. If you're a supervisor working with this category try to workshop the people, show them the importance of the reputation of the municipality so in that forum he tries to touch base on issues that affect the reputation of the municipality.

**Participant two:** I think there are a couple of things we are doing like one we are currently developing new customer contact centres we've picked up over time that the times people who work directly with people for an example when you are in a customer care department you dealing with people who are either unhappy with service we are rendering or they are unhappy with their bill mostly if they come personally to the municipality its usually when they are experiencing problems with the municipality so what we have observed was that our employees behaved like typical government employees at least that how we are perceived. We had internal workshops held by organisational development just to coach people about the system and it must be delivered in a certain way.

**Participant three:** Previously Assistant Management tried workshops to empower managers but the response was not there to support the initiative and the plug was pulled off and was cancelled. If managers are not responsible how would subordinates behave, if managers are not leading by example and clearly explain to subordinate on how to respond to media relation sides and interviews conducted by radio stations.

**Participant four:** Our employees I think like any other organization your employees are on the forefront of everything that you do, they carry out duties so in this case with Emfuleni is no different. Our employees the way they interact and serve people it is at the very core of our reputation for an example if a client comes at the water and light and people are eating it reflect badly on our reputation.

**Participant five:** The employees before they are employees they are residents and the point you are raising reminds of my university student days, we used to say then I'm a member of a community before I'm a student so the same principles applies to the employee. You are just here for eight hours and you go back to the community. Whatever you do it has bearing or effect in terms of how best can we advance as individuals but first it's the issue that we must do as an institution is to education our employees about organizational culture that we want to build. Remember in any organisation there is formal and informal and informal in many instances in any organization you will find different people who are having their own backgrounds, expectations and different skills but once you are now part

of a big family you then need to introduce a culture that will give you an identity. In an effort to build that good positive reputation let's try by all means to act professionally on our work. Let's try to avoid being tempted into acts of corruption. It's very painful when people raise corruption against the municipality, they only see one party they forget that there is a corrupter and a corruptee so it's all the time trying to educate ourselves to at all times let's rise above this unethical behaviours in that ultimately compromise the entire institution, just one action of a wrong person it tarnishes the whole institution.

**Participant six:** We tried to create an internal communication forum that cuts across all departments with the sole intentions for us to be able to communicate whatever that is happening in the institution bringing all employees together at once at the particular time. The forum's intention was to develop programmes that would unite employees under one band. You would have your wellness days, your OR Tambo games under one umbrella. The idea or reason behind that is to make sure that there is cohesion amongst the employees as a result they would be able to work together in terms of departments but as it stands we so are disjointed even those programmes fall to the cracks so that's one challenge. Internal communication forum is one aspect, we have also established management forum that sit on a monthly basis where managers would also try amongst themselves see how best they collaborate and work towards helping the institution collectively because the understanding is that if managers understand they can share the same vision it's going to be better for the institution. There's also serious dichotomy between middle management and the executive they are not talking to each other so those decisions that are taken they remain there, at the bottom people are doing whatever that they are doing that is not contrary, that is not uniformed. We try all sorts of things to unite.

**Participant seven:** We work with communities, and forums we make sure that our duties even though they have goals they want to achieve at the end of the day and they need support from us as a department. We support them with whatever that is in line with our duties even though at times we try to go beyond but we become on the same level to align our functions and their functions to try assist each other. We are trying to organize symposium with the forum of arts and culture so it's going to include all art forms as the employees



and staff of arts and culture must make sure that it becomes a success even though it is community based, we are there to offer support. It depends on where you are as an employees, I would say there's top management, middle management and lower employee so we are right in the middle and we engage a lot with stakeholders but because our office and the style we use with being in the middle management we drag lower employees and with them during stakeholder meetings, we try empower them to make sure that they learn about the vision of our office but there are decisions they are not allowed to take in terms of delegations of powers. Mostly training and development, planning of internal and external events. We have this big carnival that we do in September so they get to be part of that.

**Participant eight:** To be truthful to you we've never even had such a discussion. Like I told you that the person who is responsible for stakeholder engagement is our assistant manager who does not have communications background, does not understand and sometimes some of us who are from school must correct him and tell him this is how it's done but because of when he is senior he has the final say. We have never had such discussion. We don't have a clear strategy as to how even if it's there I've never seen such. Even when we go for retreats I've never seen it, we only discuss our internal programmes of the office.

**Participant nine:** The office of the Speaker which I'm currently in mainly deals with stakeholder engagement amongst other we make that all kinds of stakeholder are brought on board, we all engage in trying to make sure that they understand what this organization is doing for them also to ensure that they assist in ensuring a strong relationship.

**Participant ten:** Our employees and our stakeholders, let me make an example at the moment in our offices we formed a stakeholder relationship with Home Affairs so but before they do that they are taught, they've got workshops that they go through to learn how do they react or their contact with stakeholders how did they go about creating them and how did they go about maintaining them so now and then we are in contact with our stakeholders there are different stakeholders Home Affairs and IEC because we mostly

deal with it now and then not only on elections but right now we having ward committee elections now and then the municipality is having elections so we must maintain that relationship with them and make sure that we still in good standing with them.

**QUESTION SEVEN: HOW DO YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUR STAKEHOLDERS IN WAYS THAT MAKES THEM TRUST AND FEEL POSITIVELY ABOUT ELM?**

**Participant one:** Like right now today since the new cabinet, the councillors have been changed and new cabinet has been elected even in the communities there are new ward committee members that have been elected so today they are launching the ward committees all stakeholder have been invited from the entire Emfuleni region they know how they selected the representative after this launch they will embark on a campaign which will last for the entire month were they will be informing the community regarding their new ward committee members. Normally we use campaign and roadshow to inform community members. We have internal and external newsletter to inform them of the new development, changes and project we have achieved.

**Participant two:** I did touch on it a bit but like I said it's just a matter of going back and mending relations honesty simple things like communicating water shutdown I'm the one who's supposed to send out a message but I'm relying on a technician to give me details information if you say I'm going to be working on a water metre for 8 hours when I need to communicate to the communities to say we are shutting down water now and it will be back in 8 hours if you fail to supply with information communicate and trust goes out the window.

**Participant three:** We use to have a newsletter that was being issued to public which stopped and its being a year to date and alternatively we have a website which is currently running whereby we engage with the public through it. Beside that also have a double page advert with we publicize on community newspaper as way to communicate with stakeholder but I feel is not enough as we are not reaching many people through it.

**Participant four:** What comes to my mind now is our key account holder you see with the municipality issues when I'm talking about key account holder I'm talking about our people who pay our services. We need those people to keep the municipality going in terms of revenue collection and everything I would also think of other departments. It is very important that we don't work in isolation. How do you make sure that they get something in return for the value for the money that they are giving us, how do we make sure that there's more relationship. How do we go an extra mile as well with ourselves to see that their businesses grow as a municipality I think we need to look at this this this example of how do we see that we interlink our efforts with from example the national government in a mandate provincial government how do we have to work around that there's no way we can do it in isolation in as far as I'm concerned so that part must be managed as well.

**Participant five:** The employees before they are employees they are residents and they remind of my university student days, we used to say then I'm a member of a community before I'm a student so the same principles applies to the employee. You are just here for eight hours and you go back to the community. Whatever you do it has bearing or effect in terms of how best can we advance as individuals but first it's the issue that we must do as an institution is to education our employees about organizational culture that we want to build. Remember in any organisation there is formal and informal and informal in many instances in any organization you will find different people who are having their own backgrounds, expectations and different skills but once you are now part of a big family you then need to introduce a culture that will give you an identity. In an effort to build that good positive reputation let's try by all means to act professionally on our work. Let's try to avoid being tempted into acts of corruption. It's very painful when people raise corruption against the municipality, they only see one party they forget that there is a corrupter and a corruptee so it's all the time trying to educate ourselves to at all times let's rise above this unethical behaviors in that ultimately compromise the entire institution, just one action of a wrong person it tarnishes the whole institution.

**Participant six:** We engage them through the IDP, we go and see them, convene public meeting and as and when they protest we engage them again. And when the Mayor invites them. In a nutshell I would say the public meetings or Mayoral Imbizo there is no meaningful constructive engagement except when they protest.

**Participant seven:** We always sit in meetings as office with the external stakeholder, we first look at what they have planned and if going to work for us. We've had people come and promise so many things. We are very strict in partnerships because we want our communities to benefit. When there is a person who want to do a local event we make sure priority is given to local artists so that's how we save guard our communities when stakeholders come. We partner with financial institutions that are providing funding to SMME's and we also partner with provincial governments, we partner with individual companies but then we check the level and profile of the company. We try and partner mostly with private sectors in order for communities to benefit.

**Participant eight:** For discussions with community we use all media related platforms and all other communication platforms there I know we do, we spend on it because sometimes for reasons known to us who are here because other use it get money out of the process. We use VUT FM we use a lot of radio station. We do have good systems like the ward committees system they are our eyes and ears. We always get information from them, what are the challenges what should we do. The problem at times is that we can't deliver on services requested by ward committees. We do all forms and have a good relationship with newspapers in the region and those are all the measures we use.

**Participant nine:** Always I encourage each and every stakeholder whatever you are doing is appreciated and I listen very attentively. I don't channel people, I don't associate with people on higher positions. I treat them equally, I trust them and need their support.

**Participant ten:** We keep them updated of everything that we do, always have meetings with them to tell them about the progress of the municipality and plans and the results of let's say we had planned to do something and then we get a report back on how that thing

works and we engaged them so that they are not lost around the way so that they can trust us so we engage with them now and then.

#### **THEME 4: MEDIA RELATIONS AND BRANDING**

##### **QUESTION EIGHT: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE ELM'S MEDIA RELATIONS?**

**Participant one:** I would say the relationship that we have with media people, locally we have a very good relationship with our local media. We try at all times to respond to them timeously when they have media enquiries and we try to inform them at all times that we are not only relying on positive things even negative things we inform them. We will ensure that we don't run away from our issues. With national media we do have a relationship but it's not the same as local media. When we have things we invite them like your Sowetan so we do have a good relationship with media people.

**Participant two:** The relations are very good locally and nationally they are good though nationally we have a serious challenge as Emfuleni but not Emfuleni alone Vaal as a whole. Vaal is not covered by the national media, they only come on Human Rights Day and when we have some seriously negative stories. I remember one story we were dealing with were ANN7 and SABC were there at the same time was of the sewerage spillage in one of the homes in Evaton and it got the most coverage so what I say is in as much as we good relation with national people I do get positive coverage from Lesedi FM they are forever there I call them they show face and other media houses you call them and they wait for that one moment when they are going to come and cover a negative story so there's nothing positive about government in Vaal that is being covered in your national media but locally I know with all print media Lokshin news, Sedibeng news, Vaal Metro Express, Mooi Vaal media, Media 24 we do have coverage some negative some positive we can't win them all but the relationship is there. Even with local radio stations, we have good relations with VUT FM, Lekoa FM, Sedibeng FM and Karabo FM, we have good relations with Thetha FM even though they are pushing their agendas at times because the last time I had an argument with them was when I was speaking to one of the anchors of the current affairs

show I felt that this man was being unfair in his approach to engage on issues with the municipality, you build up a hype against the municipality with your listeners so that when officials get in there like people from communication get in there you already arrive on a ticking time bomb and you will have listeners calling in and insulting us it's easy for them to do that you must understand when you go to an interview at a radio you are wearing a corporate cap that is ELM but you still a community member and your human at the end of the day. When people start insulting you and you are not getting protection from the person who is hosting the show it becomes very difficult so it's okay for them to insult us with the confidence of we can't insult us back. So that affected our relation a bit but the station is trying to sort it out in engaging with us. If people complain on air I believe that as the radio station its part of your social responsibility is to try and resolve the issue as the mouth piece of the community and not aggravate the situation further. Relations are good with most of the media houses.

**Participant three:** Locally we have good relations except Thetha FM, but nationally we don't have problem only advertising part on public notice because of trust issues they have but generally we don't have only when come to fees that have to be paid because of payment history the municipality had in the past.

**Participant four:** It is not where it's supposed to be. Locally we sort of okay but I think there still room for improvement. Mainstream I don't think there is any kind of relationship we still trying to build it but the issue are that is almost as if when we have problems and we have our own things that we conduct the same to you know what I want to showcase their there they're municipality do what you always struggle to get support of the mainstream media will always have to pay if you pay for service will get it but I don't think that you know that's the way one wants to go you want to when he said that there is a carnival at Emfuleni people to be flocking here without you know you like we normally see to help instead of relationship so I can say that we try to send the media statement to this people to do whatever but what do you do with them I don't know I don't think the response I don't like it so the media relations at times is constant there so much in a room for improvement.

**Participant five:** It's not mutual. Our relationship with media at many times having analyse it, having worked with them the first thing that informs especially on the other side is what's in it for me, why should I even at times you will find a basic issue of sharing with the ordinary citizens, you will be expected to pop out money to get that slot in the media platform either newspaper or radio and in that particular sense it doesn't serve a purpose of why we are having community media. Community media is all about advancing the local interest of people and a common things that at times gets missing we a municipality or local media both printing and electronic we share an audience, to the Emfuleni residence are their audience to us they are a population that is expecting a service. At all times we are expected to convey messages to this population of Emfuleni through this media platforms over and above our own statutory processes such as your public participation or during the normal council sittings or Imbizo's over and above that we need to find the space to interact to convey our message. In a communication environment you always have two parties, you have the messages that have to transmitted and have somebody who receives the message and gives feedback, it's just unfortunate at times the kind of feedback you will get its based on emotions, it's based on one side of the story the only time when you must give your side of the story you must me pay in a form of buying an editorial space, in a form of buying a show. We don't say we want to own them, we are saying let's find a way, a common way of executing our responsibilities in a conciliatory way.

**Participant six:** I think the national media sees us as some form of rural municipality. We have that tag that we are a rural part of Gauteng that how national media sees us, that's why you would find not much being covered in terms of national media because it far from where everything happened. Media should be writing about developmental projects but we have less of those. Our relationship with national media is just a cold neglected kind of a relationship unless we are doing advertising with them. With the local media, with print media locally we don't have quality writing, quality newspaper, and quality reporting I would say if it's according to me I would advise to close shop and forget. We have adversely relationship with them primarily because very few of these guys are actually journalist by profession. They see newspaper as one way of getting money. Some

newspapers came and died. Some newspapers Media 24 and Vaal Ster I think in their true nature and their own formation they really keep us on toes and challenging us on some issues. It's a positive and negative relationship for me. With the electronic media we have one problematic radio, your Thetha FM I think it's very problematic in every respect. I think they do not adhere to any code or piece of legislation it depends on a presenter on a particular day. We have other radio stations that support us. We have established a relationship with Lekoa FM on Saturdays where we take different departments to talk about issues they are supposed to be talking about.

**Participant seven:** I think at times people within departments who fight for power, there's those internal fights and at times it compromises whatever the department's wants/objectives of the department. I've had my share with the department of communication because when it comes to issues of media I happen to be very passionate about it because without them they compromise the things we want to do so I think there's a lot that needs improve and done and also people who experts in that need to understand that other people are also experts in what they are doing they should come to us and listen to our ideas, what we think of a specific project allow us speak it out. I know that they will say the person who speaks for the institution is someone from the Mayor's office or communications.

**Participant eight:** On a face value I would say there are good relations between ourselves and the media but depending and I communication are the ones dealing with this aspect but we do have a very good relationship with the media because I know for sure that there are other things that could have been known in the public but they couldn't because of the relationship with the media. We do papers, TV, Radio station and the platforms that they give us. We also have billboards. Our media relations is good although its applications sometime is subjective to particular people.

**Participant nine:** I think recently as fire and rescue before we go to the radio, the arrangement is made by communications department. We cannot go without them. We cannot give information without them. We cannot communicate with the media direct. We must have one voice from one house.



**Participant ten:** I find the media relations with Emfuleni is very good with other radio station around and newspaper because every time we do something we know where to get because the relationship between us is very good and very real if I can say we don't struggle to get interviews even if we need urgent help from them we know we can get it the relationship between us is very good.

#### **QUESTION 9: WHAT ARE YOUR CHALLENGES WHEN DEALING WITH THE MEDIA?**

**Participant one:** Challenges when dealing with the media as communication enquiries will come in, the enquiry will be waste related obviously for us to answer that we will need information from the waste manager and you know media are people who work on a time frame. Media person will tell you that if he doesn't have the response they will publish what they have so it becomes difficult for us as communications because we rely on sources to give us information and we sit down to see how we work it out so most of the problems is that normally we struggle to get information on time and the media will write whatever they have. There are still some people who still don't understand especially our political head when dealing with the media with some political heads they are able to say when they receive an enquiry because the media will call them directly that relevant political head will tell them to contact the relevant communication person but some will put the reputation of the municipality at stake.

**Participant two:** I know of a few journalist within Vaal, people that are hungry for stories that matter, we are sitting with a lot of journalist within Vaal that become journalists when it comes to things that are going to benefit them personally. People only engage on issues like we have one in Lekoa FM, guy will only talk about issues because they are affecting him directly he'll only take issues of no water in Tshepiso because he has a relative there who's been complaining that he has no water for some time, he will talk about issues of sewerage spillages in Waldrift because he has a relative or he is staying there and then we have another set of journalist that only come alive when there are gala dinners like your

Vaal River Carnivals, Jazz they accreditations, free access and VIP and then they get there they have fun and not covering the events.

**Participant three:** As I have mentioned that challenge comes where there are fees involved then we struggle because trust issues but there is a change in that but is a slow change.

**Participant four:** Non-attendance, especially to non-response if you put it that way. It's almost as if you know you have a whole database of all these people within your archives you send them stuff but there still no response and somehow you don't know how to deal with that you know you. That's the main challenge.

**Participant five:** The challenges when dealing with media especially local media is that there is lack of professionalism. There's too much reliance on perceptions, they don't go out and do research, and they don't take an extra effort or go an extra mile to go authenticate the information they are having at their disposal. At times we are not given a space to reply, if you are writing about me you must afford me an opportunity to give the side of my story so that you balance the story. The issue of lack of professionalism, lack of integrity, vulgar language. Here locally is the order of the day, the recent incident that happened on Thetha FM. If it were to be according to my way I would say VUT as an institution why don't you give a section to train or deal with media issues. Basic things it's also about reputation.

**Participant six:** Challenges are internal because our communications department does not like when we communicate personally with this people but when we leave it to them, they expect them to pay and normally they don't present what we want to present. They don't capture what we want and will not invite the media. It dents our programme and it ends up saying to the community we are not doing anything because it's not well captured and not well advertised.

**Participant seven:** I haven't had any challenges but know the institutions has many gaps that the media is waiting to interrogate. Media in general the way it's perceived it becomes

a threat to our politicians and it affects our work because some of the work we cannot take it to the media.

**Participant eight:** We normally don't deal with the media but communications like I told you we are political office so it means the face of the political office if the Mayor's office, there no understanding between the office of the Mayor and communications. This one will say this and the other says that. The media gets confuse with both the Mayor's office and communication department. For political reasons I have notice that the Mayor's office is not willing to incorporate communications so that they can engage because of political differences.

**Participant nine:** The media will always report on an angle that they want. Whether you give them the basic core truth they may not report it as it is.

**Participant ten:** The challenges with the media are that the media write whatever they want they don't want to get the right information. They just want to see their story be published. The right person who has experience with the media is our spokesperson, they have the same level of understanding of how to report. If I can report I would put the reputation of Emfuleni in jeopardy.

#### **QUESTION 10: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CURRENT ELM BRAND AND BRANDING EFFORT?**

**Participant one:** The current Emfuleni brand is a brand that it is well known to its users, internal and external stakeholders. They are aware of the brand and me as the branding custodian I always ensure that we visible and known even this morning before I came in I tried to ensure that within our roots we visible but in terms of the internal stakeholder understanding our brand is difficult. We came up a corporate identity manual, manual that enforces compliance and understanding to the employees that this is our brand and you need to understand it in this way. As a branding custodian you need to know your colour

codes, if they are not sure they must ask from the branding office because I'm the one who understand everything regarding branding.

**Participant two:** Emfuleni Local Municipality as a brand is based on we've everything discussed the brand is in dire straits we are in a very bad position like I said it becomes difficult for one to say I'm waiting for Emfuleni all of us in this institution have name tags you never see anyone wearing them only when in office soon as you walk out not safe to walk around with any Emfuleni emblem on your chest because people are just not happy with what Emfuleni represents almost everything we do we get a serious backlash from the very people we serve so branding wise we are at the lowest and the effort of branding or rebranding Emfuleni goes back to the issues we spoke about earlier of reputation the only time Emfuleni is going to sit well with all stakeholders is when we start doing things the way we should be doing them but then again I won't blame the institution for failing entirely as a brand failure in Emfuleni basically it's all about the lack of funding how do you source funding yourself. We have grants from national government obviously but does a enough for certain things but I think it's about time we had people who represent the brand for what it is within Emfuleni it's about time we had people who go out there and tell the Emfuleni public people that are serviced by Emfuleni to say to them start paying for services you know that's the main problem with Emfuleni we can't afford to put a tar road in Tshepiso even though it's one of the oldest townships we can't afford to put it up there we can afford to have a star trucks to collect waste because we take all the money we buy the water at Rand Water to just people basic human rights what is a basic human right so now between by water and collecting waste obviously if I had to make a choice between the two I would choose water it's about time Emfuleni gets people who represents Emfuleni and would we brand Emfuleni because for now I feel like everybody expects miracles out of this institution and we are seen as failure when the public is failing itself if you are not paying for the water you're getting are failing then you are failing yourself if you are not paying for waste that is collected weekly you are failing yourself in that way things that we are being measured with it like you guys are not doing 1 2 3 4 for us we're not doing 123 because you are not doing what you should be doing that's paying for whatever I was service you are getting so now the effort of rebranding Emfuleni will only take shape as

soon as we have leaders and managers that really want to engage on what is the key problem in this area that is payment for services as long as nobody's going to talk to that nothing is going to happen to this institution. We are still going to be judge for not doing things that need money to be done with no money.

**Participant three:** We experiencing problems with branding currently with ELM where by the cars or T-shirts are branded incorrectly as well as the buildings, so last year there was a project to de-brand all municipal buildings and its continuing this year. When the banding process begins people would bring the stuff to communication for final go ahead before branding, but they don't bring them. So we have to explain to people on how they should print the brand.

**Participant four:** ELM brand we are well positioned. I think that it is important for that because we serve Emfuleni jurisdiction I don't think that you go round and nobody people don't know who Emfuleni local municipality is. People know who we are they may not be happy with some of the things. We try to be very visible in all the areas that is why we will print the notes in our events wherever the municipality is it right to make sure that we are the people do in notice.

**Participant five:** Positive, negative, mild and neutral. It's just in between to be honest with you, in a sense that an ordinary person at times when he or she is confronted with a particular situation he or she may not know where to go between Sedibeng and Emfuleni no matter how hard you try to elevate or raise your brand so that people get to know who is who and who is doing what. It's a complicated situation but then the only way of rectifying it is keep on making massive drives outreach programmes to try to understand. I cannot say it's completely negative or completely positive it depends. It's forever in a movement. Again at times it becomes issues of red tape that's one typical example.

**Participant six:** I've spoken about the branding. For me the brand itself is just bad, its bad from its own conceptualization because nobody knows what it stands for, where does it originate. It's badly positioned. The brand it's very problematic in every respect. As to why

the colours people don't know why. To manage it is one of its own kind. The function resides with us but everybody does manage a brand. We need to manage the brand.

**Participant seven:** Communications is responsible because they know their strategies that they have to market Emfuleni.

**Participant eight:** Like I told you branding some of the thing we are dealing with here are subjective you will find that you brand the municipality very well only when you know that there are elections so me and you know the next elections for local will be in 2020 and the next one will be in 2019 which doesn't really have much to do with local government but of course we have to do some work to mobilise our communities. I'm responsible for council work myself which means all council sitting that sit I'm the one responsible for everything, sometimes I must call communications and tell them come and brand.

**Participant nine:** I think now they are working very hard. Their branding is very attractive and you see Emfuleni and it explains that we are next to the river and tourism. It explains that Emfuleni is a river bank. Whatever they are doing even the colours explains itself.

**Participant ten:** Emfuleni as a brand is okay and the branding effort I can say its 60% because in every event do bring branding you know that but I think they should improve on that there's room for improvement on that the effort is recognised but they can still improve on that because they still using banners all that but I think they can do more because when you do an event they just bring two banners one on the stage and one outside so I think they need to improvement on that maybe there are new ways that they can and that can be introduced to them.