A Stakeholders' Perspective of Reputation Dimensions in Selective Service Organisations

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Thesis accepted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Sciences at the North-West University

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Graduation: May 2021

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, original work. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Science, at the North West University, South Africa. This work has not been previously submitted in parts, or in its entirety for a degree at another university.

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October 3, 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincere gratitude to my promoter, Prof. Mpho Chaka, who despite his busy academic and administrative duties accepted to supervise me. I am particularly grateful for his patience with me at the beginning of my PhD journey. Coming from a purely practical background, this thesis was my first major research work. His guidance, push and advice helped crystallise my idea, and made this research an excellent one.

I also thank my co-promoter, Dr Tsietsi Mmutle, for his support and valuable contributions to the completion of this research. Thank you for your enthusiasm and willingness to share your knowledge.

My utmost gratitude goes to my father, Prof. Olarotimi Matthew Ajayi, for believing in me and encouraging me to begin my PhD journey. Thank you for your presence and for being heavily invested in every step of this research. Words are not enough to appreciate how much your advices, encouragement, sacrifices, and push mean to me. I am forever indebted to you.

To my colleagues and friends who contributed to the successful completion of this research, I say thank you. I particularly thank Dr Abdulgaffar Arikewuyo for his valuable support in the analysis and interpretation of my quantitative data and result.

I also extend my gratitude to all those who participated in this research, especially the corporate communication executives. Thank you for making time for me despite your busy schedule.

This acknowledgment will not be complete without thanking the North West University and the Faculty of Humanities for the financial assistance. Thank you for reducing the financial burden of getting my PhD degree.

ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that a favourable corporate reputation is very beneficial, especially in terms of giving an organisation a competitive advantage and ensuring its profitability and sustainability. Several empirical studies have explored its significance in different kinds of organisations (products and services), as well as the factors that favourably contribute to the reputation of these organisations. It is evident from these studies that although corporate reputation is a must-have for every organisation, it is more significant in some organisations than others. In fact, it is well-established that corporate reputation is more significant for service organisations due to the intangible nature of services – a situation whereby stakeholders cannot feel, touch or see services prior to patronage thereby making corporate reputation the biggest indicator of the organisation's competence to deliver high-quality service. However, despite the huge impact of reputation on service organisations, the factors that make these organisations reputable, otherwise called the dimensions of corporate reputation, remain under-researched. Adding to this problem, previous studies on the dimensions of corporate reputation have excluded developing countries like Nigeria. Hence, no documentation exists on what constitutes the reputation dimensions of any organisation operating within the Nigerian business context.

The primary objective of this study was to address this gap in the literature by identifying the precise dimensions of reputation for service organisations from the perspective of four primary stakeholder groups, namely: customers, employees, regulators, and corporate communication executives. Two large service organisations operating within the Nigerian context, a bank and a mobile service provider, were selected as the focus in this study. The secondary objectives were to determine whether the same reputation dimensions apply to service organisations in general, or whether they differ according to the type of service organisation; as well as to identify and understand the impacts of a favourable reputation on each stakeholder of the selected organisations.

The study followed a pragmatic paradigm, involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. In other words, the mixed method approach was used to address the research problem and questions. The research design followed the exploratory sequential mixed method in which information derived from the qualitative enquiry informed the quantitative enquiry. An extensive literature review was first conducted to explore the few studies that have investigated the

reputations dimensions for service organisations. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were then conducted with selected stakeholders of both organisations and this further facilitated an understanding and identification of reputation dimensions unique to the study context. Thereafter, a questionnaire was developed based on the dimensions identified from the interviews and literature. The questionnaire was pre-tested, and the refined questionnaire was re-administered to a larger population. The questionnaire enabled the researcher to streamline and purify the reputation dimensions, and obtain results that did not only emanate from the researcher's interpretation of interviewees' responses, but results that were backed by a rigorous, objective scientific process and analysis.

Key findings in this study include the identification of six reputation dimensions and 16 items describing the dimensions. These dimensions are *Issue management, Service quality, Corporate communication, Branding, Social responsibility* and *Trustworthiness*. Also, it emerged from this study that there is minimal variance in the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank, and stakeholders of a mobile service provider. Where the difference lies is in the order of relevance of the dimensions in each organisation. Likewise, prestige and confidence, increased employee motivation, productivity and retention, higher customer patronage, reduced organisational scrutiny, and favourable brand supporting behaviours such as positive word of mouth and referrals, were identified as the major impacts of a favourable reputation in service organisations.

The study contributes to theory by the identification of precise and reliable reputation dimensions for service organisations from the perspective of key stakeholders in a developing country context (Nigeria). It represents the first major investigation into reputation dimensions in the aforementioned country context. More so, the study makes significant scholarly contribution towards the development of a unique and valid instrument for measuring the reputation of service organisations where the impact of reputation is most significant.

This study also contributes to practice as it provides service organisations and managers with precise dimensions that allows them to be cognisant of core areas to focus on in their reputation building programmes. The outcome of this study could thus serve as a strategic framework for achieving a favourable reputation that ensures the organisations' continuous relevance and profitability.

KEYWORDS

Corporate reputation

Service organisations

Measurement instrument

Stakeholders

Reputation score

Service quality

Issue management

Media relations

Corporate communication

Social responsibility

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

“A good reputation acts like a magnet: It attracts us to those who have it”

- Fombrun and Van Riel

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The increased competition in today’s business environment has necessitated the proactive identification of the drivers of sustainable competitive advantage. These drivers are not limited to tangible assets alone, but also include the intangibles such as corporate reputation. Corporate reputation is the overall evaluation of an organisation based on its ability to meet all its stakeholders’ expectations (an extensive review of definitions is presented in the literature review chapter). The significance of corporate reputation has increased over the years. Media rankings such as ‘The Most Admired Companies list’, and ‘The 50 Most Reputable Companies’, that are regularly published by the Reputation Institute, Fortune Magazine, and several other magazines, have also increased the focus on corporate reputation. These lists indicate the best or worst organisations, and are derived from surveys with stakeholders based on the organisations’ performance in meeting various expectations or standards. As a result, reputation has become the biggest indicator of an organisation’s competence and this is evident in how organisations are increasingly investing in their employee engagement, stakeholder relations, public relations activities, and corporate communications as part of the efforts to boost their reputation.

There is no doubt that a favourable reputation is the most significant intangible asset of any organisation (Dowling, 2016, Flynn, 2006). It is even more significant for service organisations due to the intangible nature of service (Balan & Schiopoiu, 2017:598; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012:22) - a situation whereby stakeholders cannot feel, touch or see services prior to patronage. Unlike product-based organisations, where stakeholders can physically see or feel the product before making a purchase decision, services are not physical. So, stakeholders have to rely on the corporate reputation in terms of the organisation’s ranking and positive reviews as an indication of its ability to deliver high-quality service and meet their expectations.

The realisation that stakeholders are more attracted to organisations with a strong reputation has therefore made corporate reputation a relevant research area, as well as a “must-have” for any organisation that desires to be profitable, competitive and sustainable (Hendrick, 2016:2; Yasin

& Bozbay, 2012:505; Hannington, 2011). Several studies (Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013:224; Gardberg & Fombrun, 2002; Carreras et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2010) show how a positive reputation offers a competitive advantage, encourages shareholders to invest, attracts good staff, retains customers and protects the organisation from excessive scrutiny by making the media secondary definers. On the other hand, an unfavourable reputation decreases stakeholders' confidence in the organisation, which consequently threatens the organisation's legitimacy, and leads to reduced profit (Dolphin, 2004; Moffat & Zhang, 2014).

Based on the aforementioned, knowing what makes organisations reputable, which is referred to as the dimensions of reputation, is pertinent to investigate. Simply put, the dimensions of corporate reputation are the specific and intransigent qualities or attributes an organisation must exhibit for it to earn its stakeholders' favourable evaluation. Though the attention given to corporate reputation research has increased significantly over the years, topics on the dimensions of reputation have not evolved at the same rate (Carroll, 2016:616). This study thus specifically explored the dimensions (qualities) service organisations must demonstrate for a favourable evaluation by stakeholders. The study uses a specific type of organisation (services) because each type of organisation has its own unique mandate, distinctive features, and stakeholders' expectations. Hence, the qualities that stakeholders consider paramount in a product-based organisation for instance, might not necessarily apply to a service-based organisation.

The establishment of the precise reputation dimensions for service organisations will enable the accurate measurement of corporate reputation, and Dowling and Gardberg (2012:34) emphasise the importance of measuring corporate reputation in a scientific way in order for organisations to know their 'reputation score'. A reputation score allows organisations know how they are perceived by stakeholders and also gives insight into their performance when compared to competitors. However, for corporate reputation to be measured in a scientific way, the dimensions of reputation must first be established which is the focus of this study. After this, the dimensions are then refined through testing and re-testing before they can be referred to as a reputation measuring instrument.

Over time, some instruments for measuring corporate reputation have been developed (an extensive review of these instruments is provided in chapter 4). The most popular ones include the Fortune's Most Admired Company (FMAC) List, the Reputation Quotient (RQ), RepTrak, Corporate Personality Scale, and the Stakeholder Performance Indicator and Relationship Improvement Tool (SPIRIT). While some of these instruments are often used (e.g. the RQ and RepTrak), they have been criticised for: (1) measuring reputation from a single stakeholder perspective, e.g. the RQ (Wartick, 2002:384) (2) Focusing only on an organisation's financial qualities, e.g. the FMAC (Feldman, Bahamonde & Bellido, 2014:59), and (3) their inability to provide ways to assess how an organisation can develop its reputation (Money & Hillenbrand, 2006). Also, some studies found that the dimensions in these existing instruments do not have cross-cultural validity which would allow for international comparability (Feldman et al., 2014:59), and they are also not industry specific (Dowling & Gardberg, 2012; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012:22; Kanto et al., 2015:410; Chun, 2005:99). That is, they were developed for all types of organisations (both product and services-based, such as manufacturing, aviation, telecommunication, and non-profit organisations).

The gaps in these instruments can lead to inaccurate measurements of corporate reputation because various stakeholders have different expectations, and would assess an organisation differently. For example, the 2013 South Africa RepTrak survey indicated "Products/Services and Innovation" as the most important dimensions of reputation, whereas the Global Survey indicated "Citizenship, Workplace and Governance" as the important dimensions (Global RepTrak, 2013; South Africa RepTrak Pulse, 2013). This shows that the dimensions of corporate reputation vary based on various factors like the type of industry, ownership type, country, or expectations of corporate social responsibility (Balmer & Greyser, 2006:735; Rindova & Martin, 2012:21). This study therefore argues that corporate reputation dimensions vary according to the industry type and country, and as such, reputation should be measured based on the dimensions identified in the industry and country in which the companies operate. Doing so may limit generalisability, but it will improve validity (Feldman et al., 2014:59). Against this background, this study investigated what constitutes reputation in service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study concerns the identification of the dimensions that make service organisations reputable. The study investigates these dimensions from the perspective of four relevant and primary stakeholder groups (employees, customers, regulatory authorities and corporate communication office staff) using two service organisations (a bank and a mobile service provider). The selected stakeholder groups for the study are crucial to the concept of corporate reputation, as their expectations and experiences have the most influence on how the organisations are perceived or adjudged. Also, using multiple stakeholder groups in this investigation is hinged on the study's standpoint that reputation results from the aggregate perception and evaluation of all stakeholders; hence, investigating corporate reputation dimensions from the perspective of only one stakeholder group is inadequate.

The service industry was selected because the significance of corporate reputation is more prominent in this industry due to its intangibility (Balan & Schiopoiu, 2017:598; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012:22; McDonald, de Chernatony, & Harris, 2001:345), and because it cut across multiple stakeholder groups. The two service organisations chosen for this study are a bank and a mobile service provider. The different organisations enabled the researcher to determine whether the same reputation dimensions are applicable to service organisations in general, or whether they also differ according to the type of service organisation.

The study context was also motivated by the increasing number of Nigerian service firms that are suffering the consequences of unfavourable reputation, with some collapsing. For instance, two mobile service providers, GLO and 9mobile lost millions of its subscribers "because people were not getting value for their subscriptions… and stakeholders had continuously expressed their displeasure in the organisation" (Nairametrics, 2018). Also, in 2018, "Access bank" acquired "Diamond bank" because the latter could no longer exist independently as it had lost all its stakeholders' confidence as a result of "bad leadership, poor risk management, the board's lack of independence, and the high volume of turnovers within the board. Diamond Bank went from making profits of N28.5 billion in 2013 to making losses of around N9 billion in 2017" (Pulse, 2019; TheGuardian, 2018). This is unsurprising, as various scholars (Hendrick, 2016; Yasin & Bozbay, 2012; Carreras et al., 2013) submit that dissatisfied stakeholders will withdraw their support from the organisation.

The foregoing indicates that the unique nature of service organisations (discussed in section 1.3) does not permit them to be nonchalant in their activities because their relevance and sustainability are largely dependent on stakeholders' unwavering support and positive perception. However, despite this huge impact of reputation on service organisations, very few studies have explored what uniquely influences their reputation, and there is no formal reputation measurement instrument for them (Wang, Lo & Hui, 2003:76). More so, the few existing studies on service organisations are usually supported with evidence from developed countries, so generalising the findings from developed countries to developing countries may be inaccurate and problematic (Soleimani, Schneper & Newburry, 2014:1004; Lange et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2003). This underscores the assertion of Feldman et al. (2014:59), that the dimensions contained in existing instruments lack international comparability. In the same vein, the result of the South Africa RepTrak survey, and the Global RepTrak survey discussed earlier (section 1.1), in which the reputation dimensions differed according to the context surveyed, further validates these assertions of Wang et al. (2003) and Feldman et al. (2014).

The dearth of precise reputation dimensions, especially for service organisations like banks, is surprising because the extent to which a bank's reputation determines stakeholders' patronage behaviours cannot be understated (Wang et al., 2003:76). This thus drives the need to investigate the dimensions that uniquely reflect what corporate reputation entails in service organisations in order to have a more precise measure of reputation for these organisations.

Note: the service organisations sampled in this study are referred to as 'the bank' and 'the mobile service provider' for ethical and confidential reasons.

1.3 THE NATURE OF THE SERVICE INDUSTRY

The service industry has become one of the fastest growing sectors in most countries and recognised as one of the key drivers for global economy development (Deloitte, 2018; Wing, Yee & Yee, 2007:2; Slade et al., 2000:1197). The service industry has created a wealth of jobs, and in Nigeria alone, over fifty-seven percent (57.4%) of the working population are employed in the service sector (Pulse, 2018). Likewise, in the United Kingdom, about eighty-three percent of the working population are employed in service organisations, while in the United States, it is eighty percent (Statistica, 2017). Not only that, the increase in GDP contribution has been more prominent in the service industries of developing countries, with a 9% increase from 48% in 1997 to 57% in 2015 (Deloitte, 2018), whereas, developed countries recorded an increase of only five percent (69% in 1997 to 74% in 2015). This indicates that the service industry in developing countries is growing at a more significant rate, and the industry alone accounts for more than half of the GDP. Hence, more than ever, utmost priority must be given to investigations aimed at contributing to the betterment of the service industry, particularly in developing countries, as in this study.

The critical role of the service industry in these various countries not only emphasises its importance, but also establishes why it is pertinent for these organisations to know and understand stakeholders' expectation. The organisations' ability or inability to meet these expectations will positively or negatively impact their reputation, and the consequences of an unfavourable reputation are costly (see section 1.2). More so, because the service industry is dominantly characterised by its intangibility, corporate reputation has become the key indicator for stakeholders' decisions about which organisation can effectively provide their desired service. Product-based organisations have an advantage because stakeholders can see the product before purchase and can base their patronage decision on the product benefit, whereas services are not physical. They cannot be examined, touched, exhibited, transported, or packaged before patronage, and the implication of this is that stakeholders have to rely on the corporate reputation when making a patronage decision.

Services are further characterised by their perishability, inseparability, simultaneity and heterogeneity (Brochado, 2009:175; Dimitriades, 2006:784; Zeithaml et al., 2009). *Perishability* implies that services cannot be preserved or returned. When a service is rendered, the consumer cannot save it because the service is experienced on the spot. *Inseparability* implies that the service consumer cannot be separated from the service provider, thus, contact is an unavoidable aspect of service provision and experience. *Simultaneity* describes the fact that 'stakeholders may be present while the services are being produced and may even take part in the production process as co-producers or co-creators' (Zeithaml et al., 2009). *Heterogeneity* then explains the fact that each service delivery is unique and stakeholders may record a different service experience and satisfaction for each patronage even if the service is rendered by the same employee (Zeithaml et al., 2009).

The preceding discussion thus indicates that providing services that meet stakeholders' standards involve a high degree of efficiency in both operations and management (Zeithaml et al., 2009). Albeit the distinctiveness of organisations in this industry, little is known about the precise dimensions that make them reputable especially in the context of developing countries like

Nigeria. This investigation is therefore of vital importance as it seeks to identify the precise dimensions that influence stakeholders' positive perceptions and assessments of service organisations in a developing country context in order to build and sustain the corporate reputation.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In a modern service organisation, intangibles such as corporate reputation, ensure its relevance and sustainability. Yet, there are no unique dimensions for measuring the reputation of these organisations where the impact of reputation is more significant because of the intangible nature of services. Adding to this problem, the majority of studies on the dimensions of corporate reputation exclude developing countries like Nigeria. As a result, limited documentation exists on what constitutes the dimensions of reputation of any organisation operating within the Nigerian business context; neither has any of the existing measurement instruments been used or tested within the same context. It is thus problematic to generalise the reputation dimensions derived from developed countries to a developing country like Nigeria, particularly because the existing instruments lack cross-cultural validity which would allow for international comparability (discussed in section 1.1 and 1.2).

It is equally risky to assume that the dimensions contained in the instruments reflect what stakeholders of service organisations consider. This is based on the identified gaps in the existing instruments (see section 1.1), such as the fact that the instruments were developed for many kinds of organisations. This makes it imperative to investigate what constitute the reputation dimensions of service organisations in the Nigerian business context as it would facilitate the process of having a more precise measure of corporate reputation, and contribute to the academic research on the reputation dimensions that are unique to each context (that is, type of organisation and country). Against this background, this study seeks to investigate *what should constitute the dimensions of reputation for service organisations in Nigeria?*

1.5 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study is to provide the dimensions of reputation in service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context in order to have a more precise measure of corporate reputation.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question of the study is:

- What are the dimensions considered by stakeholders of the selected service organisations when evaluating corporate reputation?

Secondary questions are:

- What are the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a mobile service provider?
- What are the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank?
- What is the influence of corporate reputation on stakeholders of service organisations?

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary research objective is:

- To identify the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of the selected service organisations.

Secondary objectives are:

- To establish the dimensions of corporate reputation considered by stakeholders of a mobile service provider.
- To establish the dimensions of corporate reputation considered by stakeholders of a bank.
- To explore the influence of corporate reputation on stakeholders of the selected service organisations.

1.8 CONTENDING PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS CORPORATE REPUTATION

There are several perspectives towards corporate reputation, both in terms of its definition and its dimensions; so much so that having a universal definition or measurement instrument for the concept is almost impossible. This is mainly attributed to the fact that corporate reputation draws attention from different academic disciplines. It is also attributed to the fact that there are several kinds of organisations in the business environment with different mandates and offerings. Hence, the factors that makes one organisation successful (that is, reputable) might not apply to another.

The opposing views held by different researchers towards corporate reputation is endless. For example, Rindova and Martins (2012:21) assert that corporate reputation is the aggregate perception of all stakeholders that "go beyond the set of actions that economic theory qualifies as valid signals and include more subjective and emotional evaluations of the firm." On the contrary, Balan and Schiopoiu (2017:595) assert that corporate reputation entails a specific stakeholder's perception based on subjective factors that determines the organisation's performance against its competitors. In other words, one researcher sees reputation as the sum of all stakeholders' perception while the other sees it as a single stakeholder's perception.

These varying perspectives is also evident in empirical studies that explored corporate reputation dimensions. Balan and Şchiopoiu's (2017:598) study found that the reputation of service organisations is simply influenced by its *customer-oriented strategy* in terms of its ability to use emotional and behavioural means to attract and satisfy customers, whereas Highhouse et al. (2009:1489) posit that corporate reputation consists of two dimensions namely "*respectability* (that is, having honour and integrity) and *impressiveness* (being prominent and having prestige)". Also, Mattera and Baena's (2015:234) study across different sectors identified implementing "*socially relevant innovative projects*" as the reputation dimension in Spanish business settings. Likewise, Melo and Branco (2012:11) and Branco and Rodrigues (2006:111) both found *corporate social responsibility* to be the reputation dimension in their studies. The outcome of the various studies reiterates that there are various dimensions that make organisations reputable and these dimensions are unique, and will differ according to the context within which the investigation is conducted.

Despite the dearth of comparative studies on the reputation dimensions across countries, a few studies exist that provides evidence of these differences and variations. Despite the cultural similarities in the three Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, and Denmark), the importance of each reputation dimension contained in the reputation quotient instrument varied among the countries (see Aperia et al., 2004). Also, Soleimani, Schneper and Newburry (2014:1004), in their cross-country study, found that the national beliefs about the role of the firm in society determine what constitutes the dimensions of corporate reputation. They point out that though the reputation dimensions will vary according to context, the common denominator is that the dimensions are determined by the expectations and interests of the relevant and powerful stakeholders of each organisation.

The aforementioned suggests that national, cultural and legal factors influence the dimensions of corporate reputation, and this reiterates the significance of this study as it becomes imperative that reputation dimensions be investigated in the context (both industry and country) within which the organisation is situated. The aforementioned also establishes the need to investigate corporate reputation as a unique and multidimensional concept (Lange et al., 2011:153) just as this study specifically investigated reputation dimensions in a service setting from the perspective of four stakeholder groups.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The unique nature of service organisations – a situation whereby there is no tangible product to influence stakeholders' patronage decisions – has put these organisations under pressure to favourably position themselves before their stakeholders. Following the definitions and perspectives to corporate reputation (extensively discussed in section 3.2), it is established that stakeholders are the sole determinant of reputation. Thus, identifying the factors that influence their evaluation is the first step for organisations to achieve a strong reputation. This evaluation involves nothing other than the dimensions of corporate reputation, and this was the focus of the study.

This study has theoretical and practical implications for corporate reputation, especially as it pertains to the service industry. To the body of knowledge, this study makes scholarly contribution by exploring the dimensions of reputation in new contexts, firstly for service organisations and secondly in Nigeria, from the perspective of key stakeholders. By so doing, it develops a framework of what precisely constitutes the dimensions of reputation of service organisations within the Nigerian business context. The outcome of this study reduces the dearth of studies on reputation dimensions in the aforementioned contexts. The establishment of the framework achieved through a robust mixed method approach (the exploratory qualitative approach to identify the dimensions, and the quantitative method to streamline the dimensions), could be the foundation to having a reputation measurement instrument for service organisations.

The study will also change the status quo, as studies on the dimensions and measurement of reputation exclude developing countries like Nigeria, and other reputation studies conducted within the Nigerian business context only emphasise how corporate reputation is now a major asset and a factor that influences stakeholders' patronage decision (Gorondutse et al., 2014:72; Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013:223; Iddrissu, 2013).

On the other hand, this study has practical implications as it provides service organisations and managers with unique dimensions that will enable them to be cognisant of core areas to focus on in their reputation building programmes. By implementing the dimensions, organisational activities will align with stakeholders' expectations which would influence positive stakeholder perceptions, and ultimately lead to a favourable corporate reputation. A favourable reputation is known to benefit organisations in several ways, such as giving a competitive advantage over competitors, and creating tough entry barriers for potential competitors. It also leads to increased stakeholders' trust, positive stakeholders' advocacy, and increased patronage and loyalty. Simply put, favourable corporate reputation ultimately ensures the organisation's profitability and sustenance.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The Mixed Method Approach (MMA) is most suitable for research questions that entail real-life contextual understanding of different respondents' perspectives and cultural factors that influence a concept, as well as quantitative methods to assess the extent/degree and frequency of constructs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), which is the case in this study. In other words, MMA uses multiple methods (e.g. semi-structured interviews and questionnaires), and 'intentionally integrates or combines these methods to draw on the strengths of each, and frames the investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:5).

Given stakeholders' varying interests and expectations (dimensions) of what makes service organisations attractive (reputable), the Mixed Method Approach (qualitative and quantitative approach) was deemed fit for data collection in this study. It enabled the researcher to adequately explore varying stakeholder expectations, and have a precise and unbiased outcome that could be generalised. More so, since the study used four stakeholder groups as its sample population, it was imperative for the researcher to have a thorough understanding of the reputation dimensions considered by each group, and using the MMA made this achievable.

The research design followed the *Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Design* (ESMMD) identified by Creswell (2014:14). The ESMMD entails that the Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis (QUAL) will inform the Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis (QUAN). This design was appropriate because of the exploratory nature of the study, as it enabled the researcher to first investigate and have a detailed understanding of what makes service organisations attractive to various stakeholders through the semi-structured interviews. The dimensions derived from the interviews then informed the quantitative inquiry that used questionnaires as the instrument for data collection. Responses from the questionnaire helped streamline the dimensions to those that are most relevant for service organisations, and also helped in determining the dimensions that are most relevant to each stakeholder group.

Secondary data was also employed for the study. In the course of the in-depth review of literature, reputation dimensions, especially those that emerged from the perspective of key stakeholders of service organisations, were identified and noted. These identified dimensions were included in the questionnaires administered to respondents.

1.10.1 Study Population and Sampling Technique

Based on the context within which this study is situated, two service organisations in Nigeria – a bank and a mobile service provider – were selected because these two organisations are prominent, they have a huge stakeholder base, and data can be obtained easily from their stakeholders.

The specific stakeholders that were sampled were employees, customers, corporate communication office staff and regulatory bodies. The four stakeholder groups represent the relevant stakeholders of any service organisation. The stakeholder groups form the population for both the semi-structured interviews and questionnaire.

Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to select stakeholders for the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This technique was appropriate for the study, as Creswell (2014) emphasises the importance of selecting respondents who will provide rich and detailed responses to questions. Interviewees were thus handpicked based on their knowledge about corporate reputation and its dimensions, their experience, as well as their affiliation with or position in the organisation so as to provide in-depth and interesting answers to questions.

On the other hand, respondents for the quantitative study (questionnaire) were selected using stratified random sampling, since the study set out to investigate the dimensions of reputation from four specific stakeholder groups. Since the stakeholder groups were already identified by the researcher, this sampling technique ensured that the questionnaires were filled by only the selected stakeholder groups, while giving each stratum (or group) an equal chance of being selected, and by so doing, eliminated bias.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

As the focus of this study is the identification of the reputation dimensions for service organisations from the perspective of four primary stakeholder groups, the key terms used in this study are defined below:

1.11.1 Stakeholders

Stakeholders are groups of people an organisation depends on to survive. They are groups of people whose activities can affect the organisation and/or can be affected by the organisation's activities (Kok, Pay & Balaji, 2015; Freeman, 2010). In the context of this study, stakeholders include customers, employees, regulatory authorities, local communities, suppliers.

1.11.2 Service Organisations (Service Industry)

Service organisations refers to organisations whose revenue stems from providing intangibles (services) in terms of convenience, comfort, timeliness, and entertainment. Examples include financial institutions, hospitality, telecommunication companies, aviation, and delivery companies (Spacey, 2018).

1.11.3 Reputation Measurement Instrument

This study defines a reputation measurement instrument as an instrument consisting of various dimensions/attributes, derived from a rigorous scientific process and ethical standards, and is used to measure an organisation's performance, or to predict steps/activities an organisation can implement to boost its reputation.

1.11.4 Reputation Score

A reputation score allows organisations to know stakeholders' assessment of the organisation, and gives insight into their performance when compared to competitors (Dowling & Gardberg, 2012). It is the outcome of stakeholders' evaluation of an organisation based on various factors.

1.12 Thesis Structure

Chapter One introduces the research context and provides a background to the study. It also includes; the statement of the problem, aim, the research questions, the significance of the study, and a brief overview of the methodological framework.

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the study – the systems theory, stakeholder theory and the reflective paradigm. The position of the theories on how organisational activities influence the corporate reputation is broadly discussed and emphasis is placed on their application in a service setting.

Chapter Three offers a definition and a thorough exploration of corporate reputation from various scholars' perspectives. Thereafter, the various components of corporate reputation (otherwise called the reputation related constructs) are explored. The significance of reputation in the business environment is also discussed and the chapter ends with the benefits of corporate reputation in service organisations.

Chapter Four addresses factors that influence a favourable reputation (antecedents of corporate reputation), and the role of corporate communication in building reputation, by focusing on four key areas namely: issue management, crisis communication, media relations and employee communication. The chapter also discusses how corporate reputation can be managed by employing the physical and non-physical elements of an organisation. Thereafter, issues regarding the measurement of corporate reputation are discussed and the chapter ends with a review of existing corporate reputation measures.

Chapter Five explains the research methodology employed in addressing the research problem and questions, which includes the research paradigm, research design, sampling techniques used, study population, as well as the data sources.

Chapter Six presents a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis process

Chapter Seven presents and discusses the research findings.

Chapter Eight provides the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the nature and purpose of the study and provided readers with brief descriptions of the research processes. A background to the study, and conflicting views towards corporate reputation and its dimensions was discussed in order to allow the reader to understand why it was imperative to carry out the investigation. The research problem, aim, research questions, research objectives, and the research's contribution to knowledge and practice were also stated. Likewise, the methodology, sampling techniques, and definition of key terms were briefly explained. The chapter concluded with an outline of the thesis which provides the reader with a description of what each chapter entails.

The next chapter provides a thorough explanation on the theories that drive the study. The theories support the rationale of this study as they advocate the need for organisations to know and understand all stakeholders' expectations, as well as adopt an all-inclusive approach to stakeholder management in order to be reputable. The theories also offer frameworks organisations can adopt to favourably position themselves before stakeholders.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

"Unfortunately, reputation often rests not on your ability to do what you say, but rather on your ability to do what people expect"

-Bryant McGill

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theories employed for this study based on the study's standpoint and supported by existing literature. The study holds that all stakeholders' perceptions come together to form the corporate reputation, and by reason of this, organisations must identify their corporate reputation dimensions from these stakeholders' perspectives. The three theories employed in this study, the *Systems Theory, Stakeholder Theory,* and the *Reflective Paradigm,* support this viewpoint by advocating the need to keep all stakeholders satisfied because they determine the corporate reputation. The theories also posit techniques organisations can use to identify stakeholders' needs, as well as provide deep insight into the complex nature of organisations with many stakeholder groups whose favourable perceptions are critical for the organisations' continued success. Ultimately, the theories support the rationale of this study, which is to know and understand stakeholders' expectations that make organisations reputable as this is what ensures their profitability and relevance.

2.2 GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

The fundamental notion of the general systems theory (GST) is its focus on interactions, and that an organisation must relate with its environment to be sustainable (Cordon, 2013; Mmutle & Shonhe, 2017). Reputable organisations are thus seen as those that acknowledge that they affect and can be affected by their environment. The 'environment' includes all internal and external stakeholders of the organisation, as well as the physical local community in which the organisation operates. In other words, reputable organisations recognise that their activities impact and influence stakeholders' perceptions and behaviours, and in turn, stakeholders' perceptions and behaviours impact the organisation. Hence, the theory advocates that organisations must look outside of themselves to evaluate their areas of strengths and weaknesses (Modaff, Delvine & Butler, 2008). Doing so strengthens the organisations' ability to satisfy stakeholders, and also identify the factors that positively contribute to the corporate reputation, which is this study's focus.

GST takes a holistic view of an organisation, and the rationale behind this is that distinct parts of the organisation (such as its stakeholders, its management, its tangible and intangible resources, etc.) come together to form a complex whole (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006), which in this case is corporate reputation. Each element of the organisation must therefore be incorporated and work in unison for the organisation to be reputable. It is believed that the exclusion of any of the distinct parts that make up the organisation will negatively impact the overall perception of the corporate reputation. Simply put, for a service organisation to be reputable, the expectations, needs, desires, and behaviours of all stakeholders must be understood and considered. A service organisation that satisfies only its employees and neglects its other stakeholders will not be considered reputable, because other stakeholders, like the customers, regulators and suppliers, are left unsatisfied. This is due to two major reasons: (1) all stakeholders' opinions and perceptions come together to form the corporate reputation; and (2) though different stakeholder groups play different roles and have various expectations, they are interconnected. That is, the satisfaction of one or more stakeholder groups is linked to the satisfaction of another stakeholder group. For instance, an organisation cannot fully satisfy its regulators if it fails to satisfy its consumers, and/or employees according to the industry standard/rule.

It is therefore imperative for service organisations to consider and keep all stakeholder groups satisfied because the exclusion of any group will pose a risk to the corporate reputation. This re-echoes the position of this study, that identifying reputation dimensions from the perspective of only one stakeholder group is flawed and inadequate. The dimensions must be derived from the perspectives of relevant stakeholder groups of the organisation as intended in this study.

To further support the aforementioned position of this study, Wepener (2014) investigated the reputation dimensions of service organisations (using a bank and an airline) within the South African context from the customers' perspective and found "*Emotional appeal, Corporate* *performance, Social engagement, Good employer* and *Service points"* as the dimensions. On the other hand, Trotta and Cavallaro (2012) investigated the reputation dimensions of a bank in the Italian business context from employees' and managers' perspectives. They found the dimensions to be: "*the organisation's role* (in terms of its vision, mission, and leadership); its *responsibility in society*; *relationships with internal and external stakeholders*; its *result* (in terms of its financial performance and quality of service); and *regulatory compliance*." The different outcome of each study, even though both investigations focused on service organisations, provides evidence that indeed, each stakeholder group holds different perceptions of what makes organisations reputable. Hence, in as much as it is important to identify the reputation dimensions that are important to each stakeholder, the above-mentioned studies are limited because they focused only on one stakeholder group. For any corporate reputation dimension to pass as an accurate measure, such dimensions must be derived from the aggregate perception of all relevant stakeholders (Van der Merwe & Puth, 2014; Barnett et al., 2006).

This current study thus differs from and builds on the identified gap by investigating the reputation dimensions of service organisations from the perspective of four relevant stakeholders, namely, customers, employees, regulators and corporate communication office staff. In doing this, the study also provides the dimensions that are specific to each stakeholder group.

Furthermore, another core feature of the general system theory is that organisations are treated as an open system, and service firms are an example because there is an exchange of energy, resources, people, and information with the external environment (Mehta & Xavier, 2009:194; Mele, Pels & Polese, 2010:127). Based on this, feedback is an important feature of open systems because it serves as an avenue for organisations to know stakeholders' opinion on the quality of service(s) rendered, as well as on organisational activities (Doorley & Garcia, 2015:39; Grimsley, 2012). By analysing stakeholders' opinion based on the feedback received, organisations are able to identify the aspects that are most acceptable to stakeholders and contribute towards a favourable perception, and vice-versa. This inherently enables the organisations to align their activities with stakeholders' expectations.

The application of the GST is therefore imperative in today's complex business environment where organisations constantly have to contend with evolving stakeholders' needs in order to succeed (Mmutle & Shonhe, 2017). In line with this, Austin and Pinkleton (2015:244) point out that, according to the systems theory, activities like surveillance, interpretation, and advising management contribute to corporate success and boost reputation. *Surveillance*, also referred to as environmental scanning, is prompted by uncertainty in the complex environment, and involves assessing actual and emerging issues that might positively or negatively impact the organisation (Burton & Pearson, 2017). Juneja (2012) adds that surveillance involves identifying stakeholders' needs which is then used to develop strategies critical to the organisation's success. *Interpretation,* on the other hand, refers to the firm's ability to understand the information gathered during the environmental scanning process in order to prioritise issues and stakeholders (Austin & Pinkleton, 2015:244). The researchers describe *Advising management* as a practical strategy that can help solve the specified issue or achieve company goals.

These three activities support the aim of this study as they represent steps organisations can take to identify the dimensions that make them reputable, in order to keep stakeholders satisfied and operate successfully in their environment. Figure 2.1 below provides a breakdown of how the systems theory can be utilised for corporate reputation. The figure shows that the constant gathering of insights from the external environment (open systems approach) might assist the organisation to better structure activities in accordance with the collated data. This can favourably position the organisation when stakeholders learn how their expectations and views inform organisational activities – mostly this is what services organisations attempt through stakeholder management.

Figure 2.1: The General Systems Theory for corporate reputation

Source: Conceptualisation by the researcher

2.3. STAKEHOLDER THEORY

Freeman (2010) defines stakeholders as groups of people that have the power to determine the relevance and sustainability of an organisation. They are groups of people whose activities can affect the organisation and/or can be affected by the organisation's activities (Friedman, 2006). They include customers, employees, local communities, suppliers, distributors and shareholders, media, general public, business partners, competitors, NGOs or activists, government, and regulatory bodies.

The stakeholder theory emphasises the need for organisations to ensure maximum value and satisfaction for stakeholders because they are powerful in determining the success or failure of the business (Freeman, 2010). This theory recognises stakeholders may have other expectations besides an organisation's product or service offerings, and that these expectations differ across various stakeholder groups. Researchers (Dickinson-Delaporte, 2010:1858; Roloff, 2008:234; Palazzo & Basu, 2007) refer to these varying expectations as 'stakeholder conflict'. A typical service organisation has at least four stakeholder groups with varying expectations that must be satisfied in order to earn a favourable reputation. Thus, to achieve a strong reputation, organisations must first identify stakeholders' varied expectations (dimensions) as is the case in this study. As Steyn and De Beer (2003; 2012) point out, the role of organisations in society has advanced over the years from being mainly concerned with profit for shareholders, to a stakeholder approach, and businesses must give stakeholders as much value as possible.

Stakeholders' willingness to support the organisation increases when they are given value and are satisfied. It is believed that satisfied stakeholders will reward the organisation with positive attitudes and behaviours (Harrison, Freeman & Abreu, 2015:859; Lewis, 2001:35) such as higher ratings, positive word of mouth, increased patronage and loyalty to the organisation. Hence, this study focuses on identifying what makes up stakeholders' expectations in order for service organisations to reap the aforementioned benefits from their satisfied stakeholders.

The theory also proffers a practical way to manage various stakeholders (Harrison et al., 2015:859). Scholars recommend Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) within the stakeholder framework as an approach to effectively understanding and managing different stakeholders (Dickinson-Delaporte, 2010:1858; Caywood, 2013:94; Dissanayake, 2012:28). Kliatchko (2008:140) defined IMC as "an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs." It is simply ensuring all forms of communication and promotional tools such as adverts, public relations, and marketing work together in harmony.

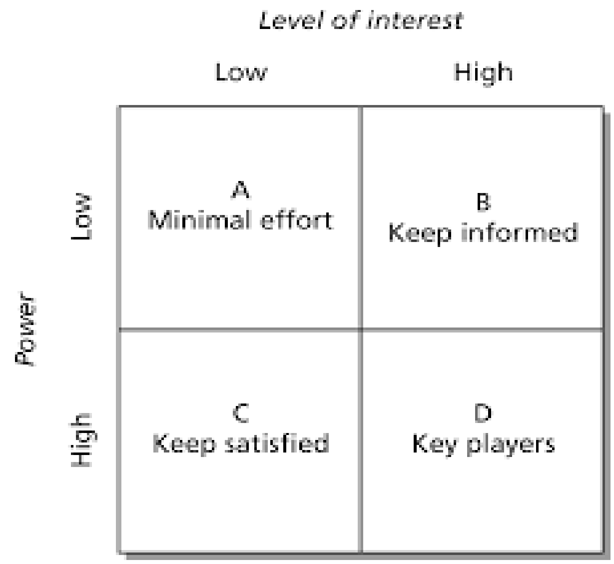
Organisations that have a hard time with efficiently delivering their services, surviving in the business environment and managing reputation consider the IMC as a strategy to align communication messages with organisational objectives and stakeholders' expectations (Melewar et al., 2017:573; Caywood, 2013:96). One of these strategies within the IMC is the realisation that organisations may require different messages for each group of stakeholders in order to achieve a strong corporate reputation (Kliatchko, 2008:145-146; Palazzo & Basu, 2007). This study supports the utilisation of this IMC strategy because of the varying expectations and interests among stakeholder groups. For instance, a group of stakeholders may be interested in the CSR activities of the organisation, while another group may be interested in the quality of its service offerings. Based on this, the organisations may disseminate messages heavily focused on CSR to the first stakeholder group, and then disseminate a different message focused on service quality to the second stakeholder group. By so doing, the organisation is satisfying both stakeholder groups, and when stakeholders are satisfied, a favourable corporate reputation is achieved.

Furthermore, implementing the IMC framework in service firms can help achieve the effective coordination of stakeholders since it ensures the inclusion of all stakeholder groups, and as emphasised throughout this study, catering to the needs of only one stakeholder group and neglecting others will not result in a positive assessment of the organisation.

Some early researchers also attempted to provide a framework for managing various stakeholders. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) suggested that in managing stakeholders, organisations should consider: (1) the stakeholders' power to influence the organisation; (2) the legitimacy of the stakeholders' relationship with the organisation, and (3) the urgency of stakeholders' claim within the organisation. However, the framework is criticised for not considering stakeholders beyond the economic value of an organisation (Banerjee, 2008:52), and also for ignoring the fact that stakeholder impact changes over time since the resources and stakeholders' power and influence are not static (Yang, Shen & Ho, 2009:167). Though these criticisms are valid, the framework of Mitchell et al. (1997) remains highly useful in managing stakeholders especially when a thorough stakeholder analysis is conducted on a periodic basis, since stakeholders' legitimacy, urgency and power in the organisation evolve and change over time.

Mendelow (1991) also formulated a framework based on stakeholders' power and interest in an organisation (see figure 2.2). According to him, stakeholders with high power and high interest are key players, those with high power and low interest should be kept satisfied, those with low power and high interest should be kept informed and those with low power and low interest require minimal effort. Though the power-interest matrix is criticised for remaining within the traditional framework of power, and ignoring the dynamism of stakeholder's environment and other influential attributes (Rajablu, Marthandan, & Wan Yusoff, 2015:113; Banerjee, 2008), it remains the most widely used framework in research and by organisations.

Figure 2.2: Mendelow's stakeholders mapping



Source: Mendelow, 1991

Rajablu et al. (2015:113) then build on these previous frameworks by providing six attributes which corporate reputation practitioners could use to manage a wide range of stakeholders. According to them, the stakeholders' "power, interest, legitimacy, proximity, urgency and network" are the relevant attributes to consider in stakeholder management. *Power* refers to stakeholders' potential influence by using utilitarian means (financial resources), coercive (forceful or physical resources), and normative (prestige) means (Rajablu et al., 2015:113). *Urgency* refers to how pressing stakeholders' claims are. These are usually determined by time sensitivity and criticality (Mitchell et al., 1997). *Interest* describes stakeholder's interest in the company. Rowley and Moldoveanu (2003:209) however point out that a stakeholder's interest in a company is capable of mobilising other stakeholder groups and impacting the organisation even in the absence of power and urgency.

Legitimacy is described as a socially constructed phenomenon with ownership title, legal, moral rights, interest (self or moral), contractual, and exchange relationship (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2011; Rajablu et al., 2015:114). However, issues may arise here when a stakeholder has a legitimate claim to make but the claim may not be prioritised unless such stakeholder has either the power to push the claim, or has a high degree of urgency to push the claim forward. In other words, legitimacy alone may not place a stakeholder at the top of the priority list in the organisation unless he/she also has power or a pressing issue to resolve. On the other hand, *proximity* gauges stakeholders' relationship based on their connections with the service organisation and its processes (Bourne & Walker, 2006). *Network* then describes the interdependence of the stakeholders in the organisational network and the positions of stakeholders in the wider stakeholder-organisational network (Yang, Shen, Bourne et al., 2011).

Following the discussions in the preceding paragraphs, stakeholder mapping and attributes give organisations better insights on how to manage various stakeholders, as well as the role and impact of each stakeholder within the organisation. The effective management of stakeholders consequently contributes to achieving a favourable corporate reputation. More so, organisations that employ the stakeholder theory will be more aware of core areas of business to focus on which will inherently make them reputable (Harrison et al., 2015:859). The favourable reputation then gives the organisation "a degree of strategic flexibility that is unavailable to competitors that do not manage stakeholders" (*ibid*).

2.4 THE REFLECTIVE PARADIGM

De Beer and Rensburg (2011:2) assert that the reflective paradigm has proven to be the most suitable paradigm for developing a framework that explains the governing of stakeholders' relationships. Consistent with the systems theory and stakeholder theory, the reflective paradigm sees reputable organisations as those that consider stakeholders' validation as top priority because they understand that their existence and sustenance depend on the fulfilment of stakeholders' evolving needs. However, this paradigm expands the aforementioned two theories by noting that a business must engage in a continuous learning process by reflecting on its actions, as well as stakeholders' interpretation of its actions for it to be reputable (King et al., 2010:294). This reflective process boosts understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders, which in turn enable the organisation to know the dimensions its stakeholders consider when assessing it.

The reflective paradigm is a core demand for every organisation, especially service organisations because it involves the organisation's production of self-learning and understanding achieved through continuous interactions with stakeholders (Holmstrom, 2009). The continuous interactions bring to the fore, and give credence to Aula and Mantere's (2013:341) earlier-mentioned assertion, that corporate reputation is achieved through "continuous dialogical communication between the target organisation and its publics." This thus establishes interaction and communication as must-do/core actions that organisations must implement to successfully identify areas stakeholders may have issues with, and areas that are contributing to their continuous success and legitimacy. Legitimacy, also referred to as social licence to operate (SLO), is the continuous acceptance of the organisation by its stakeholders and government (Ngcobo, 2016:25). For an organisation to sustain its SLO, it must develop the ability to identify latent issues, gauge their impact on the organisation, and transform reflective observations into organisational learning processes (Holmstrom, 2004). However, Van Ruler and Vercic (2005) point out that developing this ability requires a reflective process and a reflective viewpoint.

The reflective process requires organisations to be responsive to the claims advocated by stakeholders which can be achieved through continuous deconstruction and reconstruction of social interactions (King et al., 2010:292; Heath, 2006a). Through these interactions, organisations are able to identify aspects of their activities that sit well with stakeholders and those that do not. By so doing, they are able to determine the factors that contribute to the corporate reputation. On the other hand, the reflective viewpoint involves viewing an organisation from the stakeholders' perspective (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2005). Doing this without any bias creates the avenue for organisations to assess their performance, and identify aspects of the organisation that needs improvement. These activities collectively enable the organisations to identify the dimensions that make them reputable, and Holmstrom (2009) believes this evaluation sustains the organisation.

Additionally, continuous assessments make businesses become experts at self-regulation, self-restriction and self-control (Holmstrom, 2005). The paradigm thus drives the rationale of this study because through these continuous assessments, organisations will become privy to those dimensions or qualities that contribute towards a favourable corporate reputation and those that do not. However, in his study in which he interviewed social workers and managers of a social team working with children and families in Northern England, Saltiel (2006) found that although the reflective paradigm has led to important developments in areas, such as teaching and practice, its vagueness on how to assess it can lead to oppressive practice. Saltiel explains that in getting stakeholders to share their perception, organisations should be aware of the issues involved with requiring less powerful stakeholders to perform confessional-reflective tasks and not be quick to assume reflective learning is always a good thing.

2.5 SUMMARY

The chapter presented a detailed explanation of the theories within which this study is premised with utmost focus on their application in service-based contexts. It was established that the systems theory admonishes an organisation against the exclusion of any stakeholder group in its activities, as this affects the overall perception of the corporate reputation. Here, the emphasis is on managing the organisation as a whole through interactions and communications that help coordinate and manage its relationships with its environment. Likewise, the stakeholder theory and the reflective paradigm emphasises the need to identify and satisfy the expectations of all stakeholders in order to have a favourable reputation. While the three theories share a common ground of advocating the identification of reputation dimensions from all relevant stakeholders' perspectives, each theory also has its uniqueness. Systems theory offers practical ways an organisation may identify its reputation dimensions through feedback, surveillance, and advising management. Stakeholder theory offers diverse frameworks to satisfy stakeholders and achieve a coordinated stakeholder management through the stakeholder mappings and attributes. The reflective paradigm, on the other hand, promotes continuous internal and external evaluation of organisational activities in order to keep abreast of evolving stakeholder needs. All these are collectively vital to attaining and sustaining a favourable corporate reputation.

The next chapter is the first part of the literature review that explores the various definitions and perspectives of corporate reputation. Special focus is placed on the definitions that address or emerge from multiple stakeholders' perspective, as that is the focus of this study. A definition in line with the purpose of this study is then given, and the components of corporate reputation are clearly discussed. The role of reputation in today's business environment, particularly in the service industry, is also discussed extensively, and the chapter concludes by addressing the various impacts of reputation on organisations, and on stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

"Reputation is only a candle, of wavering and uncertain flame, and easily blown out, but it is the light by which the world looks for and finds merit"

- James Russell Lowell

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the concept of corporate reputation (hereafter referred to as CR) by beginning with a focus on its definitions, and various perspectives towards the concept. The chapter further explains the different components of CR (otherwise called the reputation related constructs) such as corporate personality, corporate identity, corporate culture, corporate image, as well as the relationship and differences between reputation and the corporate brand. Each component is thoroughly discussed in order to clarify and reduce the confusion that exists between them and corporate reputation. Thereafter, the focus shifts to discussing the significance of CR in the business environment, with emphasis on service organisations. Likewise, the relationship between reputation and trust, identified as major drivers for successful businesses in service-based contexts, is discussed. The impacts of corporate reputation are also explained in detail.

3.2. DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

Corporate reputation is a concept with diverse definitions and as Ertug et al. (2015:115) points out, it is difficult to have a generally agreed definition since the perception of what is, or is not reputable is in "the eye of the beholder." Over time, several researchers (Walker, 2010; Fombrun, 2012; Lange et al., 2011; Chun, 2005; Aula & Mantere, 2008) have stressed the need to reach a consensus on a definition for CR. However, despite the contradictory definitions of the concept, corporate reputation has significantly developed since its inception in the early 80s (Barnett et al., 2006:27). It is now evident that corporate reputation is not only considered a relevant research area, but also a must-have for organisations. Thus, as there is a growing evidence that many organisations today are concerned with their reputation (Jinfeng et al., 2014; Orukari, 2010; Devine & Halpern, 2001), it is vital to understand what the concept entails.

Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1057) define corporate reputation as stakeholders' overall evaluation of a firm based on their experiences and relationship with the organisation and its brand, which includes interactions with employees, information about an organisation, as well as stakeholder's comparison of the organisation to its competitors. Barnett, Jermier, and Lafferty (2006) believe CR goes beyond the organisation-stakeholder relationship, to the positive impacts the organisation makes in the society. Thus, they define CR as stakeholders' collective judgment of a firm based on an assessment of the social, financial and environmental impacts attributed to the organisation over time (pg. 34).

Following a review of 62 studies on corporate reputation, Walker (2010:370) defined the concept as "a relatively stable, issue-specific collective perception of a firm's past actions and future prospects when compared against some standards." However, Fombrun (2012:102) opposes this definition by stating that corporate reputation definitions should not concentrate on the antecedents (inputs) and/or consequences (results) of reputation but on its attributes. That is, defining reputation based on past actions can be interpreted as an antecedent because people depend on this to assess the company's reputation. Likewise, defining the concept based on "future prospects" can be interpreted as a consequence of reputation, because a good corporate reputation opens up opportunities (Dowling, 2016:215).

Fombrun (2012:103) then proposed that reputation definitions should retain the following components: "(1) collective assessments (2) of a company's attractiveness (3) to a defined set of stakeholders (4) relative to a reference group of other companies." According to him, defining corporate reputation this way excludes the antecedents and consequences from the construct, and the dimensions that make a good reputation can be studied separately. Fombrun's position faults the majority of the existing measurement instruments as they were derived from one stakeholder group, or the general public, who may or may not be stakeholders of the organisation (see section 1.2 and 4.10 for a detailed review). More importantly, the scholar's position encapsulates the focus of this study as the investigation focuses on the dimensions of reputation (a company's attractiveness) in service organisations (relative to a reference group of companies) from the perspective of a defined set of stakeholders (customers, employees, regulators, and corporate communicators). Four stakeholder groups are used because, contrary to some scholars' position (e.g. Helm, 2005; Balan & Şchiopoiu, 2017), this study argues that corporate reputation results from the collective assessment of all relevant stakeholders of an organisation and not from a single stakeholder perspective.

For instance, Helm (2005:100) describes CR as a single stakeholder perception of the general assessment of an organisation, which could be positive or negative. Here, corporate reputation is portrayed as an individual's personal assessment of the dominant narrative about an organisation's reputation. That is, a stakeholder's perception of the CR emanates from his/her judgement of the already established corporate reputation, whether favourable or unfavourable. This study opposes this viewpoint because one cannot take a single stakeholder's perception to be the corporate reputation without considering other stakeholders' perception of the organisation. Rather, every individual perception is significant and all come together to form the corporate reputation.

As such, this study adopts Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martınez-Leon's (2011) definition of corporate reputation because it portrays reputation as a concept that results from an aggregate of all stakeholders' perceptions, and also emphasises the need for organisations to investigate the specific dimensions that influence their stakeholders' positive assessment. They define corporate reputation as:

> 'the estimate of the overall perception different stakeholders have about a company, evaluated through a set of dimensions and attributes that create value that are linked to the organisation and distinguish it from the rest.' (pg. 79)

It is observed that despite the myriad of definitions, most scholars seem to agree that corporate reputation results from stakeholders' collective perception or assessment of an organisation, which is also this study's position. Barnett et al. (2006:32), in their review of various definitions of CR, found that most definitions fall within three main perspectives:

(1) Reputation as an assessment

(2) Reputation as a state of awareness

(3) Reputation as an asset

Barnett et al. (2006:33) believe definitions that fall within "reputation as an assessment" describe CR as stakeholders' judgment, evaluation, estimate or gauge of a firm which could be based on various factors. For instance, Wartick's (2002) definition that corporate reputation is "the cumulative evaluation stakeholders make about the performance of an organisation in meeting their expectations", reflects the subjective nature of reputation. Here, an organisation might be performing 'well' to a certain group of stakeholders while other groups of stakeholders of the same organisation would describe it as 'terrible' because their own expectations or standards are not met. The belief is that reputation is not formed just by logical reasoning but also by the opinions and beliefs stakeholders have formed over time. This view thus suggests that stakeholders do not judge a firm solely by its mandate to offer goods or services, but also by their personal experience, the quality of their customer relationship, rumours, etc.

For those who view corporate reputation as a state of awareness, researchers (Barnett et al., 2006:32; Hardeck & Hertl, 2014:313; Shamma, 2012:156) believe reputation results from an aggregate of stakeholders' knowledge, observations and emotions. Here, reputation is formed by the type of activities, achievements and information shared about the company. It is also important to note that third-party information (e.g. the media and opinion leaders) influence stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate reputation even without having any direct contact with the organisation (Feldman et al., 2014:55). Thus, organisations must give increased attention to the quality of information circulating concerning its activities, operations, and other aspects of business because they are powerful in determining the CR, and any misinformation may expose the organisation to reputation loss. Additionally, the assertion by Fombrun et al. (2000) that reputation is formed by attributes consisting of emotional and rational appeal is also in line with this perspective, because if positive organisational attributes (e.g. CSR, good leadership, and service quality) that appeal to stakeholders' emotion and/or logic are communicated, their perception of the CR may be enhanced.

On the other hand, those who view CR as a strategic asset describe it as something of great value that significantly increases an organisation's performance especially in terms of its finances (Barnett et al., 2006; Feldman et al., 2014:55). For example, Fombrun and Van Riel's (2003) definition of corporate reputation as an "intangible, financial or economic asset" that gives organisations a competitive advantage projects this view because it portrays how reputation is an asset that benefits an organisation. This is also supported by Feldman et al. (2014), who assert that CR is an asset of immense value because it differentiates an organisation from its counterparts and creates entry barriers for potential competitors. More so, Adeosun and Ganiyu (2013:222) also emphasise how reputation is an intangible valuable asset that reflects itself in the balance sheet, which consequently boosts investors' confidence. Following the review of the aforementioned clusters, it can be concluded that corporate reputation incorporates the three perspectives – it is stakeholders' collective evaluation of an organisation based on their level of awareness, and a strategic asset to those organisations adjudged reputable.

In the same vein, Chun (2005:93) identified three perspectives to understanding corporate reputation namely: (1) the relational approach, (2) the impressional approach, and (3) the evaluative approach. Chun points out that while the 'evaluative' and 'impressional' perspectives are focused on the interests of single stakeholders, the relational perspective focuses on all stakeholders because it recognises that each stakeholder may have a different expectation of an organisation, and their various perspectives on how well the organisation meet these expectations form the corporate reputation.

The relational perspective is rooted in one of the theories this study is situated within - the stakeholder theory (see section 2.3). The theory posits that different stakeholder groups may have different expectations of an organisation, and based on this, an organisation can have a varied reputation with each stakeholder group, depending on their level of satisfaction. This means an organisation may have a positive reputation with its investors because the business is yielding profit, but have a negative reputation with its employees because of non-payment of salaries or bonuses. Thus, the characteristics and attributes that determine each stakeholder groups' assessment of an organisation will differ (Clardy, 2012; Cornelissen & Thorpe, 2002).

However, though the relational approach suggests that various stakeholder groups have different expectations and perceptions, Chun (2005:95) points out that all stakeholders' views are linked in the overall formation of the corporate reputation. Hence, regardless of whether a specific stakeholder group has a positive perception of an organisation, if the dominant perception among other stakeholder groups is negative, such organisation cannot be seen as reputable. Thus, this study is rooted in the relational perspective because it investigates multiple stakeholders' views on what they consider to be the corporate reputation dimensions for service organisations.

On the contrary, the impressional perspective adopts a single stakeholder view of corporate reputation with its key focus on the employees or customers (Chun, 2005:93). Just as the name implies, this perspective is concerned with the impression relevant stakeholders have of the organisation, and the dominant impressions form the corporate reputation. Chun adds that concepts such as identity, personality culture and image are associated with this approach and the distinguishing factors between these concepts would be the academic disciplines they stem from (see table 3.1). While internal stakeholders' views (employees) are rooted in the organisation's culture and identity because they are concepts internal to the organisation, external stakeholders' views (customers) are rooted in the organisation's image because they concern the organisation's projection of itself to stakeholders.

Chun's evaluative perspective explains CR based on the organisation's financial strength, shareholders and its short-term financial performance. This perspective also adopts a single stakeholder view consisting of those stakeholders whose main interests are the financial qualities and benefits of the organisation (e.g. investors, shareholders). Proponents of this perspective believe that companies with the highest turnover are the most reputable, while those with a lower turnover are not reputable. An example is the Fortune's Most Admired Company List, in which the dimensions for measuring CR contained in the list consist of an organisation's financial attributes (see section 4.10.1).

Table 2.1: Corporate reputation according to various academic disciplines

Discipline	**Approach to corporate reputation**
Accounting	Reputation is seen as an intangible asset with immeasurable financial value
Economics	Reputation is approached mainly in terms of product/service price and quality. It is seen as the perception held of the organisation by its external stakeholders, and also serves as traits or indicators to these stakeholders.
Marketing	Reputation focuses on the customer or end-user's perspective in terms of what influences their purchase decision, and the manner in which reputations are formed
Organisational behaviour	Reputation is mainly viewed as internal stakeholders' perception of the organisation by focusing more on the sense-making experience of employees.
Sociology	Reputation is viewed as an aggregate assessment of a firm's performance relative to expectations and norms in an institutional context
Strategy	Reputation is viewed as an asset that give a competitive advantage and creates barriers for competitors. Since reputation is based on perception, it is difficult to manage

Corporate Communication	Reputation is seen as the synergy of various organisational activities and operations that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial organisation-stakeholder relationships. It is regarded as the sum of all stakeholders' perceptions based on the assessment of the organisation's past, current activities and character. Corporate reputation is also acknowledged as a significant factor that protects organisations in times of crisis.
Corporate Social Responsibility	Sees reputation in regard to how organisations demonstrate and showcase themselves as good corporate citizens in a society, as well as how organisations manage issues in their environment and deal with stakeholders.

Source: Chun, 2005:92; Aula & Mantere, 2008

Aula and Mantere (2008) also came up with the instrumentalist and interpretive view to understanding corporate reputation. Like Chun's evaluative perspective, the instrumentalist considers reputation to be capital, economic, financial and value-driven. However, the instrumentalist viewpoint does not consider the role of communication in reputation formation, unlike the interpretive view that emphasises the importance of communication (Aula & Mantere, 2008:52).

The interpretive view promotes the notion that reputation should be considered as interpretations among stakeholders since the dimension of what is, or not reputable is determined by the stakeholders and not the organisation (Aula & Mantere, 2008). Aula and Mantere (2013:341) extend this view by defining corporate reputation as a *"continuously developing set of evaluative narratives, beliefs, and expectations, built and modified in dialogical communication between the target organisation and its publics over time."* This suggests that stakeholders' interactions with the organisation, and interpretations of information received are central to the reputation formation process and cannot be discarded.

It is however important to note that reputation is not an outcome of communication (Aula & Mantere, 2013:343); rather, through effective communication, organisations can influence and keep abreast of stakeholders' perception since their interpretations of the organisation's activities are constantly developing, and hence subject to change. This study is situated within this premise because stakeholders' expectations and perceptions are not static and as such, the meaning stakeholders attach to organisation's actions or inactions should be prioritised because it is what determines the corporate reputation.

Following the aforementioned discussion on CR definitions and perspectives, it is evident that (1) corporate reputation is ultimately determined by stakeholders and their assessment is based on several factors. (2) These factors represent their knowledge, feelings and expectations towards an organisation. The various factors also explain why it is difficult to have a universally agreed definition or perspective of corporate reputation. (3) However, through continuous communication with stakeholders, organisations can understand stakeholders' interpretations of organisational actions and this guides organisations on ways to influence favourable perceptions. (4) A favourable corporate reputation is of immense value – it has financial benefits and increases an organisation's competitiveness. Corporate reputation is therefore about the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders. It is how stakeholders view an organisation based on whatever information and/or misinformation they have regarding the company activities, its service quality, etc.

3.3. COMPONENTS OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

Corporate reputation is regarded as an integration of other corporate-related constructs such as corporate personality, identity, culture, image (Shamma, 2012:156) and the corporate brand (Furman, 2010:16). Scholars argue that although CR is stakeholders' collective evaluation of a firm, their judgement emanates from the perception of the corporate identity and image (Wartick, 2002:376; Barnett et al., 2006:34; Davies et al., 2001:1363). This explains why these concepts often overlap, and are confused with reputation (Dowling & Gardberg, 2012: 36). The confusion can also be linked to the fact that corporate reputation draws academic attention from various fields, and the related concepts often appear in literature as identical, interrelated or totally different depending on the adopted perspective (see table 3.1). It is important to note that this study discusses reputation and its related concepts from the corporate communication perspective, and a detailed discussion on corporate reputation from this perspective is provided in chapter 4.

3.3.1 Corporate Personality

As individuals have personalities, so do organisations. Balmer (2001:256) defines corporate personality as the attitudes and beliefs of internal stakeholders of an organisation such as employees, CEO, and members of management. Fill (2009) also describes corporate personality as the core input to corporate identity, which Fill and Roper (2012) explain as the way an organisation is differentiated and presented. Put simply, corporate personality is what an organisation really is (Bromley, 2001). Corporate personality is a vital component of corporate reputation because it forms the basis for all other components and is the first influence on stakeholders' perception. The corporate personality is a crucial aspect of the reputation formation process of service organisations because of the intangible nature of services. It is the corporate personality that first attracts customers and also guides their decision on whether or not to patronise the organisation. Using Balmer's (2001) earlier stated definition as an example, the attitude of internal stakeholders like employees affect how they relate with external stakeholders like customers. If external stakeholders are then impressed by how they are received by internal members of the organisation, their association with the organisation will continue and vice-versa. Hence, organisations must ensure that the corporate personality is properly reflected in its operations, and aligns with how it truly wants to be seen.

Scholars (Fill & Roper, 2012; Omar, William & Lingelbach, 2009:178) have suggested diverse components of corporate personality and most tend to identify corporate culture as its key component. For instance, Balmer (2001:254) claims corporate culture is the main element of corporate personality even though both concepts are almost synonymous. Fill and Roper (2012) also assert that the two key components of corporate personality are the culture demonstrated among staff in the organisation and the organisation's overall strategic purpose. Corporate personality can therefore be described as the foundation for other constructs like culture, identity and image. The organisation's personality leads to the creation of the corporate identity which is then projected to stakeholders who form an image based on the perceived personality and projected identity of the organisation.

3.3.2. Corporate Identity (CI)

Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1051) assert that an organisation's identity is formed and built on what is distinctive, fundamental and sustainable about the organisation's character (personality). Corporate identity is particularly crucial for service organisations in terms of differentiation since services are not tangible, and stakeholders patronage decision is largely based on how well the organisation positions and differentiates itself from other service providers. Scholars (Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Bromley, 2001) thus define corporate identity as the qualities that distinguish an organisation from its counterparts. Likewise, George et al. (2012:39) define corporate identity as internal stakeholders' description of the organisation such as employees, CEOs, and managers. A holistic approach therefore suggests that corporate identity is how an organisation projects itself to stakeholders and separates itself from its competitors. It simply refers to how an organisation sees and describes itself.

Just like the corporate personality, the corporate identity is a significant component of corporate reputation. Walker (2010) points out that corporate identity consists of (1) the *desired identity*, which describes what the organisation wants its internal stakeholders to think of it, and (2) the *actual identity,* which entails the actual perception of the internal stakeholders. However, for the corporate identity to contribute towards a favourable reputation, the desired identity must align with the actual identity. When both are harmonised, appropriate behaviour(s) that reflect what the organisation stands for will be effectively exhibited by internal stakeholders (e.g. employees, managers) to external stakeholders (e.g. regulators, suppliers, customers). This in turn enhances external stakeholders' perception of the organisation and contributes to a favourable corporate reputation.

He and Balmer (2007:767) also categorised corporate identity based on four perspectives namely: "visual identity, corporate identity, organisation's identity and organisational identity". They explain *Visual Identity* as those visual cues (such as the organisation's logo, colour, and slogan) a company incorporates as part of its corporate communications plan in order for stakeholders to get familiar with the organisation. The *Corporate Identity* (CI) refers to the company's distinctive characteristics that give an insight into what the company really is, and it comprises six core characteristics, representing six different types of identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Abratt & Kleyn, 2012:1051). They include an organisation's reality (actual identity); its communication (communicated identity); its perception (conceived identity); its strategy (ideal identity); its vision (desired identity); and the promise of the corporate brand (corporate brand identity).

He and Balmer (2007:769) explained the third perspective, *Organisation's identity*, as the organisation's description of itself which also answers the questions "who we are" and "what we are". The definition of George et al. (2012) falls within this perspective as it describes internal members' perception of the defining characteristics of their company. *Organisational Identity,* on the other hand, refers to the level of importance people attach to themselves by virtue of their membership of an organisation. For instance, a manager might consider himself/herself more important than others because of his role and association with the organisation. Corporate identity is therefore a core component of CR because the organisation's description of itself determines the parameters its stakeholders will assess it by. Thus, for corporate identity to effectively project a good image, it must be realistic and align with the organisation's activities, core values and culture (Balmer & Greyser, 2003).

3.3.3. Corporate Culture

Corporate culture describes the act of continuously implementing what a firm stands for, which subsequently becomes its behaviour (Rangan, 2011). It is the modus operandi of an organisation which includes the way an organisation provides service to stakeholders, and executes its other activities. Simply put, corporate culture is "the way we do things around here" (Fill & Roper, 2012). Coleman (2013) believes a good corporate culture usually includes the organisation's vision, values, practices, people, narrative and place. However, O'Donell and Boyle (2008) note that the strongest indicators of corporate culture are the beliefs and values of the organisation. Corporate culture can therefore be described as the set of values and behaviour a company cultivates and exhibits towards achieving its set goals and objectives.

For example, a service firm that engages in regular reflective practices about its activities and stakeholders' opinion can be said to have a strong learning culture, and as King et al. (2010) and Holmstrom (2009) state, this culture can give the firm a significant edge over its counterparts. Likewise, Lane (2013) asserts that employees of organisations with strong culture usually find the work environment more enjoyable and this consequently increases their productivity.

Corporate culture is further emphasised as an advantage by Uddin (2013), who reiterated Deal and Kennedy's (1982) reports that companies with strong cultures experience continuous high performance.

In the same vein, James Heskett, a professor of business logistics at Harvard University, asserts that "corporate culture can account for 20-30% of the difference in corporate performance when compared with 'culturally unremarkable' competitors." (Coleman, 2013). Going by the aforementioned, it is understood that the corporate culture is instilled by an organisation into its internal members, which is then projected through these internal members (e.g. employees) to various external stakeholders. More so, as the corporate culture has a significant influence on corporate success, service organisations that desire a favourable reputation must ensure that they cultivate a good culture that appeals to stakeholders and appropriately reflects organisational objectives.

3.3.4. Corporate Image

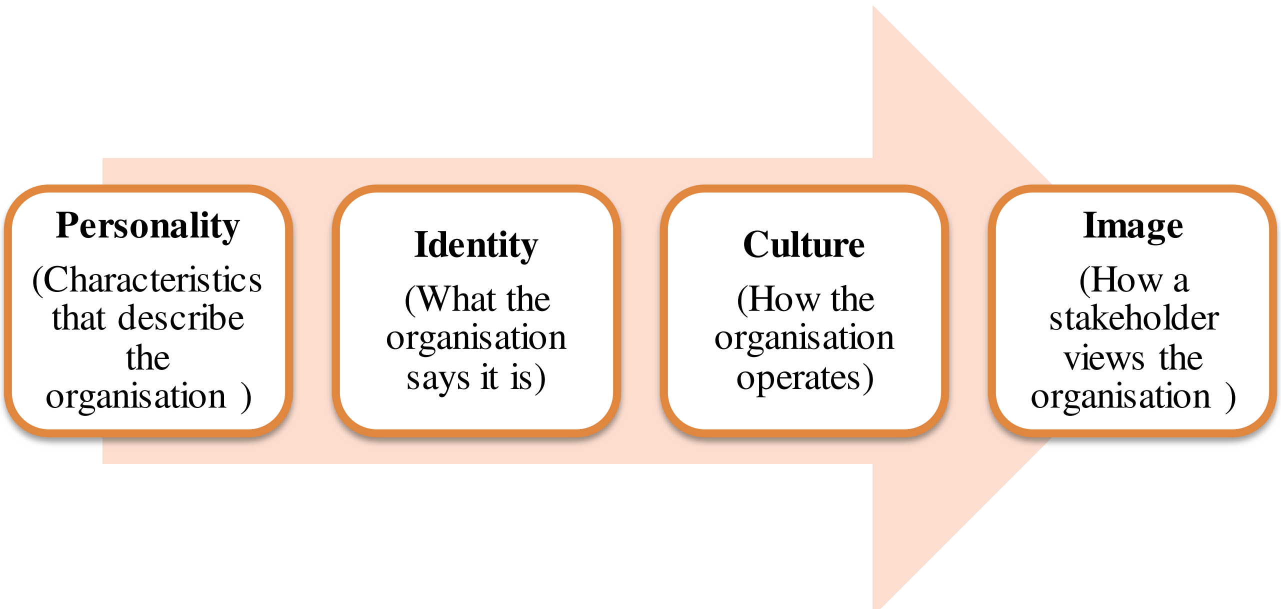
The corporate image refers to the way an organisation projects itself to external stakeholders (Walker, 2010:366), and how those external stakeholders view the organisation (Davies, Chun, Silva & Roper, 2001). In other words, corporate image is the mental picture organisations want stakeholders to have when they see, hear or think of the organisation. Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004:369) further explain the corporate image as the way an organisation is seen from the perspective of one stakeholder group (e.g. customers) which is influenced by the corporate brand and identity. Hence, a firm may have a positive image with its employees because they get their salaries and bonuses, but have a poor image with its suppliers because they are being owed or treated with disregard.

Brown et al. (2006:103-104) identified two types of image as intended image and construed image. According to them, the intended image refers to the view an organisation's leaders want relevant stakeholders to have of the organisation, while the construed image refers to those mental associations organisational members believe external stakeholders treat as central, enduring and distinct. However, Brown et al.'s (2006) classification – "what leaders want stakeholders to think" and "the aspect organisational members feel appeal to stakeholders more" – is flawed because it solely describes the corporate image as a construct that is entirely controlled by the organisation whereas this is not so. While the corporate image may be influenced by the organisation, it is formed via stakeholders' perception and the image may vary among different stakeholders. By implication, the corporate image is undoubtedly a critical component of corporate reputation formation and in fact, some empirical studies (e.g. Iddrissu & Akolaa, 2017; Lloyd, 2007) found the corporate image to be a significant dimension of reputation for service organisations. Service organisations must therefore strive to achieve a positive image with each of their stakeholder groups, as a negative image among any group could negatively impact the corporate reputation.

There is then the question of whether image and reputation are the same, because both concepts involve stakeholders' perception, and are used interchangeably (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001:25). Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004:369) established the basic difference between the concept and reputation by stating that image concerns "what stakeholders think of whom you are and who you tell them you are", whereas reputation concerns "what do all the stakeholders think of whom you tell them you are and what have you done". Simply put, reputation is the sum of all the images held by stakeholders. It is significant to note that a positive image might not always translate to a good reputation because image can be formed quickly based on a current circumstance and through well-conceived communication programmes, whereas, reputation is formed over a period based on consistent performance, and stakeholders' overall assessment of organisational activities (Cornelissen, 2017:145; Le Roux, 2003:47). In other words, though a positive image has the potential to lead to a favourable corporate reputation, organisations have to ensure that the activities or actions that led to positive image are continuously implemented. Only then will the positive images translate to a good corporate reputation.

In summary, corporate reputation is not an isolated concept, and the related components are all essential to achieving a favourable reputation. Corporate personality is the foundation for every other component, and a good identity and image can influence the formation of a strong corporate reputation. It is important to note that while these related components are largely driven by the organisation, corporate reputation is solely stakeholder-driven. That is, while an organisation can determine and control its personality, identity, culture, as well as influence its image, it cannot control its reputation, because this is bestowed by stakeholders. Notwithstanding, reputation can be influenced by various factors such as the company's good performance, policies and people (Mmutle & Shonhe, 2017). Knowing these influences or factors, otherwise called the dimensions of reputation, is the goal of this study. Figure 3.3. depicts the summary of the components of corporate reputation discussed in this section.

Figure 3.3: Differentiating corporate personality, identity, culture and image



Source: Researcher's summary based on literature review

3.3.5. The Reputation Formula

Following the discussion on the various components of corporate reputation, it is evident that a relationship exists among these components, and with corporate reputation. This is summed up by Doorley and Garcia (2011:4), who submit that reputation is the summation of all images held by stakeholders, and this is determined by the organisation's performance, behaviour and communication. However, Doorley and Garcia (2015:37) later expanded the reputation formula to include '*Authenticity Factor'* as suggested by Ray Jordan, the Vice President of Public Affairs and Corporate Communications at Johnson & Johnson. According to them, the Authenticity Factor implies the 'intrinsic identity' which explains what an organisation stands for and how well it lives up to its standard. Doorley and Garcia (2015:37) thus posit a new reputation formula as:

Reputation = (Performance + Behaviour + Communication) x Authenticity Factor

The above formula implies that reputation is determined by an organisation's actions in terms of the summation of the efficiency of its activities, how it conducts those activities and relates with stakeholders, as well as how it communicates the activities with stakeholders. These actions are then weighed against what the organisation describes itself to be, its mission and its visions (intrinsic identity). If stakeholders determine that the organisation's actions are in line with the intrinsic identity, then such organisation will be said to have a good reputation, and vice-versa.

By positing a reputation formula, Doorley and Garcia (2015:12) oppose describing reputation as an intangible resource which is contrary to the assertion by several scholars (e.g. Feldman et al., 2014:54; Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013:223; Mahon, 2002; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2003:230), that reputation is an intangible asset that benefits all types of organisations. Doorley and Garcia (2015) explain that the historical view of reputation as an intangible asset is a wrong approach and that accounts for the reason most organisations lack formal programmes to measure reputation. According to them, "reputation has real tangible values that can be measured like any other assets, and any reputation management plan has to measure, monitor and establish a plan for managing both the reputational assets and vulnerabilities/liabilities."

While Doorley and Garcia's rationale for critiquing the description of reputation as an intangible resource is valid, the fact remains that reputation is an intangible resource because unlike other tangible/physical resources of an organisation (e.g. building structures, money, human resources), reputation cannot be touched or seen. Albeit, while this study, together with other reputation scholars, maintains reputation is an intangible resource, the establishment of the dimensions to measure reputation is continually advocated and this study represents one of the investigations exploring the reputation dimensions of organisations (services). Hence, though an intangible resource, reputation should, and can be measured by various dimensions or factors. More so, despite that service organisations are also characterised by their intangibility because services cannot be physically held or seen, they have dimensions they can be measured by – and so can reputation.

Table 3.2. provides different scholars' description of corporate identity, image and reputation based on the aforementioned discussions.

Table 3.2: Summary of scholars' description of corporate identity, image, and reputation

Corporate Identity	**Corporate Image**	**Corporate Reputation**
Who/what do we believe we are? (He & Balmer, 2007; Walker, 2010)	Who/what do we want others to think we are? (Walker, 2010)	Stakeholders' collective views of an organisation, including its identity and image. (George et al., 2012; Barnett et al., 2006)
Collection of Symbols (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Brown et al., 2006)	The outcome of an organisation's identity and its corporate brand (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004)	A judgment/assessment of the company's activities based on its past, present and future (Walsh et al., 2009; Barnett et al., 2006; Abratt & Kleyn, 2012)
How we see ourselves (George et al., 2012)	The way a firm presents itself to its stakeholders (Bromley, 2000)	The extent to which stakeholders accept, desire, admire, and respect the organisation (Dowling, 2016)
The individuality and reality of the organisation (Hatch & Schultz, 2008)	Immediate mental view that stakeholders have of a company (Walker, 2010)	The outcome of an organisation's performance, behaviour and communication when compared with how it has lived up to its identity (Doorley & Garcia, 2015)

Source: As mentioned in the table

3.3.6 The Corporate Brand

It was predicted some years ago that in the service sector, stakeholders' decisions, especially patronage decisions, would depend more on the company and people behind the brand and less on the benefits of the service provided. In other words, the corporate brand would become the major influencer of stakeholders' patronage decision (Holmes Report, 2012; Kitchen & Laurence, 2003). The prediction has become a reality, as the Reputation Institute (2011) talks about the "reputation economy" – a situation where people are now more interested in the organisations behind the services and products they purchase. This communicates a direct a message to service firms that service provision is no longer the only basis for reputation. Other components of the organisation, such as the corporate brand, must equally be prioritised.

The corporate brand describes the verbal, pictorial, and behavioural expressions of a company's identity that builds stakeholders' hopes of the company's offerings in terms of experience, products and services (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012:1053; Lussier, 2014; Knox & Bickerton, 2003). It refers to the way an organisation differentiates itself from competitors, as well as the way the organisation promotes strategic and mutual relationships with its staff and external stakeholders (Le Roux, 2003:48; Curtis et al., 2009:405). Simply put, the corporate brand is how an organisation projects itself to its stakeholders, and conveys the promises of what the company will deliver to them.

The growing importance of service organisations and the intangibility of services have made organisations recognise that the development of corporate brand gives a competitive advantage and ensures sustainability (Mcdonald et al., 2001:349; Mann, 2012; Andreassen & Lanseng, 2010:212; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010:378). Financial and telecommunication organisations, for example, have proven that achieving a clear distinction between service brands is not impossible. Some banks might offer loan packages specifically for small businesses, funeral plans, children's school finances, in-app international transfers, etc., while others might offer something else. Also, some mobile service providers have facilities that allow subscribers to borrow data or airtime (e.g. MTN Nigeria), while others do not. Hence, if a stakeholder group such as customers are asked why they choose to bank with FNB instead or Capitec bank, or why they prefer to use MTN over Cell C, they might likely mention the differences in the service brands offerings without hesitation.

The corporate brand has therefore become a key driver for service organisations to distinguish themselves, as well as position themselves in stakeholders' minds (Shandwick, 2015; Buil, Catalan & Martinez, 2015). This distinction and positioning are largely dependent on the way the organisation implements its activities and its corporate culture (McDonald et al., 2001:342). "This means that a brand's personality and culture cannot just be designed by a marketing department, but must depend on the whole organisation. Stakeholders prefer corporate brands with a clear and consistent presentation, and their perception of the brand highly depends on individual interactions with staff. Thus, emphasis has to be placed on the consistent delivery of the service" (McDonald et al., 2001:342).

Organisations with great corporate brands enjoy increased visibility, recognition and reputation (Xie & Boggs, 2006:349). Based on the potential of the corporate brand to give these benefits, Argenti and Drunkenmiller (2004:374) submit that companies should manage their corporate brand as a way of managing their reputation. This is because reputation and the corporate brand are different yet intertwined concepts. While the corporate brand focuses on relevance and differentiation to stakeholders, reputation ensures the legitimacy of the organisation with stakeholders (Corkindale & Belder, 2009). Ultimately, the effective management of the brand boosts corporate reputation.

In summary, the corporate brand is especially crucial for service firms because it allows for differentiation and gives a competitive advantage amidst the stiff competition. Service firms with prominent corporate brands are more recognised over their counterparts and consequently are considered more reputable. However, though the corporate brand significantly contributes to reputation, organisations must know other aspects with which their stakeholders assess them in order to be truly reputable.

3.4 REPUTATION IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Great importance is attached to corporate reputation in today's business environment that is characterised by inquisitive stakeholders, stiff competition, and social media platforms (Shamma, 2012:151). The world economic crisis in the late 2000s, as well as other crises that companies have experienced in the last decade have also strongly reinforced the importance of corporate reputation and there is now an increased effort among companies to build and sustain a positive reputation (Orukari, 2010).

According to Belasen (2008:58), intangibles, such as corporate reputation, drive many organisations, and make up over 80% of the organisation's market value. This statistic makes CR even more valuable and crucial for service organisations because stakeholders cannot pre-evaluate service quality before associating with or investing in the organisation. As a result, their decisions will be largely dependent on the corporate reputation and their trust in the organisation to deliver the brand promise (Mould, 2017; Josang et al., 2007:619), which is mostly influenced by the organisation's ranking, positive word of mouth, referral, testimonials, and direct experience (Yasin & Bozbay, 2012:508; Josang et al., 2007:621). This fundamentally makes CR the biggest indicator of a service organisation's competence, and it is no surprise that reputable service organisations record a higher performance than the less reputable ones. This is because stakeholders believe the reputable organisation will not engage in any act that will jeopardise its reputation, nor compromise it by failing to fulfil its promises and obligations (Yasin & Bozbay, 2012:509; Ingenhoff & Sommer, 2010:341; Jin et al., 2008; Hannington, 2011).

Service organisations must therefore strive to achieve favourable corporate reputation to remain competitive and relevant. One of the ways to achieve this is by reconsidering their role in the society and not just focus on profit for shareholders because financial performance is no longer the sole determinant of reputation (Mirvis, 2012; Bernstein, 2009; Greyser, 2009; Steyn & De Beer, 2009). In line with this, of the seven RepTrak dimensions used in assessing organisations, the 2020 Global RepTrak survey found *Products/services, Governance* and *Citizenship* to be the 1st, 2nd and 3rd most important reputation dimensions to stakeholders while *Financial performance* was the 4th relevant dimension. This outcome reiterates that indeed, corporate reputation requires much more than successful transactions; the role of businesses has evolved, and the dimensions that make the organisation reputable must be investigated.

However, a favourable reputation also puts an organisation under intense scrutiny usually fuelled by traditional media, social media, activist groups, etc. (Davies, 2003; Eccles et al., 2006; Kitchen & Laurence, 2003; Fombrun, 2010; Tucker & Melewar, 2005). Wepener and Boshoff (2015:163) claim this scrutiny is equally heightened by inquisitive stakeholders with an increasing demand for transparency, social/environmental responsiveness and accountability. An example is seen in the case of the South African retail company, *Woolworths*, which was rated the third most reputable company in 2018 South Africa RepTrak survey. Woolworths, in 2012, had asked two independent web researchers to leave their store because they wanted to check the prices of items (as they did with other stores) so that they could place it online for customers to compare prices. News of the incident circulated, and people were outraged and condemned the organisation, particularly because it created the impression that it had something to hide. The public outrage indicates that regardless of an organisation's reputation, it is not immune to public scrutiny. Stakeholders will react if they sense an organisation placed on a high pedestal might be unworthy of it.

The incident also reiterates the importance of this study, as the impact of issues and/or crises is more significant in the service industry because of its unique nature (Smith et al., 2013). Thus, by identifying the reputation dimensions for service organisations, they will become aware of what stakeholders expect of them, and this is expected to guide their conduct and deter them from taking actions that could expose them to the risk of reputation loss. This is particularly important because, unlike *Woolworths* that was able to surmount the incident, several other organisations have collapsed or are still struggling with their reputation as a result of similar or other incidents such as social irresponsibility, organisational error, financial mismanagement, and ethical misconduct.

For example, since 2016, *Ford* South Africa has been in the process of repairing its reputation following the explosion of many of its Kuga brand vehicles. However, the fact that *Woolworths* and *Ford* had a "second chance" does not mean other organisations will enjoy the same privilege. The privilege enjoyed by *Woolworths* and *Ford* could be explained by the fact that both companies already had a strong reputation before the incident and had earned a high degree of stakeholders' trust. This outcome is referred to as the halo effect. The belief is that reputable organisations have a greater chance of overcoming a crisis that would ordinarily spell disaster for less reputable organisations (Yasin & Bozbay, 2012:508; Shanker et al., 2002). Service organisations must therefore strive to earn a positive reputation.

To achieve this, Pirson and Malhotra (2008) suggest that organisations must create an ethical, value-based identity, and make it the corporate culture. Service firms, for instance, can ensure their employees behave in a consistent and trustworthy manner to external stakeholders. This will portray the firm as reliable, transparent, and also give stakeholders a sense of belonging. Doorley and Garcia's (2015:37) reputation formula that included the "Authenticity Factor" (see section 3.3.5) also emphasises how organisations can earn a strong reputation by first earning stakeholders' trust. According to them, trust is established and reputation is earned when all forms of organisational communication and behaviour are in line with the organisational identity.

3.5 REPUTATION AND TRUST

The relationship between CR and trust is well established in several pieces of literature (Jin et al., 2008). According to the 2017 IPSOS reputation survey of over 100 of the world's largest companies, when companies build trust, they also build their reputation because trust is a major factor that contributes to a strong reputation, as well as making organisations resilient when faced with challenges. Trust determines over 75% of business reputation (Grafe, 2013), so if an organisation loses its stakeholders' trust, it also loses reputation, which is fundamental to business relevance and competitiveness.

Trust is particularly crucial for service firms since the quality of service cannot be pre-determined due to its intangible nature. Once a service firm is able to earn its stakeholders' trust, the chances that such stakeholders will remain loyal are high as they will be unwilling to gamble with other organisations they are unsure of. However, just like reputation, once organisations lose stakeholders' trust, it will be hard to regain. Many organisations have collapsed after losing their stakeholders' trust. One cannot talk about the Enron scandal without mentioning Arthur Anderson, who lost his credibility and stakeholders' trust in the wake of the scandal in 2001.

Anderson managed Enron's accounts and operated one of the largest and most reputable accounting firms in the United States at the time. However, following the scandal, Anderson was found guilty of concealing large losses by devising complex financial structures and transactions that facilitated deception (Segal, 2018b; Jickling, 2003). The firm's collapse was not just because it lost its reputation as it still had its entire high-quality human resources and other assets, such as its financial, physical and intellectual capital which jointly contributed to its reputation (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004:32). Instead, the reputation loss and collapse are ascribed to the fact that it lost the trust and credibility its stakeholders had placed in it (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004:34). This incident and outcome validate the position of several researchers (Davies et al., 2010:531;

Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004:19; Jones, 2007), that when an organisation loses the trust of its stakeholders, it can pay an exorbitant price.

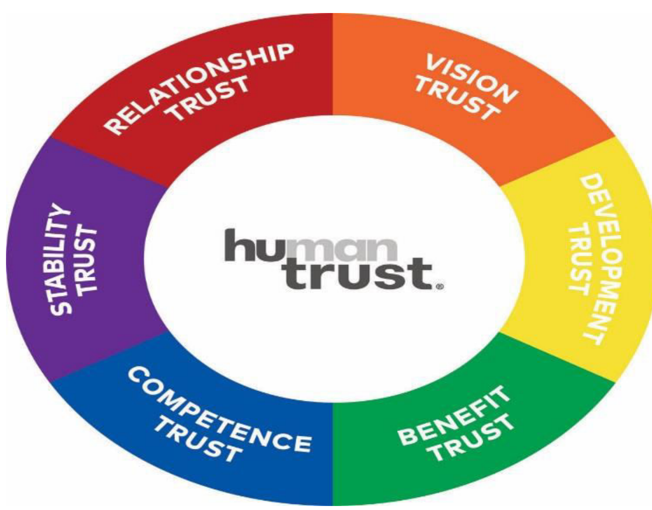
The concepts of reputation and trust are thus important dimensions of an organisation-stakeholder relationship, particularly for organisations that are purely service-based (Jeng, 2011:859; Gao & Zhang, 2006:735; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Trust is strengthened when the organisation is perceived as reliable and conducts its business with integrity (Keh & Xie, 2009:733). Once trust is established, stakeholders are more likely to value their experience, and ultimately become confident in the organisation.

In line with this study's aim to identify dimensions of corporate reputation for service organisations, trust has been established as a significant part of the reputation building process in the preceding paragraphs. The study posits that trust can be made an actionable concept if organisations engage the six dimensions contained in the HuTrust® model (shown in figure 3.4) namely "stability, development, relationship, benefit, vision and competence." *Stability* means that organisation must have a clear direction and be well grounded. Organisational activities must align with the stated direction as anything contrary might give stakeholders the impression that the organisation is unstable and incapable of delivering its brand promise. These negative impressions ultimately have an adverse effect on the corporate reputation. *Development* implies that organisations must show zeal for progress and leadership initiative. It is easier for stakeholders to place trust in an organisation that has shown steady progress over time, than in those that have not. Progress assures stakeholders that the organisation is competent in what it does, and this reduces risk perception, and enhances trust.

The third HuTrust® dimension, *Relationship*, refers to establishing an attractive and mutual organisation-stakeholder relationship. Building relationships with stakeholders is particularly important for service organisations as it involves a lot of 'contact'. Unlike product organisations, where a customer can just pick up a product and proceed to the check-out without having interaction with any staff, the same does not apply in service organisations. A lot of communication and contact happens in a service setting especially between staff and customers. Stakeholders are thus more likely to trust organisations they have established relationships with over others they have no significant connection with. The relationship gives them a sense of belonging, which boosts their trust and confidence that they will have a good service experience.

Benefit means a business must deliver a compelling benefit to its stakeholders. This should be a priority, because the primary purpose of business is to deliver value to stakeholders, and researchers (Esmaeilpour, 2018; Smith et al., 2013:134; Abd-El-Salam et al., 2013:180) emphasise that a service organisation that fails to do so is bound to fail. *Vision* implies that organisations must have an aspiration, what they want to pursue and know how they want to be. The corporate goal, as well as the strategies to achieve the goal must be clearly established, as this will enable the implementation of activities that drive the corporate vision. The sixth dimension, *competence*, implies that organisations must have the skill, knowledge, and resources to achieve their vision and portray competitiveness (Grafe, 2013). It will be impossible to achieve the first five dimensions if the organisation lacks the necessary capabilities in terms of competent human and intellectual resources. Following an explanation of the six HuTrust dimensions, this study concludes that implementing these dimensions will encourage stakeholders to trust the organisation, and once trust is earned, a favourable reputation will be easier to achieve.

Figure 3.4: Facets of the HuTrust model



Source: HuTrust website

3.6. IMPACT OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

Corporate reputation benefits organisations in diverse ways. Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) found that organisations with stronger reputation have "significantly higher return on assets, higher intangible wealth, lower debt-to-equity ratios, and higher 5-year growth rates, in each case dominating lower-rated companies by a factor of nearly two to one." This statement thus brings to the fore Smaizene's (2008) position that it is necessary to acknowledge the value and potential of corporate reputation to a company and some of them are discussed below.

3.6.1. Corporate Reputation and Competitive Advantage

Reputation gives an organisation a competitive advantage more than any intellectual and physical properties, and it also protects an organisation by reducing the negative impact a crisis or competitive attacks might have on it (Pires & Trez, 2018; Feldman et al., 2014:56). An approach to understanding how reputation gives a competitive advantage is the Resource-Based View (RBV), that posits that an organisation positions itself in an industry by gaining control of the material, human, organisational, locational resources and skills that can enable it to develop a unique value-creating strategy (Veh et al., 2019:326; Pires & Traz, 2018; Fombrun, 2012:98). Scholars (Vance & De Angelo, 2007; Brahim & Arab, 2011; Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Zigan, 2013) of the RBV then maintain reputation is the most intangible resource that is most valuable and rare, and also difficult to replicate or substitute. These characteristics of reputation based on the RBV thus place reputable organisations ahead of their counterparts. For example, a service organisation whose service offerings is inimitably different from what is commonly offered in its market environment and delivers high benefits to stakeholders will stand out among other service firms.

On the other hand, Gardberg and Fombrun (2002:303) point out that reputable organisations enjoy competitive advantages in four significant aspects in the business environment namely: 1) penetrating international markets; 2) congestion and disintegration of media; 3) increased open/transparent organisations; and 4) commodification. That is, transformation of goods, ideas, people and services into objects of trade. Organisations with favourable reputation enjoy these four privileges and due to this, researchers (Gorondutse et al., 2014; Caruana & Chircop, 2000; Roberts & Dowling, 2002, Kitchen & Laurence, 2003:116) have linked strong reputation to corporate success. This link is further proven in service organisations by Iddrissu (2013), who investigated the impact of corporate reputation on consumer patronage in the telecommunication industry in Ghana. The researcher found that reputation plays an important role in the selection process of service providers by customers, and the level of subscription to a service provider is significantly decreased following any negative perception of the service provider. Therefore, an unfavourable reputation puts a service organisation at risk by giving its competitors an edge over it. Service businesses must thus strive to identify the factors that make them reputable so as to gain a competitive advantage and enjoy the benefits the competitive advantage brings.

3.6.2. Corporate Reputation and Financial Performance

A positive reputation leads to increased financial performance (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001:17) through increase in sales, and positive word of mouth by stakeholders who are impressed with the organisation. "Though reputation is not identified as an asset on the balance sheet, it reveals itself in a company's turnover, affects investors' confidence, supplier attitudes and a myriad of other stakeholders in its capacity as relationship capital" (Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013:222). According to Wang (2014:167), reputation in its capacity as a relationship capital is an intermediary between a company and its potential and current stakeholders. That is, it describes all forms of relationships or interactions with people and organisations who are interested in the organisation's success. These relationships, which typically involve sharing ideas and knowledge, solving problems, and creating mutually beneficial connections (Wyk, 2018:48; Wang, 2014; Adams, 2013), when judiciously utilised, increase the financial performance of the organisation.

In the same vein, Hilman et al. (2014), in their study on the influence of corporate reputation on banks, found that reputation is a construct that has a direct effect on performance because the organisations' stakeholders find reputable ones will perform better than less reputable ones. The link between corporate reputation and financial performance is more prominent and direct in service companies like banks and mobile service providers (MSP), because stakeholders will dissociate quickly from a bank that has a bad track record, or a bank that is experiencing issues threatening its sustenance. Likewise, stakeholders will not patronise, or will switch from a MSP with a poor reputation to a better MSP, and the lack of patronage for these two service organisations quickly reflect in their financial records.

However, there is contention on whether financial performance is an antecedent of reputation, or a consequence. That is, some scholars believe a firm's reputation determines its financial performance, while some think the financial performance determines its reputation (Lusambo, 2017; Tracey, 2014). For example, Adeosun and Ganiyu's (2013) study show how a favourable reputation increases financial performance, whereas Aula and Mantere's (2008:21) instrumentalist view of corporate reputation (see section 3.2), as well as the dimensions of reputation in the Fortune's Most Admired Companies List (discussed in chapter four) suggest that an organisation's financial performance determines its reputation. Both perspectives are however valid because there are stakeholders who are drawn to an organisation because of its financial performance, and there are those stakeholders who associate with an organisation for other reasons, such as its quality of service, and their satisfaction subsequently increases the organisation's financial performance.

3.6.3. Corporate Reputation and Increasing Stakeholder Loyalty

A strong corporate reputation influences stakeholders' support towards the organisation's offerings which also allows the organisation to charge premium prices and enjoy a higher level of satisfaction and loyalty towards its brands (Walsh, Beatty & Holloway, 2015:173; Bracey, 2011; Ljubojevic & Ljubojevic, 2008; Carreras et al., 2013; Greyser, 2003). For instance, MTN has the second largest customer base in South Africa (Statista, 2020) despite having the most expensive data plans. Not only that, the telecom organisation also emerged as one of the 50 most reputable organisations in South Africa according to the 2018 SA RepTrak survey. Thus, it is likely that when a company is reputable, stakeholders may prefer it even when similar companies offer the same service at a much lower price.

Additionally, Gorondutse et al. (2014), in their study on the relationship between corporate reputation and customer loyalty in the Nigerian food and beverages industry, found that corporate reputation accounts for 80% of the variance in customer loyalty (both the behavioural, attitudinal and cognitive aspects). Thus, without the ability of the industry to satisfy their customers, it will be difficult for them to record profit, stay relevant, or even to survive (Gorondutse et al., 2014). Reputable organisations will therefore enjoy stakeholders' support and loyalty more than the less reputable ones (Walsh & Wiedmann, 2004; Bromley, 2001; Walsh et al., 2009). When stakeholders find an organisation that meets their expectations and gives them value, the chance of them going about to look for another organisation that provides the same service is decreased. Service organisations must therefore identify the dimensions that make them reputable in order to satisfy and give value to stakeholders, which will in turn earn them stakeholders' loyalty.

3.6.4. Corporate Reputation and Increasing Perception of Service Quality

Since the early 90s, service quality has been a strategic dimension for service organisations to ensure business success and survival (Esmaeilpour, 2018:8; Abd-El-Salam et al., 2013:178; Little & Little, 2009; Ismail et al., 2006:738; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). According to scholars (Esmaeilpour, 2018:8; Buil et al., 2016), many leading service organisations consider service quality as their most powerful competitive tool. This then underscores the importance for stakeholders to have a favourable perception of the organisation's quality of service. However, due to the intangible nature of services which makes it difficult for stakeholders to determine the quality of service prior to patronage, stakeholders are forced to rely on other factors in their decision-making process. One of those factors is the corporate reputation. Stakeholders consider the reputation of the service organisation as the first indicator of service quality (Southern Eye, 2014; Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2007:207; Jeng, 2011:852; Esmaeilpour, 2018:8; Dowling, 2004). Not only that, the corporate reputation also serves as the differentiating factor in situations where stakeholders have to make a choice between competing service providers. A favourable corporate reputation therefore boosts stakeholders' perception of the organisation's quality of service and this ultimately ensures its existence, relevance, and profitability.

Various empirical studies have also established the impact of corporate reputation in increasing the perception of service quality (see Abd-El-Salam, 2013; Jeng, 2011; Hansen et al., 2007; Esmaeilpour, 2018). Using a bank in Iran, and an international service company in Egypt for their respective investigations, Esmaeilpour (2018) and Abd-El-Salam et al. (2013) found that corporate reputation has a significant impact on stakeholders' perception of service quality. Similarly, Jeng (2011) investigated the impact of corporate reputation on customers' economic orientation (that is, perceived benefits of buying new services from current service provider), as well as on their cross-buying intentions (that is, when customers purchase additional services from the same service organisation) using a life insurance company in Taiwan. The study found that the favourable reputation of the service company increases the expected quality of new services from the company, which then increases cross-buying intentions. The study proved that favourable corporate reputation does not only improve the perception of service quality, but also boosts customers trust and confidence to patronise the organisation for additional services. This increased perception of service quality may also enable the organisation to charge a premium price for its services.

3.6.5. Corporate Reputation and Attracting Qualified Staff

High-quality employees are a source of competitive advantage for every organisation. From a recruitment perspective, corporate reputation plays an important role in attracting top talents who are eager to devote their knowledge and skills in working for an organisation (Partner, 2019; Kitchen & Laurence, 2003). Ibrahim (2020) buttresses the aforementioned notion by asserting that a favourable reputation is ten times more likely to attract the best talents and twenty times more able to retain them than less reputable organisations. Thus, corporate reputation is a major factor employees consider before deciding to work for an organisation because of its capacity to motivate and encourage commitment, which in turn contributes to superior productivity and overall organisational effectiveness (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004).

The impact of corporate reputation to attract potential staff is demonstrated in the 2008 "Reputation and the War for Talent" survey by Hill & Knowlton that comprised 527 MBA students across 12 top business schools in the United States, Asia and Europe. The study revealed that 96% of the students indicated that reputation was a significant factor in their choice of potential employer (Auger, Devinney, Dowling et al., 2013). Service organisations must therefore pay great attention to earning a favourable reputation in order to attract and retain qualified staff. Having high-quality staff who are aligned with organisational goals are central to achieving corporate success because employees are automatic brand ambassadors of organisations, and they are expected to communicate and exhibit behaviours that positively promote the organisations to other stakeholders. The perceptions these other stakeholders have which are based on their interactions with employees determine their subsequent patronage decision. Hence, having high-quality staff who are knowledgeable and can use initiative is an advantage for the service organisation. However, to build a strong reputation and attract great staff, organisations must know the dimensions that make them reputable and this is the goal of this study.

3.6.6 Corporate Reputation and Attracting Investors

Corporate reputation increases an organisation's attractiveness to a great number of potential investors. De Beer (2009) and Walsh and Beatty (2007) assert that organisations benefit when looking to attract investors if they have achieved some media coverage or if key management figures have a reputable profile. According to them, a strong reputation is a good signal for future profits and reduced risk perceptions, hence investors are more likely to invest in reputable firms. This impact of corporate reputation is particularly beneficial for organisations in emerging economies like Africa because the positive reputation attracts foreign investors, which gives the organisations better access to financial capital, mitigates uncertainty about investment, and increases the service organisations' efficiency and investment activities (Lee et al., 2017:1; Girma et al., 2008; Douma et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the ability of a favourable corporate reputation to attract investors may be tied to the belief that organisations that are favourably perceived by their diverse stakeholders to make smart business decisions and as such, investors are more willing to explore investment opportunities in such companies. Additionally, not only does the corporate reputation attract investors, it also impacts their satisfaction and loyalty. Helm (2007b) explains this latter impact using the self-perception theory and the cognitive dissonance theory. According to her, when an investor buys shares from a reputable organisation, the favourable perception of the organisation gives him satisfaction, might reinforce his purchase decision, and boosts his self-competence, whereas an investor who buys stock from an organisation with unfavourable reputation might harbour negative thoughts, or attitudes about his decision (cognitive dissonance) and may be quick to sell the stock so as to lessen the psychological trauma caused by cognitive dissonance. This demonstrates that not only will a positive corporate reputation attract investors, it will also give investors a feeling of satisfaction regarding their decision.

3.6.7. Corporate Reputation and International Expansion

As organisations expand, either by adding new product lines or by moving to a new environment, they need to establish their presence, as well as be mindful of the risks that come with the expansion. Hence, Marconi (2001) points out that when organisations expand, their good corporate reputation sustains them. This is also consistent with Kitchen and Laurence's (2003:116) assertion that "good corporate reputation precedes and helps organisations seeking international expansion, not only in terms of market penetration, but also by preparing the ground among key constituencies". For instance, based on the researcher's observation, whenever the famous retail store, Shoprite, opens a new branch in a different state in Nigeria, it is assumed that they easily penetrate the new environment because they have earned a reputation for offering products at cheaper rates. Corporate reputation therefore helps organisations penetrate new environments, and also gives potential stakeholders in the new environment the impression that the organisation is competent.

Table 3.3: Impact of corporate reputation on different stakeholders

Customer	• Enhances customer loyalty • Charging premium prices • Reduced cost of introducing new product • Positive word of mouth
Investor	• Reduces investors risk • Encourages more investment • Low cost of capital
Employees	• Attracts talented, dedicated staff • Improves retention ratio • Motivates employees to give their best
Supplier	• Improves bargaining power of firm • Increased payment period
Media	• Better media coverage
Community	• Ensures support from host community and peaceful operation of the organisation in the community

Source: Summarised from the literature discussed

3.7 SUMMARY

The goal of this chapter was to give readers a thorough understanding of the concept of corporate reputation, the different perspectives of the concept, as well as to offer a definition for corporate reputation in line with the study's scope. The various definitions and perspectives to CR stresses the subjective nature of the concept and also points out that there is no one-size-fits-all of what reputation entails. As such, reputation dimensions should be investigated and identified from each organisation's unique context as intended in this study. More so, as pointed out in the review of reputation components, there are a few discrepancies in different scholars' explanation of what some components consist of (especially the corporate image). This gap might explain why the confusion between the components and CR linger. However, the researcher attempted to provide clear distinctions between the components and corporate reputation. These distinctions are expected to reduce the confusion among readers, and also give a better understanding of each component's significance and input in achieving a favourable reputation with stakeholders.

The significance of corporate reputation as an intangible asset for service organisations in the business environment was also established. For an industry highly characterised by intangibility, it was necessary to discuss the potential of reputation to ensure its profitability, relevance, and continuity. In addition to this, 'trust' as a concept that contributes to building reputation was discussed in this chapter. As a point of departure, the chapter discussed the impact of a favourable reputation on organisations.

The next chapter discusses the antecedents of corporate reputation, how reputation can be built within the corporate communication framework, and the strategic management of the concept. The measurement of corporate reputation is also extensively discussed particularly as it concerns issues regarding the development of reputation measures (dimensions), existing measurement instruments, and other scientific studies that have investigated the dimensions of corporate reputation especially in a service setting.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BUILDING AND MANAGEMENT OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

"There is no advertisement as powerful as a positive reputation traveling fast."

- Brian Koslow

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The saturated business environment has made it difficult for organisations to easily carve a niche for themselves and achieve a competitive advantage. This is even worse for new organisations because stakeholders are not motivated to work with organisations without any record of accomplishment, especially for large-scale projects. While it is not impossible for these organisations to achieve a unique position, a lot of work and strategies is required for this to be possible. More so, the reliance on common communication strategies such as advertisement are no longer sufficient for organisations to stand out, and corporate reputation has become the major tool for corporate sustainability and competitive advantage, especially for service organisations (Davies et al., 2010:530; Jinfeng et al., 2014:128).

Organisations therefore need to prioritise reputation building, and reputation management. Also, because stakeholders are now sophisticated and their expectations go beyond the simple notions of customer satisfaction with products and services (Caruana & Chircop, 2000) to a broad mix of economic and social criteria (Fombrun & van Riel, 2003), it is crucial that organisations know the factors that make them reputable.

This chapter thus discusses factors that influence a favourable reputation (antecedents of corporate reputation), and the role of corporate communication in reputation building by focusing on four key areas, namely: issue management, crisis communication, media relations and employee communication. The chapter also discusses how corporate reputation can be managed by employing the physical elements of an organisation such as its leaders and employees, as well as the non-physical elements and activities of an organisation such as corporate governance and online stakeholder management. It is however crucial to state that while researchers have suggested numerous strategies for reputation management, only the strategies listed above are discussed in this study because they are deemed very relevant for service organisations in this study's context.

The chapter also discusses the measurement of corporate reputation. Researchers like Fombrun et al. (2000), Ponzi et al. (2011); Worcester (2009), Helm (2005), Olmedo-Cifuentes (2014) and Lloyd (2007) developed popular measures of corporate reputation based on attributes that make a company attractive (in terms of stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes and expectations towards an organisation). Some developed measures of reputation based on its antecedents and consequences (e.g. Shamma & Hassan, 2009; MacMillian et al., 2004), and fewer researchers have measured the concept using the organisation's personality (e.g. Davies et al., 2003).

The chapter concludes by also exploring the works of the few researchers that have put forward some dimensions for measuring the reputation of service organisations. However, an observed pattern is that most of the reputation dimensions are derived from the perspective of either employees or customers, or both. The focus of this study is however to establish the dimensions of reputation from the perspective of four key stakeholder groups of service firms, namely customers, employees, regulatory authorities and corporate communication office staff.

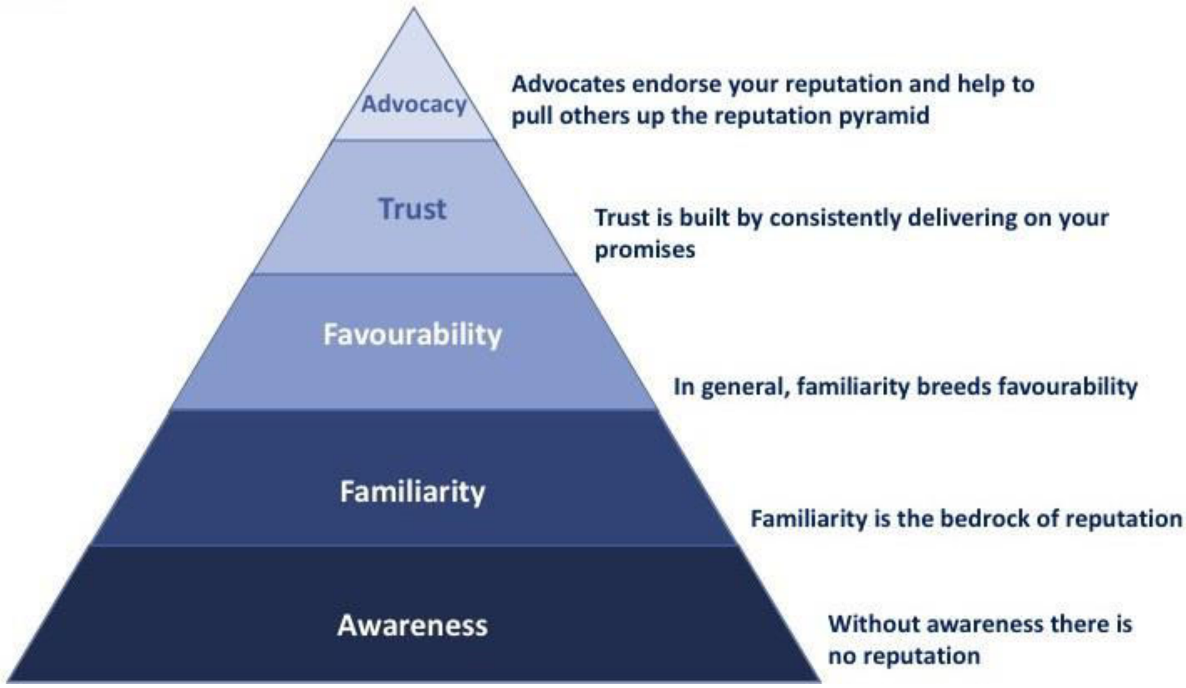
4.2 ANTECEDENTS OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

The realisation that reputation is a significant factor for corporate profitability and sustainability has given credence to knowing and understanding the factors or activities that contribute to building a favourable corporate reputation. Interestingly, early researchers argued over whether corporate reputation functions as a predictor or outcome of these factors (Fisher, 1996). Fisher likened the connection between a favourable reputation and the relevant factors or activities to the chicken and egg concept, stating, "it is not always clear which begets which, but it's awfully hard to have one without the other."

Despite this debatable role of corporate reputation (that is, whether it functions as a predictor or consequence), this study adopts the position of scholars (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004) that corporate reputation is the most reliable indicator of an organisation's capability to meet its stakeholders' needs, as well as an effective way to predict the outcome of stakeholders' association with the organisation.

Organisations can influence stakeholders' positive perceptions by being responsible, competent, communicating effectively and meeting stakeholders' needs (Aula & Mantere, 2008). The Ipsos MORI also identified five factors that contribute to reputation building. They include *awareness*, which refers to the degree to which stakeholders are aware of the organisation's offerings and *familiarity*, which refers to the organisation-stakeholder relationship. The third factor, *favourability,* describes the organisation's positioning before stakeholders such that the organisation is more patronised than its competitors. *Trust* then describes stakeholders' reduced risk perceptions and confidence in the organisation, and *advocacy* explains how stakeholders' trust in the company leads them to share positive information about it to others who might not have experienced the organisation (Worcester, 2009:584).

Figure 4.5: Ipsos Mori's antecedents of reputation



Source: Ipsos public affairs, 2014

Jinfeng et al. (2014:131) and Kim and Kim (2017:1), in their studies on the antecedents of corporate reputation in a service sector, found that *Quality factor/Corporate Ability* (CA) and *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) significantly contribute to reputation, and positively affect stakeholders' overall satisfaction and trust in the organisation. The Corporate Ability refers to an organisation's expertise in delivering its brand promise, which also includes the ability to improve the quality of service and innovate (Kim & Kim, 2017:1-2). It is therefore not only a strategic factor for attaining effectiveness in business, but also a factor that aids reputation building.

On the other hand, CSR practices are strategic investments that contribute significantly to reputation building, because stakeholders prefer companies that are socially responsible and value their associations with firms with a good focus (Almeida & Coelho 2018; Maden et al., 2012; Fu et al., 2014; McWilliams et al., 2006:4). For example, in a study among over 23,000 respondents across 23 countries in 4 continents, three in four of the respondents indicated that they seriously consider the social responsibility of an organisation when deciding what products to buy, or what services to pay for (Worcester, 2009). CSR is thus a significant factor that contributes to favourable corporate reputation and must be prioritised.

Jinfeng et al. (2014) further identified *operation performance factor* and *attractive factor* as antecedents of corporate reputation. Building on Schwaiger's (2004) assertion that a strong corporate reputation must include sympathy, and competency dimensions, Jingeng et al. (2014:131) point out that the quality factor and operation performance positively influence both the sympathy and competence dimensions of corporate reputation. Both sympathy and competence dimensions relate positively to the attractive factor, while the social responsibility factor appeals only to the sympathy dimension.

Likewise, Soleimani (2011) identified stakeholder power, shareholder rights protection and financial performance as antecedents of corporate reputation. According to him, stakeholder power is an input to corporate reputation because powerful stakeholder groups determine the standard, as well as shape the beliefs about the acceptable organisational behaviours in the society. These beliefs then become highly institutionalised (Davis & Marquis, 2005) and other stakeholders assess the organisation based on the subjective parameters or expectations pre-determined by these powerful stakeholders. Organisations also communicate their actions and outcomes based on the language and rhetoric the powerful stakeholders prefer, which further affects public opinion (Soleimani, Schneper & Newberry, 2014:995; Fiss & Zajac, 2004:507). Therefore, using Mendelow's power-interest matrix in the stakeholder theory (see section 2.3), organisations must give maximum attention to those stakeholders with high power and high interest because they are key players, and have the capacity to shape public opinion about the organisation. Organisations must also ensure that those stakeholders with high power but low interest are kept satisfied.

The shareholder rights protection implies the inputs to corporate reputation are determined by the economic situation the organisation operates in (Soleimani, 2011:63). For instance, stock performance will be a more prominent dimension of corporate reputation in capitalist societies when compared with countries where other social groups have dominant power. This establishes that the dimensions of reputation are influenced by the environmental factors within which the organisation is situated. Additionally, Soleimani (2011:59) explains that financial performance is an antecedent to reputation, because for organisations to be considered reputable, it requires the "legitimacy, trust, esteem, and admiration of shareholders, creditors, and other stakeholders that pay attention to financial outcomes." This is particularly important for service organisations like banks, where stakeholders and resource-providers are naturally risk averse, and only financially stable banks will be patronised and perceived favourably.

In the same vein, Fill and Roper (2008:14) posit that corporate reputation is influenced by four business factors, namely *general business management, financial management, corporate marketing* and *corporate communication*. These factors are crucial in building reputation since they primarily include the most fundamental aspect of business such as organisational core values and culture; shareholder value; leadership and management qualities; corporate brand; the marketing mix such as product/service promotions, price; corporate communication and establishing relationships with stakeholders. Clardy (2012) also grouped the antecedents of corporate reputation into three clusters, namely:

i) Stakeholders' personal observations, or experiences with the organisation, which include experiences with services rendered, and experience of the behaviour of employees.

ii) Indirect or secondary experiences with the organisation, influenced by rumours, reports on the organisation by the media, and through other stakeholders that may have had a negative experience with the organisation.

iii) Corporate communications functions and initiatives like media relations, effective crisis management, sound employee communication, advertisements, public relations, etc. These initiatives or strategies help organisations build relationships with stakeholders, and position them as leaders in their industry. Consequently, effective corporate communication has become a crucial driver for favourably positioning brands and building the corporate reputation (Guru et al., 2013:136).

In summary, while an organisation cannot determine its reputation, it can influence it since reputation is determined an organisation's ability to meet stakeholders' expectation. By knowing and meeting these expectations, stakeholders are more likely to have a favourable perception of the organisation. The literature reviewed indicate that factors such as quality of service/product, CSR, financial performance, stakeholders' power, authenticity of the organisation, corporate communication activities, attractiveness, stakeholders' trust, etc. influence the building of a favourable corporate reputation. The environment within which the organisation is situated, as well as the industry in which the organisation operates such as the service industry, equally influence these factors. The foregoing discussion thus reiterates the fact that various factors constitute reputation, and, as such, organisations must know the factors that make them reputable. How one of these factors, corporate communication, contributes to the building of CR is discussed in the next section.

Table 4.4: Summary of the antecedents of corporate reputation

Scholar (s)	Factors
Clardy (2012)	Direct and indirect experiences with the organisation like word-of-mouth referral, and media reports, corporate communication activities
Kim and Kim (2017), Almeida and Coelho (2018), McWilliams et al. (2006:4)	Quality of product/service; corporate social responsibility
Soleimani (2011)	Financial performance, type of economy in practice, stakeholders' power to influence others
Jinfeng et al. (2014)	Attractiveness of the organisation, effective organisation performance, organisation's emotional appeal to stakeholders, corporate social responsibility, quality of the organisation's offerings
Worcester (2009), Ipsos MORI	Knowledge of the service(s) offered, good relationship with stakeholders, effective brand positioning, stakeholders' trust in the organisation, positive review, testimonial, word-of-mouth referral

Source: As identified in the table

4.3 BUILDING REPUTATION WITHIN CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Cornelissen (2017:5) define corporate communication as "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 stakeholders the organisation depends on." Corporate communications enable organisations to reach multiple stakeholders and foster better understanding of their evolving needs in order to align their interests with that of the organisation (Shamma, 2012:154). Thus, it is the most important link between an organisation and its different stakeholders, and Guru et al. (2013:135) note that its primary objective is to increase public awareness and elicit cooperation and support by engaging in activities that remind and entrench the organisation and its offerings in stakeholders' minds.

The importance of corporate communication in achieving business objectives cannot be overemphasised and it is no surprise many modern organisations have begun prioritising this aspect of business. Various scholars (Guru et al., 2013:139; Fill & Roper, 2008:14; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001:17; Lewis, 2001:31) also established the significant role of communication in reputation building. For instance, Fombrun and Van Riel (2007) assert that reputation is the most meaningful outcome used to evaluate the success of any communication effort and, as such, belongs at the top of the corporate communication agenda. In line with this, the Financial Times (2018) submitted that corporate communication is regarded as the conscience of an organisation and is above all responsible for building and managing the firm's reputation. The task of building, protecting and maintaining the organisation's reputation is therefore the core function of corporate communication professionals (Cornelissen, 2017:3).

Amidst the many functions of corporate communication, its focus is on wholeness and totality by managing everything the organisation does or says in a unitary and consistent manner (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Christensen et al., 2008). This is consistent with the systems theory employed in this study, as the theory emphasises the need for organisations to adopt a holistic approach for managing all units in the organisation in order to be reputable. Corporate communication is therefore a vital tool for creating, monitoring and ensuring that all corporate activities are aligned, and have the potential to contribute towards a positive corporate reputation.

There is however a tendency for corporate communication to be misunderstood because many companies decide the activities they want to implement or message they want to share to a specific stakeholder group, and then embark on the task without considering that stakeholders may have different interests. Lewis (2001:31) explains that because stakeholders' expectations and the standards by which they evaluate the organisation vary, if messages are not streamlined based on stakeholders' preferences and priorities, the desired outcome of the messages will not be realised. Lewis' position brings to the fore the IMC strategy for reputation building discussed under the stakeholder theory (see section 2.3). The IMC strategy corroborates Lewis' position because it advocates the creation of different messages for each stakeholder group based on the area of interest in the organisation, since messages on activities that appeal to one stakeholder group might not appeal to another. However, "this is not to say that communications should be reactive and solely determined by the stakeholders' order of priority. But if communications fail to acknowledge stakeholders' priorities, they are not likely to be effective" (Lewis, 2001:31-32). Organisations must therefore take the initiative to know how to work out their communication content and strategy such that it appeals to stakeholders, while also achieving organisational objectives.

Consequently, Lewis (2001:35) identified five building blocks for a successful corporate communication as *Awareness, Involvement, Connection, Persuasion* and *Action* (see figure 4.6). According to him, awareness involves the organisation introducing itself to its stakeholders. It is primarily about the organisation's identity and addresses the question "who are we?". After creating awareness, the organisation then tries to engage stakeholders by informing them of what the organisation can do for them. Thereafter, the organisation engages itself with activities that draw stakeholders' attention to the organisation's contribution to communities and society. It is only when these first three foundations are established that the corporate communicator can persuade stakeholders (Lewis, 2001:35). If stakeholders are then persuaded, the ultimate goal of the communication will be to inspire action, which simply refers to as "what we want stakeholders to do".

Figure 4.6: Building blocks of effective corporate communication

Source: Compiled from Lewis, 2001

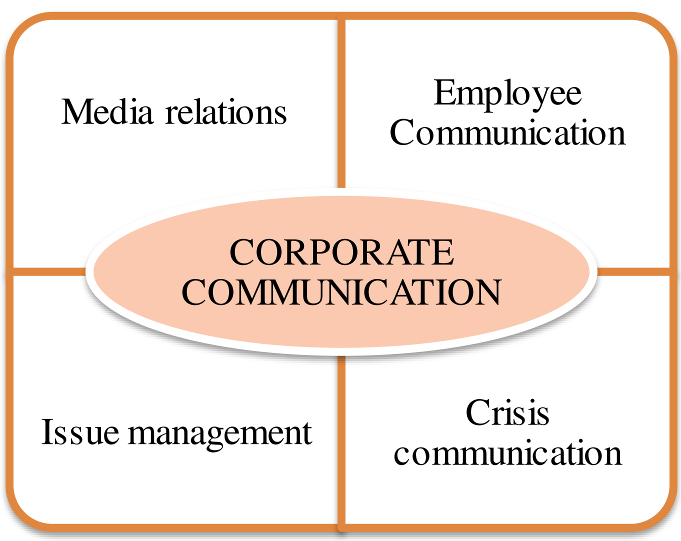
From the foregoing, the popular saying that "familiarity breeds contempt" does not apply to corporate communication or reputation, because the more an organisation is known, the more receptive stakeholders will be towards it. Consistent with this, Ljubojevic and Ljubojevic (2008:224) posit that organisations should engage in reputation-building activities that constantly place the organisation before stakeholders, such as public relations activities and advertising. Guru et al. (2013:135) however point out that reputation is not built by just displaying adverts, or engaging in public relations activities, but rather it is built by the implementation of several factors that have been identified from stakeholders. Therefore, while activities like advertising and public relations give the organisation publicity and contribute to the reputation formation process, the ultimate determinant of reputation stems from the responsible actions of a company, as well as its capacity and efforts to meet its stakeholders' expectations. These consistent positive actions of the organisation are then strengthened by competent communication.

4.3.1 Key Functions of Corporate Communication

Some corporate communication (CC) functions include media relations, crisis communications, speech writing, annual and interim reports, employee communications, budgeting for external public relations agencies, and organisation publications such as newsletters (Hutton et al., 2001). Neill (2015:120) also submits that the major functions of CC are reputation management, media relations, community relations, internal communications, crisis communication, government relations and social media management. Likewise, Cornelissen (2017:153) asserts that media relations, employee communication, issue management and crisis communication are key functions of CC that influence corporate reputation. In the same vein, Dowling (2006) points out that internal communication, external communication, and issues management are the three core functions of corporate communication.

While the CC functions differed among these scholars, four functions constantly appeared, namely media relations, employee/internal communication, issue management and crisis communication. These functions/areas are crucial for organisations, especially service organisations, to favourably position themselves and build reputation, because they involve stakeholders whose positive assessment is critical to the organisation's reputation. The four functions are discussed in subsequent headings.

Figure 4.7: Corporate communication functions for reputation building



Source: Researcher's conceptualisation

4.3.1.1 Media Relations

The Chicago School of Media Theory (2018) defines media as the principal means of mass communication such as radio, television, newspapers, and new media. The media is the second most important stakeholder after customers/clients (Gonzalez-Herrero & Ruiz, 2006:269), and it serves to communicate the actions of organisations and plays an integral role in reputation building.

Media relations therefore involves the management of an organisation's communication and interactions with the writers, editors and producers who provide the content and determine what is disseminated and published in the broadcast, print, and online media (Cornelissen, 2017:155). Media relations is not limited to relationships with journalists alone, but also involves all forms of responsibilities and relationships communication practitioners have with the media itself (listed in the table 4.5). It is therefore fundamental to the reputation building process, because the media control both the technologies that disseminate information about the organisation to the public, as well as the type of information that gets disseminated.

Table 4.5: Media relations role

Role	Inbound/Outbound	Main function	Usage of mass media
Journalist in residence	Inbound and outbound	Prepare content for internal and external news and information	Content source and information/news distributor
Organisation gatekeeper/ boundary spanner	Inbound and outbound	Central contact point, communication manager	Monitoring, evaluating, control

Trusted source	Inbound and outbound	Issue information, interact with senior journalists, counselling and advising, two-way flow with media	Joint production and interrelation, influence the media agenda
Publicist	Outbound	Promoting, producing content, and generating publicity	Influence gatekeepers, the media agenda and stakeholders, spread information
Spin doctor	Outbound	Persuasion, lobbying, and partisanship	Influence gatekeepers, the media agenda and stakeholders

Source: Zerfass et al., 2016:501

Deephouse (2000) points out that communication practitioners use various techniques like media research and monitoring, press releases, interviews, press conferences, and online news outlets to gain news coverage, build relationships with journalists and monitor their organisation over time. Similarly, communication practitioners also engage new techniques like content strategy, content marketing, native advertising, and brand journalism to achieve favourable news coverage and build reputation (Zerfass et al., 2016:200). *Content strategy* involves developing a pattern for creating, sharing and managing structured content targeted at specific stakeholders across various platforms (Andersen, 2014:7). *Brand journalism* involves engaging professional journalists and media producers to produce newsworthy content that promotes the brand, while *native advertising* refers to online advertisement that involves embedding sponsored messages with the editorial or entertainment content of the online publishers (Hallahan, 2014:392). On the other hand, *content marketing* describes the creation and distribution of all types of content that appeal to stakeholders and have the potential to keep them engaged with the organisation (Zerfass et al., 2016:502).

The extent to which organisations utilise these techniques and are in the media therefore determines how much they will be remembered. Consequently, the more favourable coverage an organisation gets increases the chances for stakeholders to form a positive perception of such an organisation (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). Service organisations can therefore influence stakeholders' favourable perception by sharing positive content/information that interest stakeholders and has the potential to generate positive conversations across various media platforms. Also, by building and maintaining good relationships with media writers/influencers/producers, the media personnel will be more inclined to publish positive news about the organisation and by so doing, the chances of favourably influencing stakeholders' perception of the organisation is increased. The outcome of this is that the service organisation becomes more prominent in stakeholders' minds, and over time, the media favourability and prominence begin to positively influence stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation, thereby leading to a strong corporate reputation. Cornelissen (2017:158) describes this influence as the "amplifying effect" which is synonymous with the agenda-setting theory of the media. The agenda-setting theory posits that the rate at which the media report on a topic determines the topic's prominence in people's minds. Simply put, while the press may not directly tell people what to think, it successfully tells its readers what to think about.

This influence of the media in building the reputation of service organisations can therefore not be underestimated. Shamma and Hassan's (2009:334) study that investigated corporate reputation in the US telecommunications industry demonstrates this important role of the media in building corporate reputation. Their study found that while direct experiences may increase customers' perceptions, and trust towards an organisation, information from the media shifts their focus to other aspects of the organisation they might have ignored but are crucial to the reputation formation process. That is, a customer may have formed a positive perception about the organisation because of its quality of service (QOS), but through information from the media, the customer may get to know the organisation poses a high risk to its environment, or is involved in some fraudulent activities. By virtue of this new information from the media, the positive perception that was earlier formed may quickly become negative. Organisations must therefore strive to utilise the media to gain good exposure.

Positive media coverage benefits the service organisations by increasing patronage, positive word of mouth, referrals, and ultimately contributes to a strong corporate reputation. Deephouse (2000) particularly emphasised how favourable news coverage is associated with competitive advantage and increased organisational performance. To support this, Villegas (2009:137) in his study revealed that one of the respondents working in the service industry affirmed that his competitor's brand name is more recognised because the competitor "has been quoted in certain publications that important stakeholders read." The respondent concluded that "my company's name being in one of those decisive magazines will positively affect our financial performance in the long run." It is however crucial to state that media coverage does not directly increase an organisation's performance, or the perception of stakeholders towards a company; rather, it influences the formation of these perceptions through the type of news it reports. Based on this, communication practitioners should seek to achieve favourable media evaluations through well-placed stories about the organisation's activities such as progress reports, corporate social responsibility initiatives and charitable giving.

4.3.1.2 Employee/Internal Communication

Employee communication and internal communication are used interchangeably because they both involve communicating with people internal to the organisation (Welch & Ruck, 2012:294). Welch and Jackson (2007:186) define internal communication as the process of managing the interaction between all internal stakeholders of an organisation in order to "promote commitment to the organisation, create a sense of belonging to it, as well as an awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims." According to them, stakeholders internal to the organisation include all employees, top management (such as the CEO), line managers (such as supervisors, team leaders, heads of departments), and project teams (such as internal communication review groups).

Quality employee communication is the first stage in building a favourable reputation (Villegas, 2009:135; Welch & Ruck, 2012:295; NI, 2008:168), particularly in service organisations where the core business activity involves employee-stakeholder interactions. Employees are usually stakeholders' first point of contact and this naturally makes them core influencers of corporate reputation. They are therefore an integral stakeholder group that must be communicated with because they represent the corporate brand, and their interactions with other stakeholders project the brand values, which influences how these other stakeholders perceive the organisation. Thus, service organisations that desire a favourable reputation must ensure that a thorough understanding of the brand values is engraved in employees' minds in order to encourage brand-supporting behaviours which ultimately influence stakeholders' positive perceptions.

Additionally, Carol Gstalder, the Senior Vice President, Reputation Management & Public Relations Practice for Harris Poll, points out that the manager must communicate in ways that resonates with employees in order for them to be encouraged to achieve company goals. When employees align with the brand values, and understand their own role in achieving a positive reputation, they will be more disposed to exhibit behaviours that promote these values in their interaction with external stakeholders.

It is therefore not surprising that the most reputable organisations prioritise employee communication and spend three times more on it than their less-admired counterparts because they understand their performance rests on effective communication with employees (Cornelissen, 2017; Dortok, 2006; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012:301). Furthermore, Olmedo-Cifuentes et al. (2014:84) state that employee communication will contribute to a favourable reputation if organisations first achieve a strong internal reputation by ensuring employees are satisfied. The satisfaction of employees is often spurred by their belief that they can trust the company, are adequately carried along in organisational activities, and that they have a voice and can contribute to the decision-making (Dortok, 2006).

4.3.1.3 Issue Management

The increased desire of stakeholders to know an organisation's position on issues of public concern like health and safety, environmental concerns, security and terrorism, and financial risks and regulation makes this area of CC significant. Adding to this, changes in the media landscape and the emergence of social media have also led to service organisations losing the dominant power on conversations concerning them. Stakeholders now have the power and platforms to generate conversation about an organisation (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010:316) and as such, issues may arise if misleading information is shared. How service companies manage issues is therefore very crucial to the reputation formation process.

Cornelissen (2017:192) defines an issue as a public concern regarding a company's operations and decisions that might trigger conflicting or controversial opinions and judgments regarding those decisions and operations. Issue management expert, Howard Chase, also describes issues as matters that are in contention between an organisation and another party in which decisive action is required in order to protect the organisation's reputation. Issues are therefore occurrences that have the tendency to threaten or destroy the corporate reputation if not properly managed. Examples include the organisation's position on dominant topics in society, activities that contradict stakeholders' culture and/or beliefs, compromising service quality, and environmental abuse.

Issue management is therefore concerned with organisations identifying and managing potentially significant issues in their internal and external environment (Christensen et al., 2008), and this may occasionally involve explaining or defending the company's actions to concerned publics (Dowling, 2006). Luoma-aho and Vos (2010:319) assert that this area of corporate communication is important in reputation building because it involves identifying the right issues that may affect the organisation, and the right arenas for discussing the issues. Thus, issue management is not only about analysing how issues evolve and how they may affect the service organisation, it also involves working out appropriate communication strategies for dealing with specific issues.

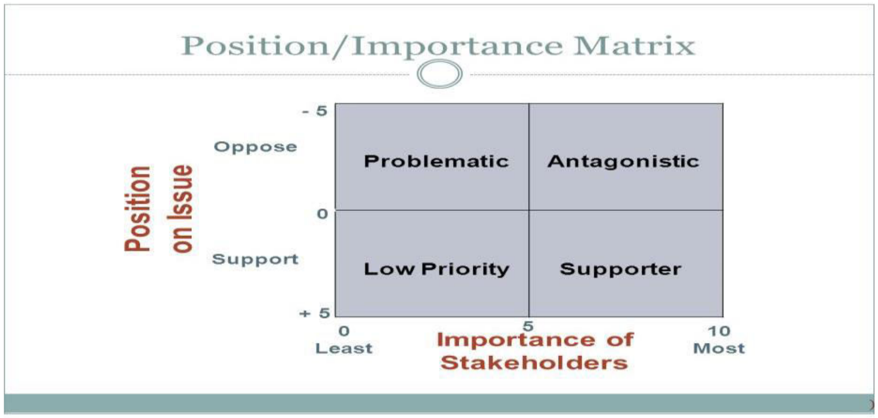
More importantly, the nature of the service industry particularly makes issue management a highly vital function because for an industry largely based on intangibles, perception is everything – it is what determines the sustenance or failure of organisations in this industry. So, service organisations cannot afford to ignore or be lax about issues raised by stakeholders. Rather, they must be attentive and resolve issues and also be proactive in identifying potential issues that may arise. This could give stakeholders the impression that the organisation is efficient, and every favourable perception among stakeholders is critical to the building of the corporate reputation.

As Cornelissen (2017:192) states, an issue may quickly become a crisis if ignored or improperly managed. Media attention or stakeholders' activities or outrage regarding an issue may also cause it to become a crisis. Cornelissen proposed four steps to managing potential or active issues in order to prevent them from becoming unmanageable or a crisis. According to him, organisations should conduct proper *environmental scanning,* which Burton and Pearson (2017) explain as the process of assessing actual and emerging issues that may positively or negatively affect the organisation. Thereafter, organisations must do *issue identification and analysis* in order to understand an active issue in terms of its intensity and how it may provoke responses from various stakeholder groups. Cornelissen adds that the issue analysis also involves identifying the lifecycle stage the issue falls within, that is: "*emergence, debate, codification,* or *enforcement.*" He explains that "corporate communicators frame the emerging issue and debate to prevent codification and enforcement if possible" (pg. 202).

The third stage involves deciding the appropriate *Issue-specific response strategies* such as *buffering* (ignoring or downplaying the issue), *bridging* (organisation actively engaging the issue), *advocacy* (changing the public's perception of an issue so that it matches that of the organisation), and *thought-leadership* (identifying a salient issue before it becomes intense and then proactively sharing the organisation's position on the issue). Organisations must then do a thorough *evaluation* at the last stage in order to assess how the issue evolved over time, how stakeholders' and public opinion have changed, and the success of the chosen response strategy (Cornelissen, 2017: 202).

Additionally, Cornelissen (2017:196) recommended the 'position-importance matrix' as a way to manage issues using stakeholders/public position and importance on issues. He categorised stakeholders/public into four groups. The first group, *problematic stakeholders/public* are those likely to be hostile or oppose the organisation's actions and are relatively important, even though they do not have the ability and influence to wield pressure on the organisation. *Antagonistic stakeholders/public* are those likely to act viciously or have an opposing/negative view about the organisation's course of action, and they also have power or influence over the company. On the other hand, the *low priority stakeholders/public* are those irrelevant stakeholders/public who wield no power or influence on the organisation even though they support its actions. *Supporter stakeholders/public* are those that support the company, and have very strong power or influence on its operations. This categorisation of stakeholders, based on their position and importance in the organisation, could serve as a means for service organisations to prioritise and effectively manage issues.

Figure 4.8: The position-importance matrix



Source: Cornelissen, 2017:196

4.3.1.4 Crisis Communication

Coombs (2017) defines a crisis as an incident or event that has the potential to generate negative outcomes and threaten corporate reputation. Doorley and Garcia (2015:299) note that a crisis is not necessarily a disastrous event unless it is ignored or poorly managed. This implies that crises do not begin by automatically destroying a company's reputation, rather, if the organisation ignores the crisis situation and continue its normal business without addressing the situation, stakeholders/public will become more agitated and begin to form unpleasant impressions about the organisation that could have grave consequences.

At the start of a crisis, organisations have a window of opportunity to manage the crisis situation without it causing any major reputational harm through competent communication. Researchers (Martic, 2020; Claeys et al., 2017; Torossian, 2015) have stressed the significance of timing in crisis communication, and there seems to be a unanimous view that the first 48 hours of a crisis is most important time frame for organisations because it determines whether the crisis becomes manageable, or goes out of control.

Claeys et al. (2013:294) explained two timing strategies in crisis communication as ex-antecrisis timing strategy and ex-postcrisis timing strategy. The ex-antecrisis strategy is usually called 'stealing thunder' and it describes situations whereby the organisation is the first to announce and give information on a crisis situation before another party. In the ex-postcrisis timing strategy, the crisis is made public by third parties, and the organisation waits to respond to inquiries from the media or other entities. Their study found that the ex-antecrisis timing strategy is most effective as it has the potential to minimise crisis damage compared to the ex-postcrisis timing strategy, where the organisation loses the dominant voice in the crisis narratives and just responds to allegations from third parties. Utilising the ex-antecrisis timing strategy therefore increases the communication professional's chance to control the crisis situations as much as possible in ways that reassure stakeholders that their interests are paramount, while also protecting the corporate reputation.

Effective crisis communication is significant for an organisation to sustain its legitimacy and remain competitive (Wang & Chiang, 2016), because every organisation at some point will be on the receiving end of an event that could threaten its reputation (Doorley & Garcia, 2015:300; Larkin & Regester, 2005; Mitroff & Anagnos, 2001). This area of CC is particularly crucial for service organisations because the risk perception of patronising a service provider must be minimal. This is also because, unlike product companies where stakeholders may still patronise the organisation during a crisis because of their attachment to a particular product brand, the same does not apply to service firms as there are always numerous service providers offering the same service that makes it easy for stakeholders to switch.

Bad crisis communication has damaged the reputation of many service organisations (e.g. the Southwest Airline' social media response); while effective crisis communication has enhanced the reputation of other service companies, as in the case of the 2007 fatal Virgin train crash. The Virgin train with about 180 passengers had derailed and crashed in England, killing one elderly woman and injuring 22 others. Immediately the Virgin boss (Richard Branson) who was on holiday in another country was informed, he wasted no time in visiting the crash site and the casualties in the hospital. While investigation was on-going, Branson held press conferences assuring stakeholders of the organisation's commitment to ensure the safety of passengers.

The organisation was open and continuously provided information throughout the crisis until investigation revealed the rail track was to blame. Virgin was applauded for how it handled the crisis; however, if Virgin had not communicated effectively during the crisis, it would have created the impression that it was incapable of communicating appropriately and managing a crisis, and this might have escalated the whole situation. Coombs and Tachkova (2019:73) describe this halo effect as "scansis", which they refer to as "the intersection between a crisis and a scandal…and is characterised by the strong moral outrage it evokes within stakeholders."

Scansis indicates the thin line between a crisis and a scandal, and a single organisational misdeed can make a crisis become a scandal. In the case of the Virgin train, even though the crisis attribution level to the organisation was minimal, the crisis could have turned to a scandal if it did not show empathy, or communicate appropriately.

Crisis communication is therefore a crucial aspect of reputation building and management. The communication professional is tasked with the responsibility of communicating in the most effective way to minimise negative outcomes and restore organisational reputation, as well as help the organisation understand how stakeholders are likely to perceive the company's actions or inaction.

It is important to note that although a key objective for corporate communication practitioners during a crisis is to protect the company's reputation, crisis communication should not only focus on protecting reputation. Effective crisis communication must first begin with addressing the physical and physiological concerns of those directly affected by the crisis, and thereafter, determine the degree of crisis responsibility of the organisation, and an appropriate response strategy (Cornelissen, 2017:216).

Coombs (2007:167) provides more insight on the aforementioned by categorising crisis in three clusters based on the level of organisational responsibility, namely "the victim cluster, the accidental cluster and the preventable cluster." He explains the *victim cluster* as situations in which the organisation itself is a victim of the crisis and adds that this cluster has very weak attributions of crisis responsibility. Examples include workplace violence, rumours, product tampering actions and natural disasters. Cases of technical-error accidents and challenges describe the *accidental cluster*. These types of crises have low attributions of crisis responsibility and it explains situations in which the event is considered unintentional or uncontrollable by the organisation (Coombs, 2007:167; An & Gower, 2009). A high crisis responsibility is attributed to the organisation under the *preventable cluster* because the event is considered purposeful. This cluster typifies occurrences deliberately caused by organisations by placing people at risk by either violating regulations, or taking inappropriate actions. Examples include human-error accidents, human-error product harm and organisational misdeeds.

By determining the crisis type, organisations can then choose an appropriate response strategy to manage the crisis situation. Coombs and Holladay (2012) suggest three crisis response strategies as "instructing information, adjusting information, and reputation repair." The *instructing information* strategies involve warning stakeholders about the crisis and providing information on how they can protect themselves from physical harm or from being victims. Likewise, the *adjusting information* strategy has been considered a useful strategy for helping stakeholders deal with the psychological effect of a crisis by using expressions of sympathy, providing information about the incident, offering counselling and taking corrective action (An & Gower, 2009; Coombs, 2007; Institute of Public Relations, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2012). The *reputation repair* strategies on the other hand are geared towards reducing the negative effects the crisis can have on public's perception (Coombs, 2007).

There are four types of crisis responses within the reputation repair strategy, namely denial, diminishment, rebuilding and bolstering (Coombs, 2007:170; Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Similar to Cornelissen's (2017:198) buffering strategy in issue management (see section 4.3.1.3), the *deny* strategy is geared towards eliminating any link between the organisation and the crisis. If the organisation truly does not have any involvement in the crisis, it will not experience any reputational loss if the deny strategy is used (Coombs, 2007:171). The *diminish* strategies attempts to lessen the impact of the crisis and the level of crisis responsibility that is attributed to the organisation (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). The *rebuild* strategy, on the other hand, seeks to enhance corporate reputation by offering material or forms of aid like compensation or a full apology to victims. Claeys and Caubergbe (2010) stress Coombs' ideology that the rebuild strategies are used for incidents that pose severe reputational threat such as intentional crises, or cases where an organisation has a bad crisis history. The *bolstering* strategy then involves reinforcing or reminding stakeholders about the positive deeds and actions of the organisation and/or how the organisation is a victim as well. Coombs adds that bolstering is a secondary response strategy that offers minimal opportunity to develop reputation and is best used to complement the three primary strategies and adjusting information.

In conclusion, the ultimate aim of corporate communications is to build and maintain favourable reputations with the stakeholder groups the organisation depends on. It is also evident that CC functions, such as media relations, issues management, crisis communication and employee communication aid in building the reputation of service companies when effectively implemented. Service organisations must therefore efficiently implement these functions to foster a strong organisation-stakeholder relationship, earn stakeholders' trust, sustain their legitimacy/social licence to operate and overall build a positive corporate reputation. However, the work does not stop at building or earning a favourable reputation; organisations must employ all of their resources to manage the favourable reputation, because a reputation built over a thousand years can be destroyed in a minute.

4.4 BUILDING REPUTATION IS NOT ENOUGH

Companies have a greater task after earning a good reputation because they are now more prominent, and may be the subject of public discourse. Simply put, reputable organisations become exposed to reputational risks which Aula (2010:44) explains as the likelihood or danger of losing reputation. Clothing brand, H&M, experienced a sudden public outrage when a student found bags of its unsold items destroyed and thrown in the garbage in New York. The student, who was shocked that H&M trashed the clothes instead of giving them to charity, informed the New York Times. The story soon found its way to Twitter and the company was forced to issue out its first statement about the ''trashgate'' incident (adapted from Aula, 2010:43). This incident might not have been a big issue if it involved an unknown or less reputable organisation.

The H&M case is one of many instances whereby organisations have had their actions questioned and had to protect their reputation. This shows that more than ever before, organisations must put mechanisms in place to manage reputation because even actions considered "harmless" (in the case of H&M and the Woolworths incident discussed in chapter 3) might cause public outrage and threaten the corporate reputation. The advent of social media also contributes to the increased risk of reputation loss as seen in the H&M case, as that was the platform that birthed and promoted the controversy. Prior to the advent of new media, reputation risk was lower, but now, organisations must realise that providing good services or implementing standard practices after earning a positive reputation is no longer enough to shield them from reputation loss (Pollak, Dorcak & Markovic, 2019).

Eccles et al. (2007) also stress how building CR only for the sake of being reputable is not enough due to evolving stakeholders' expectations, norms and interests. Eccles et al. (2007)

explain that when stakeholders' expectations change and the reputable organisation's mode of operation remains the same, a "reputation-reality gap" is created and this exposes the organisation to the risk of losing reputation. According to them, bridging this gap requires the organisation to either increase its capacity to satisfy stakeholder's evolving expectations, or attempt to lessen stakeholders' expectations of the organisation by reducing its brand promise. However, the issue with lessening stakeholders' expectations in a service setting is that there are several other organisations promising more and fulfilling the promises, and this might prompt stakeholders to not patronise the one promising less, or even transfer their patronage to where more value is offered and given. The strategy organisations employ to manage the corporate reputation therefore determines the advantage they will have over competitors and make them the service company of choice to stakeholders (LoFrisco, 2019). Service organisations must thus recognise that they have an even greater responsibility to keep abreast of evolving stakeholders' expectations, and step up the service provisions/value to stakeholders, even after earning a favourable reputation, so as to protect themselves from reputation loss.

The loss of reputation affects an organisation's ranking, competitiveness, stakeholders' trust and loyalty, loyalty and availability of employees, as well as its legitimacy and licence to operate (Neef, 2011; Aula, 2010:44). In line with this, Burke (2011) revealed that the consequences of losing reputation has encouraged over 82% of major organisations to make significant effort in managing reputational risk, while 81% have also increased their effort over the past three years according to a survey of 148 risk management executives in US and European corporations.

Though managing corporate reputation is no doubt a challenging task, service organisations must nonetheless be proactive and identify the most significant drivers that are instrumental to the management of this intangible asset. Consistent with this, McCann (2020) and LoFrisco (2019) assert that organisations must utilise the strategic elements and activities of the organisation for an effective reputation management programme. This study thus submits that by employing the tangible and intangible elements of an organisation, service organisations will to a large extent be able to ensure that on their part, they are not engaging in acts that risk their reputation.

4.5 THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF REPUTATION

Reputable companies go beyond being good, that is, delivering the brand promise, to developing strategies to sustain their favourable reputation (Serrat, 2017). This is because reputation is not static but increases or decreases based on the positioning and engagement of leading players of an organisation with stakeholders (Obloj & Obloj, 2006; Cravens & Oliver, 2005:294). This section discusses how the tangible and intangible elements of a service organisation, that is, employees, leader reputation, online stakeholder engagement, and corporate governance serve as drivers for managing corporate reputation.

4.5.1 Leader Reputation as Driver of Reputation Management

Several authors (Davies & Chun, 2009; Gaines-Ross, 2008; Murray & White, 2005, Lines, 2004:30) in the academic and business field have considered the leader or CEO as the main corporate entity responsible for reputation management. Earlier research by the reputation expert, Charles Fombrun, also suggests that reputable organisations have their root in the quality of their leaders. This is because at every point, the leader personifies the organisation's culture and becomes the face and voice of the organisation to various stakeholders, and his projection of the organisation influences stakeholders' perceptions. Hence, the reputation of the leader contributes to the reputation management process (Shamma, 2012; Men, 2012; Kitchen & Laurence 2003) and makes up almost fifty percent of corporate reputation (Davies & Chun, 2009, Reputation Institute, 2006).

Empirical research has established the importance of leader reputation in the reputation management process. Men's (2012) survey of 157 employees from a Fortune 500 company indicated that employees consider corporate reputation dependent on the leader's reputation. The survey extends Davies and Chun's (2009) notion, that the external reputation of a service organisation, to a large extent, depends on the employees' perception of their leader. In other words, the extent to which employees are satisfied with their leader influences how they relate with other stakeholders, and their disposition towards other stakeholders determines how the organisation is perceived.

Likewise, Shandwick's (2012) survey revealed that 66% of respondents indicated that their perceptions of CEOs affect their perception of the company's reputation. It is therefore no coincidence that studies by Fortune Magazine and the Financial Times found that most reputable companies also have prominent and reputable CEOs (e.g. Jack Welch, Bill Gates, Richard Branson, and Steve Jobs). The belief is that a reputable leader will ensure all necessary measures are set in place for the company to remain reputable.

More importantly, the importance of CEO reputation in the strategic management of corporate reputation is gaining more ground in developing countries within which this study context falls. Shandwick's (2015) global survey on the significance of leader reputation across 19 countries found that executives in developing countries attribute a higher percentage of an organisation's market value to the leader reputation than those in developed countries. In fact, three out of the top five countries that attributed more percentage of an organisation's value to the leader's reputation were developing countries. The implication of this is that more than ever, the CEO's reputation especially in a developing country like Nigeria, has become an indisputable aspect of reputation management. The CEO's reputation gives stakeholders an assurance of a good service experience, which then make them more willing to associate with, and patronise the organisation, even though they might not have prior personal interactions with the leader or the organisation.

CEOs now realise the link between their personal reputation and corporate reputation and are therefore more involved in the reputation management process (Gaines-Ross, 2009; Deloitte, 2014; Alsop, 2004). Shandwick's (2015) survey revealed how much CEOs recognise the benefits of positive leader reputation, as 87% of executives believe a good leader reputation attracts investors, and 83% believe it generates positive media coverage and protects the organisation in crisis situations. Leaders must therefore be mindful of their actions, especially in today's media environment where CEOs are constantly monitored (Minc, 2018). They must understand how their actions and inactions impact the reputation management process.

4.5.2 Employees as Drivers of Reputation Management

Employees are brand ambassadors of an organisation and they play a crucial role in reputation management (Siano et al., 2011:41; Villegas, 2009:135). Most times, they are the only interface stakeholders have with the service organisation, and as result, their behaviour reflects the organisation's reality and values. The reputation management process therefore requires employees' behaviour to be in line with the projected image of the organisation and its desired reputation (Buil et al., 2016:4; Cravens & Oliver, 2006:297).

More so, in the digital world today where 80% of employees use their individual social media accounts (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) also for work, when company related content are shared on those personal accounts, the organisation's visibility and reach online is increased (van Zoonen et al., 2016; Dreher 2014). Researchers state that information published on employees' accounts is perceived as more credible, authentic, and trustworthy than those posted on corporate accounts because it is believed that employees share information related to their workplace voluntarily and autonomously (Agresta & Bough, 2011:23; Helm, 2011; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). This then generates positive evaluation of the content and ultimately enhances the organisation's reputation.

However, just as employees' posts enhance the corporate reputation, it can also threaten it. Internet users are quick to dig out the work details/employer of a person that makes a crude comment on social media. The employer's actions or inactions towards the employee's behaviour then affect how the organisation is perceived. This indicates that not only are employees fundamental in the formation of corporate reputation, they are also crucial in preventing the decrease or loss of reputation.

Based on the aforementioned, employers are increasingly paying more attention to employees' behaviour, especially online, by sanctioning employees whose actions might negatively affect the company's reputation. For example, six employees of a service organisation, Ryanair, were dismissed in October 2018, because they had posted a picture of themselves sleeping on the floor of an airport in Spain after their flight was diverted. The picture, which Ryanair said was staged, quickly went viral online and the airline was criticised for mistreating its employees. Ryanair dismissed the allegation and revealed that the employees (cabin crew members) had been sacked because "the photo led to media reports that damaged the company's reputation and caused irreparable breach of trust with those six persons."

The situation at Ryanair reiterates the views of scholars (Alniacik, Alniacik & Erdogmus, 2012:6; Murray & White, 2005:351; Bingley, 2017; Villegas, 2009:135), that employees are important in reputation management as they serve as the image builders, event managers and crisis managers in the present times. This is also because employees are the focal point for anyone who wants to know more about the organisation, and their portrayal of the organisation determines other stakeholders' perception. Banks and telecommunication companies must therefore pay attention to their employees' attitudes, dispositions and communication towards stakeholders, especially the employee-customer relationship. These two service organisations deal with numerous stakeholders and receive several customer complaints or issues almost on a daily basis, and how employees respond to these customers will negatively or positively affect their perception of the organisation. Grunig (2006:6) thus rightly asserts that the only way to manage corporate reputation is by managing the internal behaviours. If employees understand their significant role in the strategic management of the corporate reputation, they will be more cautious in their actions.

4.5.3 Corporate Governance

Scholars believe that organisations adhering to the corporate governance norms help manage the corporate reputation and increase stakeholders' confidence (Ljubojevic & Ljubojevic, 2008:227; Bednar et al., 2012; Joosub, 2006). Corporate governance refers to the system by which organisations are managed and controlled (Horn, 2005). The act of 'managing' and 'controlling' the organisation in the definition involves developing control mechanisms in order to ensure maximum satisfaction for stakeholders, and value for shareholders (Aras & Crowther, 2008:441).

For corporate governance to serve as a driver for reputation management, service organisations must first investigate and know what their governance policy and practices need to be, because each service organisation has its own unique structure and stakeholders. The structure and distinct feature of the organisation will then determine the procedure or strategy that will ensure the smooth running of the organisation. In line with this, Aras and Crowther (2008:400) offer a general framework for ensuring that corporate governance serves as a strategy for managing corporate reputation. According to them, organisations must consistently practise the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness and responsibility. These principles positively project the service organisation before stakeholders, and by so doing, the corporate reputation is sustained.

In addition, the 'corporate board' is regarded as the most prominent way for corporate governance to serve as a means of managing the reputation of service organisations (Musteen, Datta & Kemmerer, 2010:500). The corporate board consists of individuals who govern the organisation by monitoring and controlling the most important decisions. Musteen et al. (2010)

assert that board characteristics such as *board composition*, *board size, leadership structure*, and the *tenure of outside directors* are the most important attributes that affect reputation management. In terms of the board size, service companies with larger boards are better equipped to sustain their reputation because they have more opportunities and access to external knowledge and networks, and this results in a higher reputation ranking (Musteen et al., 2010:502; Rhee & Lee, 2008). The board composition implies that when a service company has a board that consists of a higher number of people external to the organisation, the board will be seen as vigilant, independent, and objective, and this sustains the organisation's reputation, because it gives stakeholders the impression that the organisation will work in their best interest (Segal, 2018a). This is so because insider dominated boards are considered to be more subjective and sympathetic to management's choices and as a result, they become less effective in governance (Musteen et al., 2010:501).

In terms of the leadership structure, Mazzola, Ravasi and Gabbioneta (2006) found that companies who differentiate the internal control from the managerial responsibilities have a higher chance of managing and sustaining their reputation. That is, service companies that separate the CEO's responsibilities from the board chair's responsibilities by assigning the roles to two different individuals manage their reputation better. This is ascribed to the belief that the board's ability to perform its oversight and governance functions becomes limited when the person responsible for organisational performance (CEO), is also responsible for leading the team tasked with evaluating the CEOs performance (board chair). On the other hand, scholars (Musteen et al., 2010:502; Canavan, Jones & Potter, 2004) also assert that outside directors who serve a long tenure eventually befriend the organisation rather than monitor it, and this makes the organisation ineffective and threatens its reputation. This then explains why the 'director tenure' is one of the significant criteria for assessing board effectiveness by governance rating agencies, with a lower score assigned to boards with longer director tenure (Canavan et al., 2004).

Also, Niu and Berberich (2015), in their assessment of 1500 directors, found that long-tenured directors are more likely to be linked with governance issues such as a corporate bankruptcy, accounting restatements, litigation or regulatory infractions. However, some scholars (Elm, 2017:ii; Clements, Jessup, Neill & Wertheim, 2018) oppose this notion by stating that long tenure does not decrease the director's performance, but rather increases the director's quality and capacity to effectively govern the organisation – which consequently enhances and sustains its reputation. This could be explained by the fact that long-tenured directors have more knowledge about the organisation, and over time have become more experienced in running the organisation than newer directors. This study therefore argues that long tenure might not be the principal cause of a director's inefficiency, as it may be due to several other factors like the director's personal incompetence, overfamiliarity, or discontinued interest in the organisation, etc. Service organisations must therefore on a periodic basis conduct a thorough evaluation of their current system of governance, and then reflect and determine the structure that is most suitable for them.

4.5.4 Online Reputation Management

Online reputation management (ORM) is one of the most strategic ways to manage reputation in business settings (Pollak et al., 2019; LoFrisco, 2019). It describes the process by which an organisation relates with people online, creates shareable contents, monitors conversations about it, and addresses negative content or comments with the aim of achieving enhanced trustworthiness, stakeholder commitment, and positive attitudes towards the company (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015:59). It also entails the organisation's use of social media platforms to build trust among stakeholders by communicating in a consistent, transparent, and engaging manner (McCorkindale & DiStaso, 2013: 508).

ORM is a core activity that every service organisation must incorporate in its reputation management plan in order to be aware of all information circulating about it online. This is because, just as positive information spreads about the organisation, misleading information that could threaten the CR is also shared, and often the organisation is unaware of such information. Thus, through the ORM process, service organisations will be able to correct misleading information, and can also become actively involved in the outcome of search engines results that increases the organisations' visibility and contribute to good publicity (Vartiak, 2015:271).

Monitoring conversations online is however a difficult task for organisations (Amigó et al., 2010:1) because there is a new conversation almost every minute, especially on social media. Before the social media era, organisations had full control over their contents and stakeholders had access only to content made available by the organisations (Aula & Mantere, 2008:168).

However, this is no longer the case in the social media age today, as stakeholders are to a large extent now determining, disseminating, modifying, and discussing the content (Jones et al., 2009:928; Kietzmann et al., 2011:241). This inability of organisations to have autonomy over content about them inherently makes it almost impossible to control discussions that involves them online, particularly on social media platforms (Aula 2010:45). So, while the organisation cannot control discussions concerning it, it can utilise ORM to strategically correct misleading information, engage with stakeholders, and manage its reputation.

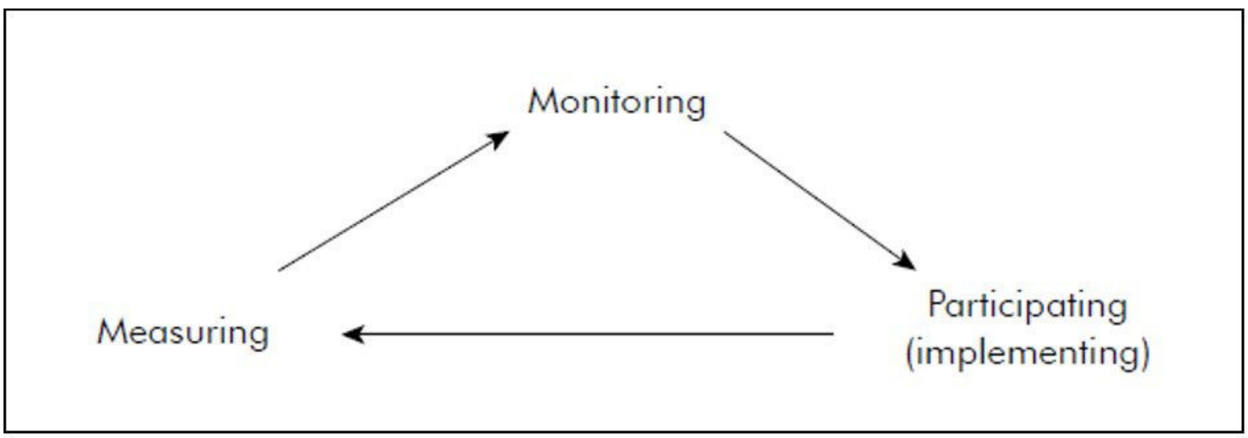
In terms of ORM serving as a tool to manage corporate reputation, a study conducted by the Retail Consumer Report in 2011 found that 68% of customers who left a bad comment or posted an issue about their experiences on social media were contacted by the retail company. Based on the feedback, 34% of the customers deleted the negative comment they earlier posted, 33% later posted a positive review, while 18% of the customers increased their patronage and became loyal to the company (Aaron, 2012). However, despite the significant positive influence ORM has on corporate reputation, Burke's (2011) survey indicates that only 34 percent of executives said they regularly monitor social media for information about their organisation, and only 10 percent actively participate in them. Given the evidence contained in the Retail Consumer Report, service firms must prioritise ORM as a strategy for managing corporate reputation management because stakeholders' positive reviews, loyalty and referrals are vital to the corporate success.

On the other hand, Aula (2010:48) identified four strategies for online reputation management via social media as strategy of absence, strategy of presence, strategy of attendance and strategy of omnipresence. In the *strategy of absence*, the organisation does not actively engage in conversations, and the information flow is one-way, that is, from the organisation to its stakeholders. In the *strategy of presence*, the organisation is aware of the conversations about it on social media, but still chooses to manage its reputation via traditional public relations whereby the organisation addresses stakeholders through predetermined platforms.

The *strategy of attendance* involves the organisation monitoring social media conversations by listening, observing, collecting and internally sharing relevant information about the firm, while the *strategy of omnipresence* involves continuously engaging with stakeholders on social media platforms. Aula (2010) however recommends that since social media exposes organisations to reputational risks, organisations should adopt the strategy of omnipresence. Aside from using the strategy of omnipresence to manage reputational risk, this study submits that a service organisation should also adopt the strategy as a way of identifying and understanding stakeholders' expectations of the organisation. By so doing, the organisation will be able to establish the dimensions that make it reputable.

For organisations to therefore achieve an effective ORM process, Jones et al. (2009:929-930) stress that organisations must: (1) actively monitor all social platforms to know what is being said about the company. (2) Be actively engaged in the use of social media by posting relevant content, and relating with stakeholders; and (3) measure the impact of social media activities and engagement on corporate reputation. In the same vein, Bunting and Lipski (2001:176) note that effective ORM must include: (1) Engaging opposition (responding to criticisms and acknowledging stakeholder's right to have alternative points of view); (2) Direct communication (communicating with stakeholders online); (3) Third-party endorsement (e.g. celebrity endorsement); and (4) Building relationships (proactively building relationships with stakeholders on different online platforms).

Figure 4.9: Online Reputation Management Process



Source: Lima, Jones & Temperly, in Jones et al., 2009:929

In conclusion, while several strategies have been suggested for managing reputation, the key components or players of any reputation management strategies include its leader/CEO, its employees' behaviour, the corporate governance, and how the organisation manages conversations and engages stakeholders online. These four areas encapsulate the basic tenet of reputation management in service organisations, and, as such, service organisations must give priority to these areas because their reputation is what ultimately ensures their profitability and sustainability.

4.6 THE MEASUREMENT OF CORPORATE REPUTATION

Measuring corporate reputation has become increasingly important in today's business environment given the stiff competition and stakeholders' evolving needs. As earlier established that stakeholders solely determine corporate reputation, measurement becomes pertinent so that organisations can know how well they are performing in meeting these stakeholders' needs, as well as their performance when compared with competitors. The outcome of the measurement also enables managers to improve reputation in specific spheres of the organisation on a local or global level (Helm & Klode, 2011:97). Additionally, just as the reflective paradigm suggests that reputable organisations must develop the ability of predicting potential conflicts, Carroll (2011) submits that regular monitoring of an organisation's stance on the reputational map can also help it identify potential issues.

Given the significance of corporate reputation and its measurement, scholars believe that the development of formal measurement frameworks based on robust empirical studies is not growing at an equally significant rate (Carroll, 2016:616; Kitchen & Laurence, 2003:108; Feldman et al., 2014:58). Some of the challenges with definitions and measurements of CR, as well as existing measurement instruments are discussed in subsequent sections.

4.7 ISSUES WITH DEFINING AND MEASURING CORPORATE REPUTATION

Leading authors (Dowling, 2016:207; Feldman et al., 2014:58; Agarwal et al., 2014:485; Wartick, 2002:373; Walker, 2010) in corporate reputation literature agree that several issues and shortfalls exist in the definitions and measurement of the concept that have slowed its growth. As discussed in chapter 3, there is no universal agreement among researchers on what corporate reputation really entails and many researchers have called for a clearer and more comprehensive definition. According to Ponzi et al. (2011) and Wartick (2002:372), one cannot talk about measurement until one knows what is to be measured. This is because the construct definition is what determines the nature of research questions to be posed, the methods to be used, the way measures are designed and the way findings are translated; hence, "poorly defined constructs make it difficult to be confident of the empirical findings, non-findings and discrepancies" (Dowling, 2016:207).

Despite the different perspectives towards the concept of corporate reputation, there seems to be some sort of agreement among researchers on the characteristics that define the concept. They agree that corporate reputation is an intangible asset (Feldman et al., 2014:54; Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013:222; Ponzi et al., 2011:15); it is based on perceptions (Fombrun et al. 2015:4; Van der Merwe & Puth, 2014:147; Walker, 2010:370; Wartick, 2002:379); it consist of several dimensions (Fombrun, 2012:102; Olmedo-Cifuentes & Martınez-Leon, 2011:79; Jensen et al., 2012); and it is influenced by stakeholders' direct and indirect experiences (Hardeck & Hertl, 2014:313; Shamma, 2012:156; Clardy, 2012). Also, it involves how well an organisation performs against its competitors (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012:1057; Barnett et al., 2006:34).

Various measurement instruments have been developed over time, but researchers (Veh et al., 2019:327; Dowling & Gardberg, 2012; Balmer, 2001:248) criticise some of these instruments for further propagating the difficulty in differentiating corporate reputation from its components (e.g. corporate identity, corporate image and corporate brand). These related concepts were thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. Dowling (2016:207) also points out that some of these instruments have been criticised due to the realisation that literature was used to inform the measures of corporate reputation in some, while in others it was not. According to him, while the Fortune's Most Admired Companies (FMAC) measure is publicised by business magazines, and used extensively in scholarly research, it is not grounded in any formal definition of reputation. By contrast, the Reputation Quotient's (RQ) measures of reputation is underpinned by a formal definition, but the measures do not accurately reflect the definition (Dowling 2016:207). These examples suggest that the problem of not basing the measures of reputation on a formal definition, or 'defining the construct one way but measuring a (slightly) different construct' means some of these measurement instruments are flawed. These gaps emphasise the importance of this study – the dimensions of reputation specifically for service organisations in a developing context like Nigeria must be identified as it is risky to assume that the dimensions contained in the existing measurement instrument are suitable for these organisations.

Furthermore, Feldman et al. (2014:58) believes some of the current measures of corporate reputation are biased in nature. According to the researchers, the source of bias is associated with the selection of respondents and selection of the evaluation criteria. Most measures lack a representative sample of stakeholders as respondents; focusing only on the perceptions of managers and business consultants. Therefore, most of them lack content validity (Feldman et al., 2014:59). Also, these instruments have been criticised for their inability to provide ways to assess how an organisation can develop its reputation (Money & Hillenbrand, 2006); their lack of cross-cultural validity which would allow for international comparability (Feldman et al., 2014:59); and also because they are not industry-specific (Dowling & Gardberg, 2012; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012:22; Kanto et al., 2015:410; Chun, 2005:99). Based on these gaps, many scholars call for the development of more valid measures of corporate reputation, based on rigorous theoretical and conceptual development.

4.8 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES TO MEASURING REPUTATION

Shamma (2012:159) explains that reputation is measured either from a specific stakeholder's perspective, or across all stakeholder groups (generic). Just as the name implies, the stakeholder-specific approach measures reputation only from one stakeholder's perspective (e.g. the consumer), while the second group proposes a more standard and generic approach for measuring corporate reputation by cutting across all stakeholder groups (Shamma, 2012:159; Puncheva-Michelotti & Michelotti, 2010). Proponents of the general measure believe reputation is a general construct that should be applied generally to all stakeholder groups even though they may not have a direct experience with these dimensions (Shamma, 2012:159). Walker (2010) also argues that since perceptions of the corporate reputation may vary across the different stakeholder groups, the measurement and dimensions derived from just one stakeholder group (e.g. employees) cannot be said to be the corporate reputation, because reputation is the aggregate of all stakeholders' perceptions.

This study uses the generic approach to establish the dimensions of reputation for service organisations, as the study sample cuts across the four main stakeholder groups of the selected service firms, namely customers, employees, regulatory bodies and corporate communication office staff. This is because a strong corporate reputation is grounded on the socially unique experiences and relationships with all these important stakeholder groups (Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008; Scott, 2007). Be it a consumer's positive experience about the service, an employee's experience at work, or the regulatory body's satisfactory assessment of the organisation's way of conducting its business, they all collectively determine the corporate reputation.

4.9 REPUTATION IN SPECIFIC CONTEXTS

It is emphasised throughout this study that the dimensions of corporate reputation vary based on the industry in which the organisations operate. Shamma (2012:163) points out that there might also be some cultural factors to consider when investigating reputation dimensions in a new environment. Consistent with this, Davies (2011) cautioned that it is risky to assume that the reputation dimensions derived in one context (e.g. in one type of industry, with one stakeholder group, or in one country) will be valid when applied in a different context. An example is Kanto et al. (2015:414) study that examined the suitability of the Reputation Quotient when applied to Malaysian banking stakeholders. The researchers found that of the six dimensions of reputation in the instrument (see section 4.10.1.2), "*workplace environment*" was not a reputation dimension considered by stakeholders of Malaysian banks, whereas Trotta and Cavallaro (2012:28) in their study did find the "*workplace environment"* to be a key dimension of reputation in Italian banks. Also, Shamma and Hassan (2009:326), in their study on the reputation dimensions in the US telecommunication industry, found that corporate social responsibility was not a significant dimension to stakeholders, while Yasin and Bozbay (2012:514), and Awang and Jusoff (2009:177) both found CSR to be a significant dimension for the telecommunication industry in Turkey and Malaysia in their respective studies.

Based on the aforementioned, this study argues that separate dimensions of corporate reputation exist for every industry and these dimensions are influenced by the organisation's physical location /environment. Reputation dimensions must therefore be investigated based on the industry and environment in which the organisations operate, which is the focus of this study. This will reduce generalisability but improve validity (Feldman et al., 2014). Additionally, the dimensions can only be valid if the investigation involves all relevant stakeholder groups of the organisations, since reputation emanates from the collective perception of all stakeholders. This study investigated the reputation dimensions from the perspective of four primary and relevant stakeholders of service organisations.

4.10 EXISTING INSTRUMENTS FOR MEASURING CORPORATE REPUTATION

Various researchers have explored the dimension of corporate reputation in various industries, with some developing their own measurement instrument. Reviewing these existing instruments is paramount for this study since the main goal is to identify the dimensions of reputation for service organisations, hence consulting secondary data is crucial. Also, a review of these existing instruments will give insight into the approaches used to develop the instruments, as well as their shortcomings. The existing measurement instruments have been grouped and will be discussed according to the following clusters:

i) Attribute based measurements – in terms of stakeholders' expectations and attitudes about an organisation's behaviour and performance (Ponzi et al., 2011; Worcester, 2009; Fombrun, Ponzi & Newberry, 2015; Fombrun et al., 2000; Helm, 2005).

ii) Measurements based on the antecedents and consequences of corporate reputation (MacMillan et al., 2005; MacMillan et al., 2000).

iii) Measurements based on organisation's personality (Davies et al., 2003, 2004; Chun & Davies, 2006; Davies, 2013).

iv) Measurements from other perspectives (Olmedo et al., 2014; Caruana & Chircop, 2000; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012; Lloyd, 2007; Newell & Goldsmith, 2001).

4.10.1 Attributes Based Measurements

This is perhaps the most used approach to measuring corporate reputation. Proponents of this approach believe that when a company, in this case, a service firm, possesses certain attributes expected by stakeholders, the stakeholders will reward the organisation with positive attitudes such as increased patronage, referrals, positive reviews, and loyalty. These positive actions of stakeholders will then increase the reputation score of the organisation because it has done right before its stakeholders (Berens & Van Riel, 2004).

Here, reputation dimensions are based on cognitive or affective measures, or a combination of both (Davies, 2011). The rational dimensions stakeholders consider for reputation describe the cognitive measures, while the dimensions that describe stakeholders' emotions or feelings towards the organisation are the affective measures. The major measurement instruments in this cluster include Fortune's Most Admired Companies List, Reputation Quotient, RepTrak, and Worcester's Reputation Pillars. These instruments are discussed below.

4.10.1.1 Fortune's Most Admired Companies List (FMAC)

The FMAC list was developed following a discussion with business leaders and financial analysts to determine what qualities they admire in a company (Coombs, 2008; Money & Hillenbrand, 2007). Nine key attributes were identified, namely: "Innovativeness; Quality of management; Ability to attract, develop and retain talented employees; Value of long-term investments; Use of corporate assets; Quality of products and services offered; Financial soundness; Community and environmental responsibility; and Effectiveness in doing business globally" (Davies, 2011:52).

The list has been criticised over the years, and the criticisms usually centre on (1) bias in respondents for the survey (it involved only financially oriented 'experts'), and (2) bias of the dimensions (they mainly focus on an organisation's financial performance). Although it is unclear how the list was developed, or whether the standard procedures for developing reputation measurement instruments were adhered to (Helm & Klode, 2011:93), it is continuously used on a regular basis to publish America's Most Admired Company list, and its dimensions have also been used in many researches (e.g. Chun, 2005; Bromley, 2000). Detailed explanations of the criticisms are given in the table below.

Table 4.6: Criticisms of the FMAC List

Factors	**Selection of Respondents**	**Financial Bias**	**Methodology**
	The fact that the respondents chosen to develop the dimensions contained in the lists consisted of people who are only concerned with	Because of the type of respondents selected, the dimensions are biased. All the dimensions focus on the organisation's financial qualities except	It is not grounded in any theory and the reputation dimensions are merely described in general terms. Its attributes are not given.

Explanations	the financial qualities of the organisation (e.g. financial analysts and executive directors) is seen by critics as the ultimate error. Since corporate reputation is the collective perception of all stakeholders, the FMAC list is not a suitable measure of reputation because it lacks other stakeholders' perceptions such as clients, suppliers, employees, etc.	the community and environmental responsibility dimension.	Organisations were selected by their revenue size. It measured image and not reputation because it assessed the perception of only one stakeholder group, whereas, reputation involves the aggregate perception of all stakeholder groups. The dimensions were not subjected to validity or reliability test.

Source: Compiled from Dowling, 2016; Shamma, 2012; Wartick, 2002; Olmedo-Cifuentes et al., 2014.

4.10.1.2 Reputation Quotient (RQ)

The Reputation Quotient is the most cited measure of corporate reputation in literature, and it contains broader dimensions than the FMAC list. Proponents of the RQ, Fombrun et al. (2000), reveal that corporate reputation combines rational and emotional appeal, and that people justify their feelings about organisations based on 20 attributes summarised into six dimensions, namely:

1. **Emotional appeal**: how much the organisation is liked, admired and respected.
2. **Products and services**: perceptions of quality, innovation, value and reliability of the company's products and services.

3. **Vision and leadership**: how the organisation explore market opportunities, demonstrates a clear vision and a strong leadership.
4. **Workplace environment**: perceptions of how the organisation is a good employer, the qualities of its employees, and how it rewards its employees.
5. **Social and environmental responsibilities**: perceptions of how the organisation support good causes, and how it deals with its community and environment.
6. **Financial performance**: perceptions of the company's profitability, low risk perception, prospects, and outperforming competitors.

All the dimensions, except the first one (emotional appeal), constitute the rational appeal, and denote the same thing as Davies' (2011) cognitive measure (see section 4.10.1). While the RQ has been appraised for having broader dimensions, it has also been criticised for lacking adequate information on the items that make up the dimensions and as a result, there is no clear distinction between the reputation dimensions and its drivers (Schwaiger & Raithel, 2015:232; Money & Hillenbrand, 2006).

The instrument is also criticised because the dimensions were derived from the perspective of only one stakeholder group, the general public (Wartick, 2002:384). From Dowling's (2016:216) perspective, using the general public as respondents contradicts the definition of stakeholders as groups of people who can affect, or are affected by a company, because the general public are people who may or may not be stakeholders of the evaluated organisations. Hence, the RQ might not be an accurate reflection of dimensions considered by key stakeholders such as employees, clients, and regulatory authorities.

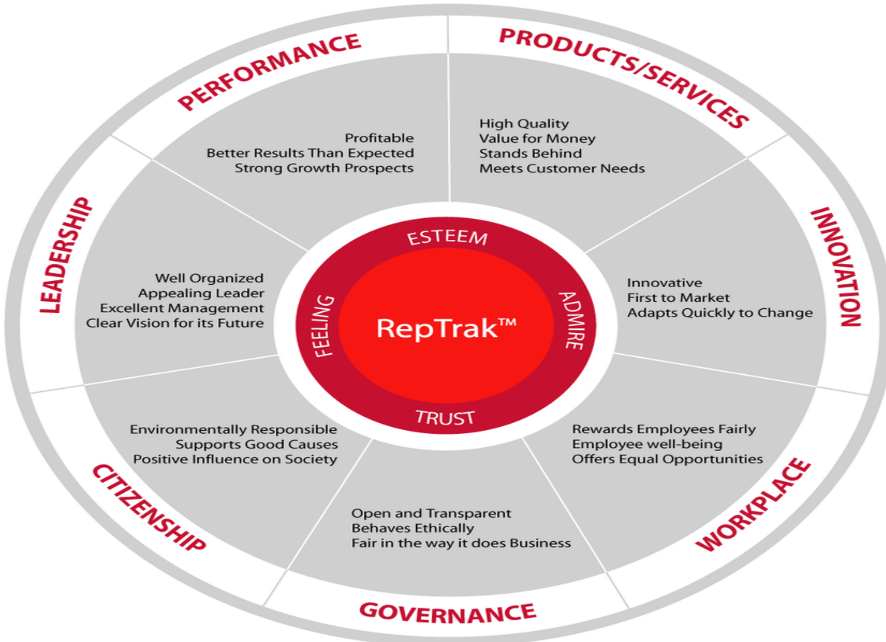
Another shortcoming of the RQ is the selection of organisations. Respondents nominated the four organisations that were evaluated. Although this was intended to enable easy evaluation, it raised concerns about the validity of the dimensions. Using the dimensions of "*vision and leadership*" and "*workplace environment*" as an example, the researchers assumed the general public will be privy to internal features of the organisations they nominate. However, Helm (2005) states that this is usually not the case. Scholars like Bahr et al. (2010) thus submit that the RQ should be refined, especially as it concerns different stakeholders' assessment of corporate reputation.

4.10.1.3 The RepTrak™

The RepTrak™ is an expanded version of the RQ discussed above and it evolved from studies conducted by Fombrun and his associates at the Reputation Institute. According to the RepTrak, reputation consists of 23 attributes across seven dimensions, namely '*Performance, Products and services, Innovation, Workplace, Governance, Citizenship and Leadership'* (see figure 4.10). These seven dimensions describe the rational dimensions stakeholders consider when evaluating an organisation, in terms of the primary attributes they expect an organisation to have and demonstrate.

The short form of the instrument, the RepTrak® Pulse, consists of three items measuring the emotional dimensions namely: *company feeling, admire and respect*, and the fourth item measuring *overall reputation*. Fombrun, Ponzi and Newberry (2015:4) believe that by establishing the dimensions that influence stakeholders' favourable perceptions, organisations can predict what will most likely elicit stakeholders' emotional reactions of admiration, liking and trust toward the organisation. The RepTrak thus shows that the reputation of an organisation ingrained in its stakeholders' perceptions (Newburry, 2010), and each stakeholder has different expectations of the organisation, and considers different dimensions in their evaluation.

Figure 4.10: The RepTrak system



Source: Reputation Institute, 2014

However, just like the reputation quotient, the RepTrak was developed for all types of industries, hence it is risky to assume that the dimensions contained therein are suitable for service organisations. Additionally, going by one of the proponent's (Fombrun, 2012) earlier assertion that reputation definition and its measures should not include its antecedents (inputs) or consequences (see section 3.2), the RepTrak Pulse is criticised for contradicting his own position. Dowling (2016:217) points out that evaluating reputation in terms of '*admiration*" involves stakeholders reflecting on the organisation's past behaviour and this is an antecedent to corporate reputation. The "*good feeling*" and "*trust*" are also antecedents, because the stakeholder is predicting the future behaviour of the company, and "*respect*" is contemporary and predictive because it is a feeling or attitude towards an organisation that may be expressed in future behaviour.

4.10.1.4 The Pillars of Reputation

Worcester (2009:585) identified 21 attributes across four pillars (dimensions) of corporate reputation. He believes these pillars and their attributes (shown in table 4.7) make organisations resilient. Although some of the pillars bear some similarity to some dimensions in the Reputation Quotient and RepTrak (e.g. product quality and environment), a new dimension is introduced in

Worcester's reputation pillars namely "well-being". This new dimension is worthy of note as the attributes that make up the dimension focus on the health and wellness of stakeholders which is not seen in other reputation measurement frameworks. The establishment of a seemingly new dimension (pillar) that is not found in other popular instruments opens up the possibility of discovering new knowledge and dimensions when a new context is explored.

Table 4.7: Worcester's pillars of reputation

Pillars of reputation	Attributes
Product quality	• Having high-quality products and services • Being innovative • Making products that fit many needs and lifestyles • Living up to high standards for product safety
Well-being	• Caring about the health and well-being of consumers • Promoting and advertising its products in a responsible way • Providing enough information for consumers to make informed choices about their products • Addressing obesity through its products and practices • Encouraging healthy and active lifestyles • Introducing new products that bring health and wellness benefits
Environment	• Having environmentally sound business practices • Using water responsibly • Using energy responsibly • Supporting recycling • Helping communities gain access to clean water
Society	• Making a positive difference in this country • Being good for the local economy • Actively participating in communities where it does business • Competing fairly in the marketplace • Respecting workers' rights

	• Being a responsible member of society

Source: Worcester, 2009:585

4.10.2 Measurement Based on Organisational Characteristics

How stakeholders differentiate an organisation in terms of its 'human characteristics' is another approach that has been put forward for measuring corporate reputation. As previously explained in chapter three, corporate personality describes the behaviour of those within the organisation, which consequently reflects as the behaviour of the organisation. In this case, the way stakeholders evaluate the organisational personalities determines reputation.

Davies et al. (2003) developed the Corporate Personality Scale (CPS) for measuring reputation, and they liken an organisation to a person with personality traits. The CPS was derived from the perspective of two important stakeholder groups – employees and customers – and it originally consisted of seven dimensions, namely "*Agreeableness, Enterprise, Competence, Chic, Ruthlessness, Informality* and *Machismo."* However, the *Informality* and *Machismo* dimensions were dropped in a subsequent study by Chun and Davies (2006), making the scale five dimensions with 43 trait items (see table 4.8 for dimensions and attributes). The CPS is the only scale that evaluates two components of reputation, namely identity (employee perception) and image (customer perception) (Davies et al., 2001). Scholars (Davies, 2013; Davies, 2011; Berens & Van Riel, 2004) however note that the CPS can only be used as a predictor/indirect measure of corporate reputation, but never as a direct measure.

Some studies have confirmed the dimensions in CPS influence reputation (Eisend et al., 2013), and give service organisations a unique identity even when the functional attributes of the service are insufficient (O'Neill & Matilla, 2010). Chun and Davies (2006) further explored how the dimensions individually affect the customers and employees. They found that "*enterprise*" was positively linked with customer satisfaction, but had no meaningful influence on employee satisfaction, while "c*ompetence*" is a vital dimension of how employees differentiate a brand, but has no influence on customers' differentiation. These findings reiterate the notion that various aspects of an organisation will appeal differently to stakeholders.

Table 4.8: Corporate Personality Scale

Dimension	Sub-dimensions	Item
Agreeableness	Warmth	Friendly, pleasant, open, straightforward
	Empathy	Concerned, reassuring, supportive, agreeable
	Integrity	Honest, sincere, trustworthy, socially responsible
Enterprise	Modernity	Cool, trendy, young
	Boldness	Extrovert, daring
	Adventure	Imaginative, up-to-date, exciting, innovative
Competence	Drive	Ambitious, achievement oriented, leading
	Conscientiousness	Reliable, secure, hardworking
	Technocracy	Technical, corporate
Chic	Elegance	Charming, stylish, elegant
	Prestige	Prestigious, exclusive, refined
	Snobbery	Snobby, elitist
Ruthlessness	Egotism	Arrogant, aggressive, selfish
	Dominance	Inward-looking, authoritarian, controlling

Source: Davies et al., 2003: 136.

4.10.3 Measurement Based on Antecedents and Consequences

As comprehensively discussed in the preceding sections in this chapter, there are several antecedents to corporate reputation. Shamma and Hassan (2009) evaluated four telecommunication organisations from the customers and the general public's perspectives and came up with a scale comprising of the knowledge, attitudes and behavioural outcomes of corporate reputation. In other words, the scale shown in table 4.9 below measures reputation in terms of its antecedents, attributes and consequences.

Table 4.9: Shamma and Hassan's Reputation Measurement Model

Antecedents	Personal Experience with company Knowledge obtained from other people Knowledge obtained from media
Attributes (attitude dimensions)	Emotional appeal Products and services Vision and leadership Social and environmental responsibility Workplace environment Financial performance
Consequences	Positive word-of-mouth Likely to invest Likely to seek employment Likely to purchase products and services Stakeholder loyalty to company Stakeholder commitment to company

Source: Shamma and Hassan, 2009: 331.

4.10.3.1 Stakeholder Performance Indicator and Relationship Improvement Tool (SPIRIT)

Proponents of SPIRIT, MacMillian et al. (2004) argue that reputation emanates from stakeholders' direct and indirect experiences with an organisation (antecedents), and this determines the dimensions of reputation, and stakeholders' attitudes towards the organisation (consequences). Based on this, they conducted a survey among customers, suppliers, employees, investors and communities, and identified *Experiences, Outside influences, Feelings*, and *Intentions* as the measures of corporate reputation.

They believe implementing these dimensions will enable organisations to analyse their relationship with key stakeholders, and by so doing, achieve success in governance, reputation and social responsibility, which constitute the three most important aspect of an organisation (Macmillian et al., 2004:27). Money and Hillenbrand (2006) further add that from a strategic view, these measures can be used to improve stakeholder experiences and to assess an organisation's ability to engage in activities that generate goodwill and favourable perceptions towards it. The first aspect of the instrument, Stakeholders Performance Indicator (SPI), portrays an organisation's responsibilities and reputation. That is, it shows if the organisation is provoking stakeholders' commitment and trust, and if stakeholders have a favourable perception towards it. The researchers also note that this first aspect is concerned with accountability by providing the organisation with relevant information about the company's activities and reputation. On the other hand, the second aspect, Relationship Improvement Tool (RIT) is simply concerned with ways by which relationships with its customers can be sustained. The SPIRIT model is summarised in table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Dimensions of SPIRIT

Drivers of relationships (antecedents)	**Outcomes of relationships (consequences)**
Stakeholder experiences of a business's behaviour • Service benefits • Non-material benefits and shared values • Material benefits • Listening and informing (communication) • Keeping commitments • Coercion • Termination costs	Stakeholder behavioural support towards a company • Subversion • Advocacy • Cooperation • Extension • Retention
Stakeholder experience of outside influences • What the media and pressure groups say about the organisation	Stakeholder emotional support towards a company • Trust • Emotions

	• Emotional commitment

Source: MacMillan et al., 2004: 28, 31.

4.10.4 Measurements from other Perspectives and Scholars

Lloyd (2007) developed a scale that was not only attribute based, but also consisted of the reputation-related constructs. Using CEOs, communication specialists, employees, consumers, media practitioners, and investment and finance specialists as the stakeholder groups, the study found that corporate reputation is driven by nine factors, namely "*image, identity, corporate brand, management leadership, performance, products and services, financial performance, ethical management and leadership*, and *corporate leadership"*. Lloyd's study also revealed the dimensions' hierarchy of importance to each stakeholder based on their perception of its relevance to reputation. The dimensions of reputation according to their relevance to each stakeholder group is presented in table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Components of Corporate Reputation for Each Stakeholder Group

Employees	CEOs	Investment & Finance Specialists	Media	Consumers	Communication Specialists
Ethical Management	Ethical Management & Leadership	Performance	Performance	Products and Services	Performance
Products and Services	Products and Services	Identity	Ethical Management & Leadership	Ethical Management & Leadership	Ethical Management & Leadership

Performance	Performance	Ethical Management & Leadership	Image	Performance	Products and Services
Corporate leadership	Corporate leadership	Management Leadership	Identity	Identity	Identity
Identity	Identity	Image	Management Leadership	Management Leadership	image
Management leadership			Products and Services		Management leadership
					Financial Performance
					Corporate leadership

					Corporate brand

Source: Lloyd, 2007:148

Table 4.11 shows that each stakeholder group's order of priority of the reputation dimensions differ, and some stakeholders do not even consider some dimensions relevant in any way. This supports the position of this study that indeed, the aspects of an organisation that interest or appeal to each stakeholder group will vary, and as a consequence, the dimensions used in evaluating the corporate reputation will also vary. Hence, it is important that any investigation on reputation dimensions includes all relevant stakeholder groups of the organisation in order to know what is important to each group of stakeholders, as well as having a list of dimensions that collectively reflect what constitutes corporate reputation for the organisation.

Likewise, Trotta and Cavallaro (2012) developed "The Five R's Model" for measuring bank reputation in the Italian business context. The measure was derived from key stakeholders' perspective namely: Regulators; Customers; Employees; Shareholders and Investors; Rating Agencies; Directors and Financial Analysts; Senior Executives; and Media. The researchers found *Relationships* (with internal and external stakeholders), *Result, Responsibility, Role* and *Regulatory compliance* to be the dimensions of reputation in the Italian banking context. The items describing each of the dimensions are compiled in the table below.

Table 4.12: The Five R's Measures of Corporate Reputation

Dimensions	**Role**	**Responsibility**	**Relationship**	**Results**	**Regulatory compliance**
	Mission & Vision (e.g. Strategic priorities)	CSR policy	Informative transparency with stakeholders	Product & Services (e.g. quality of deposits, investments;	Risk Management

Items				loans)	
	Governance (e.g. Remuneration /incentives policy; Presence of independent Directors; Implementing of gender diversity)	Ethical Behaviour	Trust & Confidence (e.g. future safety of deposits and investments)	Financial Performance (e.g. profitability, growth perspective)	Antitrust
	Leadership (e.g. CEO' reputation, Excellent management)	Workplace Environment (e.g. employee satisfaction, employees' expertise)	Disclosure		Complaints' Management
					Anti-Money Laundering Policy

Source: Compiled from Trotta and Cavallaro, 2012

In the same vein, Olmedo-Cifuentes et al. (2014) investigated the dimensions of internal reputation using senior managers and employees of Spanish accounting audit firms as the stakeholder groups. The researchers identified four dimensions of reputation from employees' perspective and six dimensions from senior managers' perspective. The dimensions are cognitive in nature, that is, they reflect employees' and managers' beliefs rather than their feelings. They believe that the implementation of these dimensions could assist managers of any service organisation to improve internal reputation. The dimensions and its measurement items are given in the table below.

Table 4.13: Employees' and managers' views of corporate reputation

Employees' view of corporate reputation		**Senior managers' view of corporate reputation**	
Dimensions	**Measurement Items**	**Dimensions**	**Measurement Items**
Reputation of managers	Managers are recognised for their good work by external stakeholders Managers are recognised for their good work by internal stakeholders	Culture	Cultural values and beliefs are shared by the members of the company Company develops activities to protect environment Company considers important information transparency in its activities
Ethical culture	Managers have an ethical commitment in the development of their activities Codes of conduct are used to encourage ethical behaviour of employees. Cultural values and beliefs are shared by the members of the company	Ethics	Managers have an ethical commitment in the development of their activities Codes of conduct are used to encourage ethical behaviour of employees
Human resources	Staff members with the specific knowledge and abilities required are attracted. Key employees for the company are kept	Customer loyalty	Company maintains long-term relationships with customers

	Employees are satisfied with their company		
Quality of management	Company uses available resources properly Company manages its assets properly Company evaluates set goals in relation with set objectives	Media reputation	Company has an up to date web site Company is visible in the media Company develops sponsorship activities, courses or events permitted by Spanish Audit Law
		Business leadership	Company is a leader in its activity Company is respected by the rest of companies of its sector Company has a high degree of credibility
		Resource management	Staff with specific knowledge and abilities required are attracted Key employees for the company are kept Employees are satisfied with the company Company uses available resources properly Company manages its assets properly Company develops necessary skills to achieve success Company evaluates set goals in relation with set objectives

Source: Compiled from Olmedo-Cifuentes et al. (2014)

Newell and Goldsmith (2001) used the concept of trust as an approach to measure corporate reputation, and they developed the Corporate Credibility Scale. Berens and Van Riel (2004) believe trust is the basis of the measurement because it entails stakeholders' perception of how transparent, reliable and benevolent the organisation is. However, though trust is a vital factor in the organisation-stakeholder relationship, and a key dimension in reputation measurement, it is simplistic to use it as the only dimension for assessing corporate reputation. Also, the dimensions and its corresponding items mostly depict what only one stakeholder group – the customers – would consider. It does not provide the dimensions other stakeholder groups like the employees, regulatory authorities, investors, suppliers etc. would likely consider in their assessment.

Table 4.14: Overview of the Corporate Credibility Scale

Dimensions	Items
Trustworthiness	• I trust the organisation • The organisation makes truthful claims • The organisation is honest
Expertise	• The organisation has vast experience • The organisation is skilled in what they do • The organisation has great expertise

Source: Newell and Goldsmith (2001)

On the other hand, Helm (2005:103) investigated the dimensions of reputation among German consumers using a consumer goods company. The study found ten dimensions of corporate reputation, namely: "(1) quality of products; (2) commitment to protecting the environment; (3) corporate success; (4) employee treatment; (5) customer orientation; (6) commitment to charity and social issues; (7) value for money on products; (8) financial performance; (9) management qualification; and (10) credibility of advertising claims".

Caruana and Chircop (2000) also developed a 12-item scale to measure corporate reputation using a beverage firm in Malta (see table below). These items were however derived and tested from, and among the general public who may or may not have been stakeholders of the firm. Also, a description of what the items signify is lacking. For instance, the eleventh item that measures reputation in terms of the company "being sound" is ambiguous. The characteristics that make a sound company in their assessment were not given, thereby leaving room for assumptions which may lead to inaccurate measurement of corporate reputation. The researchers however recommended the inclusion of other stakeholders in future studies on reputation measurement, because other stakeholders may consider other attributes, and also to have a more robust empirical research (Caruana & Chircop, 2000:55).

Table 4.15: Caruana and Chircop's Measure of Corporate Reputation

XYZ produces quality products
XYZ uses high calibre adverts
XYZ sponsor many activities.
XYZ is always willing to welcome visitors to tour the factory
XYZ is a long-established company
Employment with XYZ is highly regarded.
The employees of XYZ are well trained
XYZ has well-known products
XYZ has strong management
XYZ carries out a lot of advertising
XYZ is a sound company
For its size XYZ secures good profits

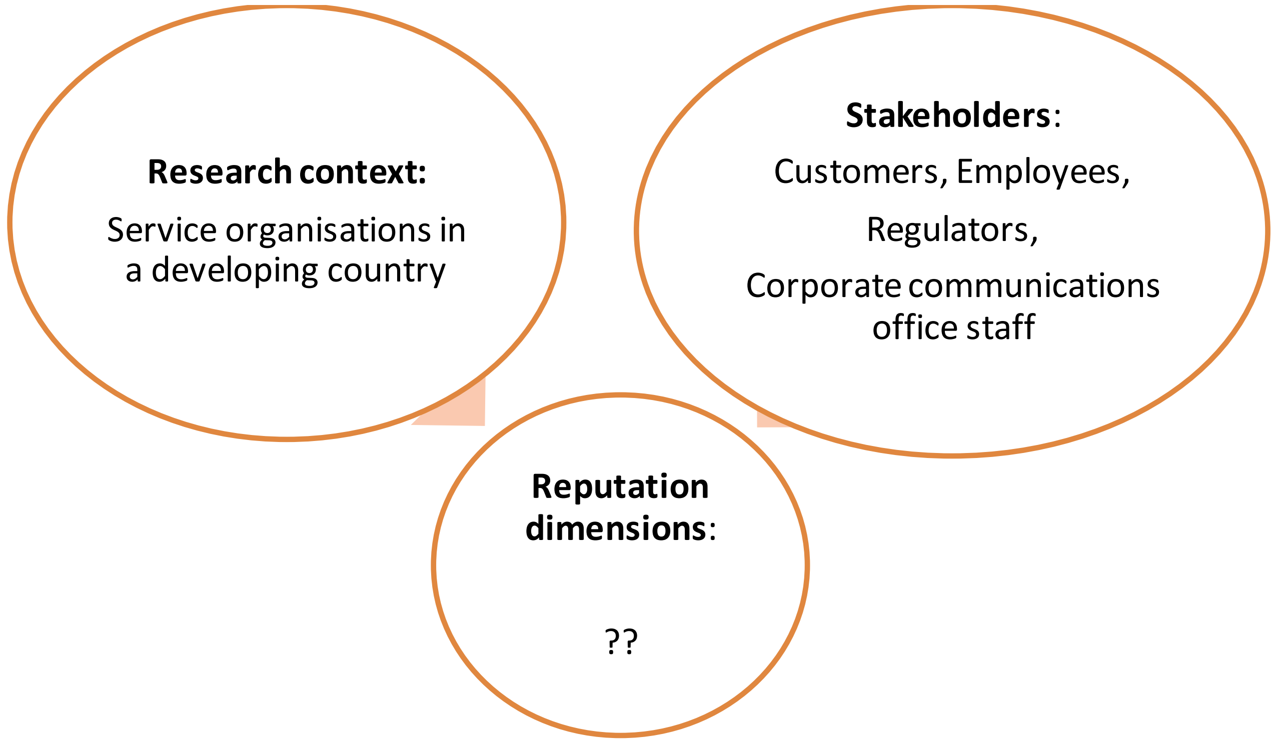
Source: Caruana and Chircop, 2000:54

4.11. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the factors that contribute to (antecedents) building a favourable reputation were discussed. While several factors contribute to the formation process, service organisations must pay utmost attention to stakeholders' direct and indirect experience, its competency in terms of the service value/quality and delivery, as well as its communication efforts. These factors form the foundation of the reputation formation process and any other antecedent on its own cannot fill the void the exclusion of any of these factors would create. Corporate communication as an integral factor in the reputation building process of service organisations was established in this chapter. Without appropriate communication, service organisations cannot achieve a favourable reputation. Specifically, media relations, employee communication, issue management and crisis communication are the four most strategic communication activities this study recommends for service organisations for a favourable CR. Likewise, the physical and intangible organisational components crucial to the strategic management of reputation in service organisations were identified and discussed.

The importance of using reputation dimensions that emerged from the specific context (country and/or industry) the organisation is situated within was also established. Existing measurement instruments were analysed alongside their shortfalls. It became clear from the review of existing studies that greater attention needs to be given to the investigation of the dimensions of corporate reputation especially in the following areas: (1) selection of respondents – the perception of all relevant stakeholders of the evaluated organisation must be investigated before the dimensions can be a valid measure of corporate reputation. (2) Methodology - the investigation must be grounded in a formal definition and theoretical background. (3) Measurement items – the items used to arrive at the dimensions should be indicated in order to avoid assumptions and to ensure an accurate measure of corporate reputation. (4) Service organisations – very few studies have investigated the reputation dimensions of service organisations, and it is evident that there is no formal instrument to measure the reputation of service organisations. (5) New contexts – reputation dimensions should be explored in new contexts, especially in developing countries. Most reputation studies are conducted in highly reputable organisations in developed countries, and applying the dimensions in less developed counties may provide an inaccurate measure of corporate reputation. This study builds on these aforementioned gaps and the research focus is shown in figure 4.11 below:

Figure 4.11: Research Focus


Research context:
Service organisations in a developing country
Stakeholders:
Customers, Employees,
Regulators,
Corporate communications office staff
Reputation dimensions:
??

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"Truth has nothing to do with the conclusion, and everything to do with the methodology"

-Stefan Molyneux

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the review of pieces of research in literature, it is clear that a favourable reputation is crucial for the survival of every organisation, and the impact of reputation is more significant in service organisations. As emphasised in the preceding chapters, stakeholders are the sole determiners of reputation and each stakeholder group hold different perspectives of what makes an organisation reputable (Fombrun et al., 2013:24). It is thus significant that this study set out to investigate the dimensions that make service organisations reputable from the relevant stakeholder groups' perspectives.

This investigation is also significant because there is no documentation on what constitutes the dimensions of reputation of any organisation within the Nigerian business context, even though reputation studies have proven its significance in the aforementioned context. Hence, this thesis represents the first major attempt to investigate the dimensions of corporate reputation in service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context. More so, the annual corporate reputation measurement of hundreds of organisations by the Reputation Institute excludes the Nigerian context.

This chapter thus presents the research methodology employed for the study. The fact that service organisations cut across multiple stakeholder groups indicates that a multi-dimensional methodology is most appropriate for the current investigation. A thorough explanation of the research paradigm and the mixed method approach involving the semi-structured interviews (qualitative method) and the questionnaire survey (quantitative method) is provided. The study population, sample size, as well as the technique used in selecting respondents are also discussed.

5.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Before presenting this study's paradigm, a brief definition of research paradigm is given to aid better understanding of the concept. According to Creswell (2014:5) and Bryman (2004), a research paradigm refers to a worldview, cluster of assumptions or beliefs that stipulate what should be studied within a particular field, how an investigation should be conducted, and how to interpret the derived data. A research paradigm also refers to a chosen research process determined by the nature of knowledge and the researcher's viewpoints and assumptions about the world (Creswell, 2007:15). Researchers bring their own world views, or sets of assumptions to the research process, and these views or assumptions inform how the study is conducted and written.

The *pragmatic paradigm* was adopted for this study as it was most suitable. This is because the pragmatic paradigm takes several forms depending on the research settings and is most suitable for social science researches using the mixed method approach (Creswell, 2009; Revez & Borges 2018:583; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:18), as is the case in this study. The paradigm focuses on shared meanings and bridges the gap between the positivist paradigm (which is solely for quantitative researches), and the constructivist (which is solely for constructive researches) by developing a meaningful connection between both worldviews (Biesta, 2015; Morgan, 2007:67; Shannon-Baker, 2015). It hinges on the view that "theories can be both contextual and generalisable by analysing them for transferability to another situation" (Creswell, 2009:4). In essence, pragmatist researchers rely more on their research questions and problem to design "what" and "how" to research intended consequences (Creswell, 2014:10).

The pragmatic paradigm was therefore appropriate since this study required both the qualitative and quantitative methods to address the research questions posed, and none of the other paradigms on their own fully encapsulate the nature and the research questions of this study. Additionally, and in line with the research design in this study (see section 5.3.1), scholars (Revez & Borges, 2018:584; Tran, 2017; Morgan, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:16) assert that the pragmatic paradigm is most appropriate for investigations that combine qualitative and quantitative methods in a sequential way where the deductive outcome of the quantitative method is based on the inductive outcome of the qualitative method, and vice versa. In this study, reputation dimensions were first explored from stakeholders through the qualitative method since the study is rooted in the belief that reality is subjective, with multiple interpretations that can only be uncovered through qualitative inquiry (Botha, 2011; Alison, 2009). Conducting the qualitative enquiry first in this study (which involved an extensive review of literature and semi-structured interviews) was important as this is an explorative study, and insight from the qualitative enquiry would enable the researcher understand and interpret the quantitative result.

After the qualitative enquiry, it was necessary that the reputation dimensions derived undergo an objective quantitative process through questionnaire administration (discussed in section 5.3) so as to appropriately address the research questions. The researcher shares Aliyu et al. (2014:83) viewpoint that "genuine, real and factual happenings could be studied and observed scientifically and empirically, and could as well be elucidated by way of lucid and rational investigation and analysis." Thus, the quantitative process complimented the qualitative process by giving results that did not only emanate from the researcher's interpretation of interviewees' responses, but results that are backed by an objective scientific process, that is independent from the researcher.

In sum, the pragmatic paradigm allowed the researcher to understand, interpret and construct meanings from stakeholders' realities and perceptions, and also facilitated the scientific and objective identification of precise reputation dimensions by eliminating the issue of bias (reducing the distance between the subject under investigation and the researcher). More so, various scholars (Norwich, 2020:244; Whitehead & Schneider, 2012; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:15; Alexander, 2006; Hwang, 1996:353) support how the pragmatic paradigm (combining both constructivist and positivist) can be complementarily employed in research so as to effectively address research questions that require the adoption of different world views, as is the case in this study. This paradigm was therefore suitable for this investigation as it considers reality 'experience dependent', and knowledge must be derived within the context under study (Norwich, 2020:248; DiVincenzo, 2014).

Table 5.16: Four different worldviews

Post-positivism	Transformative
• Determination • Reductionism • Empirical observation and	• Political • Power and justice oriented • Collaborative

measurement • Marketing management • Theory verification	• Change oriented
Constructivism	**Pragmatism**
• Understanding • Multiple participant's meaning • Theory generation • Social and historical construction	• Consequences of actions • Problem-centred • Mixed method • Real-world practice oriented

Source: Creswell, 2014:6

5.3 MIXED-METHOD APPROACH

As mentioned in the preceding section, the mixed-method approach (MMA) was employed for this study and it was the most appropriate because of the nature of the investigation. Since this study is an explorative one, the qualitative enquiry was necessary in order to uncover as many reputation dimensions as possible, and understand stakeholders' reasons for considering the dimensions. The quantitative enquiry was equally necessary in order to streamline the dimensions and identify the ones that are most relevant to corporate reputation in the study context based on stakeholders' responses. Hence, neither the qualitative or quantitative method was sufficient to fully address the research problem and questions, but when combined, give a valid and more generalisable result.

Based on this, the mixing and the point of integration happened by first exploring multiple stakeholders' views of the reputation dimensions for an in-depth understanding. The information derived from the qualitative inquiry then informed the development of the questionnaire. The same information from the qualitative inquiry was later employed to explain the quantitative findings, and the quantitative results helped generalise the qualitative findings.

Qualitative approaches are inductive, in that they are concerned with exploring and processes, are highly valid, less concerned with generalisability, and are more concerned with a detailed understanding of the research problem in its unique context (Antwi & Kasim, 2018:219; Ulin, Robinson & Tolley, 2005). Addressing the research problem in its unique context is one of the major justifications for using qualitative methods and this could be explained by the fact that "there is no objective social reality. Knowledge is constructed by observers who are products of traditions, beliefs, as well as the social and political environments within which they operate" (Frechtling, 2002). By reason of this, the qualitative method mainly concerns "what" people think, and "why" they think so. The qualitative method, using face-to-face semi-structured interviews in this study therefore enabled the researcher to have a thorough understanding of the contexts in which the research problem is situated, as well as interpret and construct meanings from the information given by stakeholders. This facilitated the identification of the dimensions of reputation, as well as an understanding of the impact of corporate reputation on stakeholders.

On the other hand, the quantitative method is concerned with objective measurements, as well as the scientific or statistical analysis of data gathered through polls, questionnaires, and surveys (Earl, 2010; Lancaster, 2005). It focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising it across a population, or explaining a particular concept or construct (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009). The quantitative method using a questionnaire as the instrument for data collection enabled the researcher to determine the relevance of each of the dimensions realised from the qualitative enquiry, and to also generalise the outcome. This method eliminates the issue of bias because responses and results are independent of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). It also improves the reliability of results, which in turn "enables the researcher to generalise the findings from a sample of responses to a population" (Creswell, 2014:173).

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that neither the qualitative nor quantitative methods are capable on their own to address the research questions of this study, but when combined, they complement each other and also facilitate a more detailed analysis (Creswell, Fetters & Ivankova, 2004:7). The rationale for employing the mixed method in this study was therefore not to replace either of the approaches, but rather to draw from their strengths, and minimise the weaknesses of both methods (Wium & Louw, 2018:4).

Additionally, the MMA in this study helped achieve participant enrichment, instrument fidelity, and significance enhancement (adapted from Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton's (2006:76) rationale for mixed method approach). *Participant enrichment* involves mixing the qualitative and quantitative method so as to have a high number of participants in order to improve the reliability and validity of the findings. This study first conducted 15 interviews with stakeholders and later administered questionnaires developed from the outcome of the interviews to 220 stakeholders. *Instrument fidelity* refers to maximising the appropriateness of the instruments used in the study (e.g. through a pilot test). The study used interviews and questionnaires as the methods for data collection, and the appropriateness of both methods has been established in the preceding paragraphs. More so, the questionnaire was pre-tested before administration to the larger population which helped ensure it was suitable for the intended investigation. The *significance enhancement* simply refers to maximising the researcher 's interpretation of findings. As earlier stated, the knowledge and information the researcher derived from the semi-structured interviews with stakeholders not only informed the development of the questionnaire, but also guided the interpretation of the quantitative analysis outcome.

Table 5.17: Differences between the quantitative and qualitative methods

Orientation	Quantitative Method	Qualitative Method
Paradigm/Worldview (assumption about world)	Positivism/Realism	Interpretivism/Idealism
Research Purpose (rationale)	Numerical description Causal explanation Prediction	Subjective description Empathetic understanding Exploration
Ontology (nature of reality)	Nature of being – objective or subjective	Nature of being – objective or subjective
Epistemology (theory of knowledge)	Dualist/Objectivist/positivist	Subjectivist
Methodology (aims of scientific investigation)	Experimental/Manipulative	Hermeneutical/Dialectical
Research methods (tools and techniques)	Questionnaires Empirical examination Measurement Randomisation	Interviews Focus group discussion Case studies Narrative research

	Blinding Structured protocols Hypothesis testing	Observations Field notes Recording & Filming Ethnographies
Scientific Method (role of theory)	Deductive approach, testing of theory	Inductive approach, generation of theory
Nature of Data Instruments	Variables Structured and validated-data collection instruments	In-depth interviews, words, images, open-ended questions, participant observation, field notes
Data Analysis	Identify statistical relationships among variables	Use descriptive data, search for patterns, themes and holistic features and appreciate variations
Results	Generalisable findings	Particularistic findings; provision of insider viewpoint
Final Reports	Formal statistical report with: • Correlations • Comparisons of means • Reporting of statistical significance of findings	Informal narrative report

Source: Antwi and Kasim, 2015:222

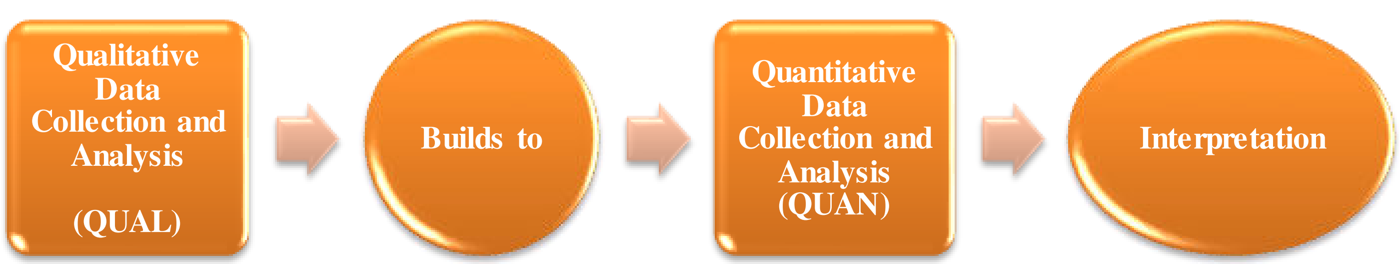
5.3.1 Mixed Method Design

When using the mixed method approach, researchers must choose a design, that is, deciding whether to conduct the stages sequentially or concurrently (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017;

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). There are three basic types of mixed method designs discussed by various authors, namely: concurrent design, exploratory sequential design, and the explanatory sequential design (see Creswell, 2013; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017; Ivankova, 2014; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). *The concurrent design (triangulation)* explains when the qualitative and quantitative inquiries are conducted simultaneously, and then the results from both inquiries are merged for comparison. In the *exploratory sequential design*, the qualitative study is conducted first and its outcome leads to the quantitative enquiry, which could be the development of instruments or the generation of hypotheses. The third design, *the explanatory/confirmatory sequential design* is when the quantitative study first unfolds and the qualitative study is later performed to better understand the quantitative results obtained.

Based on the above explanation, the MMA design for this study was sequential, and falls within the *exploratory sequential mixed method design* explained by Creswell (2014:14). This design was informed by the exploratory nature of the study in which the semi-structured interviews were first conducted to identify and understand the dimensions that make service organisations reputable from various stakeholders' perspectives. The information derived from the interviews then informed the questionnaire development. A graphical illustration of the chosen mixed-method design is given in the figure below.

Figure 5.12: The exploratory sequential mixed method



Source: Creswell, 2014:272

5.4 POPULATION OF STUDY

Two service organisations in Nigeria - a commercial bank, and a mobile service provider were selected for this study because they are both reputable, well-known, and they are big organisations whose services are highly patronised by stakeholders almost on a daily basis. These organisations also have a large staff strength, and customer base, hence, data could be easily sourced from employees and customers who are two stakeholder groups used in this study.

'The Bank' is a Pan-African financial institution with affiliates in West, East and Central Africa. As of December 2012, it had an estimated customer base of 13.7 million, with 9.6 million (70.2%) located in Nigeria (About us, 2019). It is one of the biggest and leading banks in the country with a staff strength of about 3,500. The organisation prioritises its stakeholders and it was no surprise that it was one of the banks that recorded the highest profit in 2018.

'The Mobile Service Provider' is a leading Nigerian telecommunication company. Its 2017 report indicates the company serves over 42 million subscribers, and has a staff strength of about 4000. This mobile service provider has won numerous awards in recent years and was once listed among the top 100 in the Most Valuable Global Brand ranking. Just as in the case of the bank, the organisation has earned its stakeholders' favourable evaluation.

Note: It is important to restate that the selected organisations in this study are unnamed for the sake of participants' confidentiality. In the event that the study included any information from respondents that might not sit well with the organisations, this study will in no way put the respondents at risk, or expose the organisations to reputational risks.

The unit of analysis in this study consists of four stakeholder groups - employees, customers, corporate communications officers and regulatory bodies. These stakeholder groups were selected because they represent the primary and relevant stakeholder groups of any service organisation whose favourable perception and assessment are critical to the organisation's continued success. More so, based on the stakeholder theory (discussed in chapter 2), these stakeholder groups have both high interest and high power in the organisations, hence, they must be kept satisfied. As their satisfaction in the organisation is paramount, what contributes to, or influence this satisfaction (that is, the dimensions of corporate reputation) must be identified.

Additionally, the different types of stakeholders allowed the researcher to identify the dimensions of reputation that are most important to each stakeholder group, and from this, conclusions were drawn on what constitutes the dimensions of reputation for service organisations. A brief description of each stakeholder group is given in the table below.

Table 5.18: Brief description of various stakeholder groups

Stakeholders	Characteristics
Customers	People who currently use the bank and the mobile service provider, together with potential customers
Employees	People (including senior executives) who are currently employed in various units of the selected service organisations.
Regulatory bodies	The agencies in charge of monitoring and regulating the activities of the service organisations. In the case of the bank, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Commission (NDIC) are the regulatory authorities and they constitutes the stakeholder group in this study, while the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) constitute the stakeholder group for the mobile service provider.
Corporate communication office staff	Corporate communication professionals working in the communication agencies contracted by the selected organisations to manage their communications/reputation management/publicity needs.

Source: Researcher's own construction

5.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SIZE

The customers, regulatory bodies, employees and corporate communication office staff are purposively selected because they constitute the primary and most important stakeholders of any service organisation (Macmillian, et al., 2004:19; Waddock, 2009). Without the employees, an organisation cannot function nor fulfil its mission. Likewise, the customers are those the organisation depends on for profitability. This certainly makes this group of stakeholders valuable because their patronage is what sustains the organisation. Hence, customers' perceptions surely have a significant impact on these organisations. In the same vein, the regulatory bodies are a very important and powerful group of stakeholders as they act as watchdogs for these organisations. They can sanction organisations that do not comply with standard practice, as well as commend those that do. The corporate communication staff are also a critical stakeholder group because they handle the reputation management process of the organisations, and thus have specialist knowledge and experience about the dimensions that influence a favourable corporate reputation which is the focus of this study. The aforementioned thus makes it imperative to investigate what constitutes the dimensions of corporate reputation from the primary, relevant and powerful stakeholders' perspective.

The two service organisations were also purposively selected because they are among the well patronised companies in their respective industries, managing a large number of customers, employees, and other stakeholder groups. The telecommunication and financial industry are both fast-paced organisations that provide essential services that are beneficial to everyone. For instance, almost everyone in the country has a mobile number and a bank account. Thus, the researcher considers these organisations relevant and knowing the dimensions their stakeholders consider for reputation will help generalise to other service organisations.

The purposive, non-probability sampling was used to select stakeholders for the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This technique is considered appropriate for the study, as Creswell (2014:209) emphasised the importance of choosing respondents who will provide intelligent and detailed responses to questions. 15 interviewees were therefore selected based on certain features like their knowledge and their affiliation with the organisation in order to provide in-depth and interesting answers to questions.

On the other hand, respondents for the quantitative study (questionnaire) were selected using stratified random sampling since the study specifically intends to investigate the dimensions of reputation from the selected stakeholders' perspective, and the sample size is specified. Using other sampling techniques might make those who are not the target stakeholders fill in the questionnaire. 100 respondents were selected for the pilot test, and 220 respondents for the questionnaire administration to the larger population. The sampling technique was appropriate as it ensured that the questionnaire was filled by those it was intended for, while giving each stratum an equal chance of being selected, and by so doing, eliminated bias.

5.6 DATA SOURCES

This study used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is an original and unique data, obtained directly by the researcher from a source according to pre-determined requirements (Ajayi, 2017:3). Examples of primary data sources include observations, interviews, questionnaires, case studies, etc. On the other hand, secondary data refers to data gathered from existing studies, experiments, or surveys that have been run by other people or for other purposes. Examples include data derived from journals, websites, books, published statistics, and reports (Ajayi, 2017:4).

Firstly, an extensive review of existing literature was done, and related dimensions, especially those put forward by researchers who explored what constitutes reputation in the service industry were noted. Secondly, data was collected qualitatively, using semi-structured interviews that included all four of the selected stakeholder groups of the service organisations. The data derived from the interview was then used in developing the third phase, the questionnaire.

These three data sources constitute the basis for identifying the reputation dimensions of service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context. The rationale for using each data source is discussed in the next section.

5.6.1 Primary Data Sources

5.6.1.1 Interview

Interview is a research method designed to provide detailed and clear information of a participant's perspective on a topic, as well as enabling a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewee's experience than other research methods (Minikel-Lococque 2018:2; Cohen et al., 2007:29). In other words, it is an effective qualitative method for making people speak about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences, which allows the researcher to gain insight into how people interpret the world (Alshenqeeti, 2014:29). Face-to-face interviews were considered appropriate as this eliminates potential distractions or peer-pressure dynamics that can sometimes emerge in other qualitative methods such as focus groups (Steber, 2017).

Fifteen (15) semi-structured interviews were conducted among individual stakeholders comprising two people from each stakeholder group (excluding one corporate communication office staff of the mobile service provider). The semi-structured format provides the opportunity to probe for more information by asking follow-up questions in order to expand the interviewee's responses (Steber, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2005:88). Berg (2007:39) explains that the benefit of this format is that "it allows for an in-depth investigation while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study." Based on this, this interview format facilitated a deeper understanding of the research objectives and significantly helped in achieving the aim of the study.

5.7.1.2 Close-Ended Questionnaire

Based on the information derived from the semi-structured interview, a structured close-ended questionnaire was developed to collect data on a larger scale from stakeholders (employees, customers, regulatory authorities and corporate communication office staff) in order to determine the dimensions and items that are most relevant to stakeholders when evaluating corporate reputation.

A questionnaire is considered one of the best data collection tools to use when the sample size is too large to directly observe (Anastasia, 2017). This study targeted two hundred and twenty (220) respondents for the questionnaire survey. This method was also deemed appropriate as Saunders et al. (2003) state that questionnaires are best used when the aim is to measure respondents' opinions, perceptions, and attitudes, as was the case in this study.

The closed-ended questionnaire format that permitted only prescribed responses was thus used to capture all the questions needed to address the research questions. This questionnaire format makes it easy for stakeholders to provide answers because alternatives are provided, it ensures responses to questions are within the given response options, and it also facilitates efficient coding and effective analysis of the responses (Ngcobo, 2016:114). This ensured that responses are interpreted in the same manner, which further increases the authenticity of findings. The questionnaire was particularly important for further addressing research questions 1-3, which are:

- What are the dimensions stakeholders consider when evaluating an organisation?
- Are the dimensions of reputation considered by stakeholders of a service provider different to the dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank?
- Are the reputation dimensions of service organisations different from other organisations?

5.7.2 Secondary Data Sources

5.7.2.1 Literature Review

Every scholarly research is built on a review of relevant literature as it helps build a conceptual framework (Saunders et al., 2003). This study explored various literature on the measurement and dimensions of corporate reputation (see chapter 4) identified by several researchers, especially as it concerns service organisations. Various inputs to corporate reputation were also discussed in detail in order to have an in-depth understanding of the concept (see chapters 3 and 4). Following the review of literature, the researcher identified some dimensions that constitute the concept as seen from the perspective of various stakeholders of service firms. These dimensions include:

- Quality of service
- Employee welfare
- Corporate social responsibility
- Compliance with regulatory standards
- Ethical culture, management and leadership
- Trustworthiness
- Media relations
- Corporate communication
- Governance
- Corporate brand
- Emotional appeal

- Workplace environment

These dimensions were included in the questionnaire together with those identified from the interviews. Detailed explanation of how the researcher collected and analysed data is presented in the next chapter.

5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter elaborated on the methodology the researcher employed to address the research problem and questions. The researcher approached the research process from a pragmatist worldview that allows the use of multiple methods to address a research problem or question as deemed fit by the researcher. The mixed method approach, involving qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative methods (questionnaire) was thus used for this investigation. The research design followed the exploratory sequential design because the qualitative data collection and analysis led to the quantitative data collection and analysis.

Likewise, a detailed explanation and justification of the data sources in this study was provided. Both primary and secondary data were used. A background of the study population and context was also given, as well as the technique that was used to select respondents for the study. The purposive, non-probability sampling technique was used to select stakeholders for the interviews, while the stratified technique was used to select respondents for the questionnaire. Both techniques are appropriate given the fact that the study handpicked stakeholders for the interviews based on their knowledge and experience, and also had clearly defined/specific stakeholder groups for the questionnaires. The next chapter gives a thorough account of the data collection and analysis process.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

"The first step in exceeding your stakeholders' expectations is to know those expectations"

- Roy H. Williams

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a step-by-step explanation of the procedures used for collecting and analysing data in this study. The validity and reliability of the procedures used in collecting and analysing the data derived from respondents are also stated.

Generally, the data collection and analysis process can be summarised into 4 stages, namely: (1) establish the dimensions of reputation through literature and semi-structured interview (2) assess the relevance of each dimension using a questionnaire (3) refine the dimensions through an exploratory factor analysis and (4) assess its reliability using Cronbach's alpha. A thorough account of the qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis process is presented in subsequent sections.

6.2 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the study used semi-structured interviews as the qualitative method to identify reputation dimensions from the selected stakeholders' perspective (research question 1), as well as to understand the impact of corporate reputation from their perspective (research question 4). Every interview begins with the selection of respondents. Selection of interviewees for this study was done in four (4) stages. These stages are explained in the table below:

Table 6.19: Procedure for Selecting Interviewees

Step	Procedure	Result
Step 1	The researcher consulted with the contact person in each organisation (one human resource staff, and one settlement and reconciliation staff) to compile a list of potential interviewees after briefing them on the research topic and purpose of the interview.	List of all suggested names and contact details.
Step 2	In order to have rich and detailed responses to the interview questions, the researcher evaluated the suitability of the potential interviewees for the study based on their work experience, expertise, and knowledge of corporate reputation.	List of shortlisted potential interviewees to be sent formal invitation emails and a list of possible substitutes.
Step 3	The names and profiles of potential interviewees were sent to the researcher's supervisors for approval	Get go-ahead to send an interview invitation e-mail
Step 4	Formal invitation emails were sent to shortlisted interviewees, explaining in detail the nature of the interview, its purpose, and their role in the research process.	List of confirmed interviewees was derived

Source: Researcher's own construction

After the selection process, interviews were scheduled with the various stakeholders selected for this study, namely – customers, employees, regulators and corporate communication office staff. The interviewees consisted of two customers of each organisation (total = 4); two employees of each organisation (total = 4), 2 communication staff of each organisation (total = 4); two regulators of a bank and one regulator of a mobile service provider (total = 3). This brought the total number of interviews to fifteen (15). Interviewees were informed about the nature of the research and the questions to be asked prior to the scheduled interview date via email. This was done to allow them to have adequate time to think through the questions and have detailed responses for the researcher. It was also done so that, if contrary to the researcher's judgment, any of the interviewees considered himself or herself unfit to give rich answers, he/she could withdraw from the interview process. However, none of the interviewees withdrew from the interview on this account.

The majority of the interviews were held in the respondent's office space, with only a few at alternative places suggested by the interviewee. During the interviews, stakeholders shared their views on the factors that make the selected service organisations reputable, as well as their expectations of the organisations that are not yet in practice. They also shared their views on the impact of corporate reputation on various stakeholders (see appendix 1 for interview template). The interviews were open-ended, and this was deemed suitable, as it enabled the interviewees to respond as much as possible, it enabled the researcher to understand the reasons for the interviewees' responses, and it ultimately enabled the gathering of high-quality qualitative data. It was important to have in-depth and rich data from the interviews in order to effectively address the research questions posed in the study.

The researcher then coined meanings and constructs (that is, dimensions and items) based on the information provided. By virtue of this, the researcher naturally used the inductive method, since the goal of the study was to generate new dimensions and attributes from the data collected and not to test existing theories or hypothesis (Streefkerk, 2019; Gabriel, 2013).

6.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Qualitative data analysis typically involves creating structure and meaning from a mass of collated data (Harding & Whitehead, 2012:144). The researcher envisaged a difficult and complex time analysing the data obtained from the interviews but this was not entirely the case. Interviewees were very knowledgeable and gave very direct responses on the factors that make the organisations reputable. For instance, when asked about the factors, they mentioned factors like trustworthiness, quality of service, CSR, risk management, etc. In other words, most responses were already 'categorised' although the researcher observed slight variations – an interviewee would mention 'trust' as a dimension, while another would say 'trustworthiness'; or, one would mention 'CSR', while another would refer to it as 'social activities.' The researcher managed this by determining what the reputation dimensions were called based on the various explanations that described the dimensions as given by stakeholders.

Although Alshenqeeti (2014:41) submits that no fixed method of analysing interview data exists in literature, it is very important to carefully sort and interpret the data derived because it determines the quality, reliability and validity of the entire study. Based on this, data derived from the interviews was first transcribed and then analysed bearing in mind the analytic methods identified by Roulston (2014), which involves: applying codes to the interview transcripts through extensive reflection, making connections between ideas, and collapsing the codes into themes (categories/dimensions) when analysing data. As earlier mentioned, most of the responses were already categorised by the interviewees, particularly responses to the first research question. The researcher then assigned items (descriptions) that explained the created dimensions or categories as stated by each interviewee. Thereafter, the researcher made connections between the data by merging similar responses, creating new categories when needed, and re-grouping items under the dimensions or categories that best described them.

The above-mentioned procedure used to analyse the qualitative data in this study is supported by various researchers (Harding & Whitehead, 2012:144; Neuman, 2007; Alshenqeeti, 2014:41) who assert that because interviews usually generate large amounts of data, data analysis can be done through coding. In social science research, which this study falls within, coding can be done through two stages involving (1) generating meaningful data units, and (2) classifying and ordering the units (Alshenqeeti, 2014:41) as done in this study.

Following the leads from both interviews and literature, the researcher identified 16 corporate reputation dimensions, namely: Service quality (SEQ), Issue management (ISM), Corporate Communication (COC), Media Relations (MER), Emotional Appeal (EMA), Branding (BRA), Customer Relations (CRL), Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW), Financial Performance (FIP), Innovation (INN), Social Responsibility (SOR), Governance and Leadership (GOL), Empathy (EMP), Risk Management (RIM), Regulatory Compliance (REC), and Trustworthiness (TRT). These dimensions informed the development of the questionnaire used to further address research questions 1, 2 and 3. Likewise, four key impacts of reputation on stakeholders were realised after the analysis (results presented in chapter 7).

It is important to state that stakeholders' responses to research question 4 did not need to undergo the quantitative process due to the nature of the question and its intended objective. Hence, the responses did not constitute part of the data that was used to identify the reputation dimensions and develop the questionnaire. This is because the fourth research question concerned a different inquiry from the other research questions. The latter concerned identifying the factors that make service organisations reputable, in which quantitative analysis is required to streamline the factors to the most significant after the questionnaire had been administered to a larger population, whereas the former sought to understand the impact corporate reputation has on stakeholders' perceptions, behaviours, and decision-making (see appendix 1 for interview template). This was important because by knowing and understanding the significant impact reputation has on stakeholders, service organisations will realise why it is not debatable to identify and implement the dimensions stakeholders consider for a favourable reputation.

6.4 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

As earlier mentioned, interviewees' responses on the factors that make service organisations reputable was the primary data that informed the questionnaire, while the dimensions identified from literature – particularly from studies that focused on service organisations – were included in the questionnaire as well (see table 6.20). This means the questionnaire items and dimensions were generated through inductive and deductive methods.

The questionnaire contained a total of 64 items across the 16 dimensions. The statements that describe the 64 items were all phrased positively because combining both positively and negatively worded items creates more issues than it solves (Salazar, 2015:193; Qasem & Gul, 2014:77; Devellis, 2003). Such issues include reducing the internal reliability, misrepresenting the factor structure/ construction, and problems of criterion-related validity (Lewis & Sauro, 2009). More so, using negatively worded items is discouraged because, in some cases, respondents do not pay enough attention to cognitively establish the difference from positively worded items (Van-Sonderen, Sanderman, & Coyne, 2013; Roszkowski & Soven, 2010; Sauro & Lewis, 2011). This then results in an increase in non-response, lower average scores on negative items, low levels of correlation between the score for an item and the total score, and consequently leads to a loss of reliability in the scales (Salazar, 2015:193; Colosi, 2005; Weems et al., 2003).

It is important to point out that at this stage, having numerous items to depict all areas of each dimension is acceptable because multiple items enhance the reliability test of data sets (Swisher, Beckstead & Bebeau, 2004; Robinson, 2017). Thus, having a pool of 64 items and 16 dimensions was normal and acceptable. In sum, the 5-point Likert scale, close-ended questionnaire contained 64 items across 16 dimensions.

The questionnaire was then pre-tested (pilot test) among 100 respondents, after which it was administered to the larger population comprising 220 respondents. Table 6.20 presents the pilot questionnaire. The reputation dimension codes seen in the table are already explained in section 6.3. The pilot process and the refinement of the questionnaire are discussed in the next section.

Table 6.20: Pilot questionnaire based on literature review and semi-structured interviews

Dimension codes	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Disagree
SER 1	I transact easily with the bank					
SOR 4	The bank competes fairly in the marketplace					
ISM 2	The bank responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)					
RIM 1	The bank has a good credit or foreign exchange risk management system or practice					
SOR 3	The bank adheres to the principle of good governance					
FIP 2	The bank has the ability to self-sustain. That is, not having liquidity challenge					
TRT 2	The bank is transparent in its transactions					
CRL 3	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner					
BRA 1	The bank can be easily differentiated from its counterparts					
SER 10	There is security using the bank					
ISM 1	The bank quickly responds to, and resolves complaints					

COC 3	The bank consistently engages with stakeholders					
SOR 1	The bank gives back to people and its local community					
EMA 6	I have a good feeling about the bank					
TRT 1	I have trust and confidence in the bank					
SER 2	I get value for my money					
SOR 5	The bank actively engages in societal issues					
FIP 1	The bank operates within the minimum acceptable threshold for non-performing loans					
EEW 5	There is job security with the bank					
EMP 2	The bank is sensitive to customers' personal challenges and makes efforts to meet these challenges					
CRL 1	The bank ensures customer satisfaction					
RIM 2	The bank does not constitute risk to the deposit insurance fund					
CRS 1	The bank does not engage in fraudulent activity					
INN 2	The bank identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the bank is chic and youthful					
EEW 2	The bank engages in quality staff development, empowerment and training					
FIP 3	The bank has healthy capital					
TRT 3	The bank has no secret charges					
EMP 1	The bank provides access to basic loan					
BRA 5	The bank projects itself in a clear and consistent manner					
SER 4	I can afford the service offering of my bank					
EMA 3	I respect my bank					
GOL 2	The bank has a sound leadership					
MER 2	The bank is favourably projected in the media					
CRL 2	The bank prioritises customer service					
SOR 2	The bank conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner					
EEW 1	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and					

	decisions made by the bank					
BRA 4	The bank has a good culture					
EMA I	The bank is indigenous					
GOL 1	The boards of directors have a good reputation					
COC 5	The bank carries customers along by notifying them of changes or new features					
EEW 6	The bank has an attractive compensation and benefits plan					
EMP 3	The bank is considerate					
SER 8	The bank has a wide coverage					
BRA 3	The bank advertises					
COC 1	The bank provides information that are useful to me					
EMA 2	I am emotionally attached to my bank					
EEW 7	The bank treats its employees fairly					
COC 4	The bank has an online presence					
SER 5	I do not have to be physically present to transact					
MER 1	The bank has relationships with journalists and media writers					
EEW 3	The bank has a conducive working environment					
CRS 2	The bank complies with industry standards					
EMA 8	Growing up into the brand makes me patronise the bank					
COC 2	The bank maintains good relationships with all its internal and external stakeholders					
EMA 5	I am proud to be associated with my bank					
SER 6	I do not have to be physically present to resolve issues					
EEW 4	The bank has monetary rewards for staff					
EMA 7	Growing up into the brand makes me like the bank					
SER 3	I experience a timely and fast service delivery					
INN 1	The bank comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts					
BRA 2	The bank uses symbols and colours I like					
EMA 4	I admire my bank					

SER 9	The bank has easily accessible service points e.g. branches or customer service points					
SER 7	The service is reliable					

6.4.1 The Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted in order to enable the researcher to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire, as well as to identify questions that needed to be restructured, or eliminated. Overall, the pilot test was aimed at determining the suitability of the questionnaire for the intended investigation. To achieve this, 100 copies of the close-ended questionnaires were administered to the selected stakeholders of both service organisations. The questionnaires were equally divided between the two organisations, that is, 50 copies to the bank, and 50 copies to the mobile service provider. Eighty-eight questionnaires were recovered.

The recovered copies signify an 88% return rate which is considered very high, and the data derived are therefore considered useful. Due to respondents' dynamics and the environment in which the study was conducted (for instance, the different groups of stakeholders, and also not all of them might have access to the internet or be motivated to fill an online questionnaire), the questionnaires were self-administered to respondents. The researcher believed that in the context within which the study was premised, the self-administered questionnaires would ensure a higher return rate than using any other method.

The tables below show the breakdown of the recovered questionnaire from stakeholders of both service organisations

Table 6.21: Recovered questionnaires for the mobile service provider

CAPACITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Customer	11	25.6	25.6	25.6
	Employee	10	23.3	23.3	48.8

Regulator	10	23.3	23.3	72.1
Corporate Communicator	12	27.9	27.9	100.0
Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.22: Recovered questionnaires for the bank

CAPACITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Customer	13	28.9	28.9	28.9
	Employee	12	26.7	26.7	55.6
	Regulator	9	20.0	20.0	75.6
	Corporate Communicator	11	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

A reliability test was conducted on the recovered questionnaires using the Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient is generally regarded as the basic statistical technique for evaluating a measure's reliability based on its internal consistency (Taber, 2018:1273; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:53). Internal consistency is the average correlation of a set of items measuring a construct. According to Zinbarg et al. (2006), it indirectly specifies the extent to which a set of items represents or describes a latent construct, that is, the degree to which the items adequately capture or explain the construct.

The Cronbach's alpha can be between 0.0 and 1.0, but the rule of thumb is that a construct (dimension) must have an alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher to be considered reliable (Taber, 2018; Cooper & Schindler, 2007). The more correlated the items underlying a dimension are, the higher the alpha coefficient will be. A low Cronbach's alpha signifies that the items do not adequately capture the construct (Noar, 2003), and as DeVellis (2003) points out, when the alpha coefficient is too low, the scale must be reconsidered. In this case, almost all the dimensions in the questionnaire had an alpha coefficient greater than the acceptable mark of 0.70, which indicates that the items adequately explain the dimension. Those that had a low coefficient were either restructured or eliminated. How the questionnaire was refined is explained below.

6.4.2 Refining the Questionnaire

Though the questionnaire performed well, a few amendments were made after conducting the pilot test. Some of the items were similar statements, hence, they were repetitive in nature. The researcher made additional observations in the process of administering the questionnaire, and noted some respondents' complaints, questions and suggestions when filling the questionnaire. These observations and suggestions, together with the result of the pilot test (alpha coefficient) were used to refine the questionnaire. The amendments made on the questionnaire include the following:

- As earlier mentioned, some of the items were similar and/or repetitive. The researcher merged the similar/repeated items into one item. For instance, as pointed out by a few respondents, two items, namely – "I do not have to be physically present to transact" and "I do not have to be physically present to resolve issues" were merged as "the organisation has an online presence". The 'online presence' captures the two aforementioned items.
- Most respondents complained about the bulkiness of the questionnaire. This complaint was addressed as merging similar items naturally reduced the weight of the questionnaire.
- The use of "the bank" or "the mobile service provider" in the item statements were eliminated and replaced with "the organisation." This was done to have a uniform questionnaire, and to avoid confusing respondents as experienced during the pilot test administration. By so doing, the confusion that was also encountered during the data analysis process of the pilot test was avoided when analysing the result from the larger sample.
- Some statements were unclear – e.g. one of the items was "the organisation is considerate." Respondents were uncertain what exactly the statement implied, and as a result, the item score weighed very low, as 52 respondents out of 88 ticked 'neutral' on the Likert scale. Similarly, the statement "the organisation has an attractive compensation

and benefit plan" was misleading and unclear as many respondents expressed their uncertainty at the specific stakeholder group the statement was addressing. This issue was addressed by rephrasing the questions. For instance, instead of just saying "the organisation is considerate", the statement was changed to "the organisation is considerate of customers' personal needs."

The modified version of the questionnaire was sent to the researcher's supervisors, and two communication practitioners working in top organisations in order to: (1) ensure that the questionnaire format was suitable for the intended investigation, and to (2) get expert recommendations on the dimensions or items to include, regroup, merge, or delete. One of the recommendations was that the '*media relations'* dimension be changed to '*media reputation'* since its underlying items describe the latter construct better. The recommendation from these experts aided in further modifying the questionnaire, and according to researchers (Bolarinwa, 2015; Mohajan, 2017), this process is used to achieve 'face validity' in scientific research. Overall, the refined questionnaire (see appendix 2 and 3) contained 48 items across 16 dimensions.

6.5 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Data derived from the larger population was analysed using descriptive analysis and multivariate research techniques such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). ANOVA is a set of statistical methods used to compare the means of two or more samples (Kim, 2014:74). It assesses the relative size of variance among group means (between group variance) when compared to the average variance within groups (within group variance). The one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences in stakeholders' perception, in order to determine the dimensions that are more important to each stakeholder group. On the other hand, the exploratory factor analysis, using the Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), was used to reduce the scale items to those attributes suggestive of the unique indicators and dimensions of corporate reputation. Principal Axis Factoring is mainly used as a variable reduction tool, and in cases where the goal is to establish measures or dimensions with the fewest possible number of variables that describe/comprise each dimension (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003:150).

Williams et al. (2012) and Feldstein (2016) submit that when the goal is to determine and describe the factors of a phenomenon or situation, the EFA is a useful technique to apply because it helps the researcher construct indexes, assign weights to items in an index, and reduce a large number of indicators to smaller set. The EFA therefore enabled the researcher to determine the items underlying a dimension, which will allow for as much understanding of the dimension as possible.

After identifying the most significant reputation dimensions following the EFA, the identified dimensions were again subjected to another reliability test using the Cronbach's alpha. Conducting the reliability test was important in order to ascertain that the dimensions are indeed reliable, and relevant to the concept being studied.

6.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF REPUTATION DIMENSIONS

As mentioned in the early chapters of this study, various authors submit that defining constructs should be the first step in any investigation as this would provide a blueprint for the investigation and enable researchers to avoid the issue of defining one thing, but measuring another (see Dowling, 2016; Feldman et al., 2014; Wartick, 2002; and Walker, 2010). According to Wartick (2002:372), one cannot talk about measurement until one knows what is to be measured. Based on this, Olmedia-Cifuentes' definition of CR was adopted for the study (refer to chapter 3).

Following the interviews conducted, and the questionnaire administration, reputation dimensions and items peculiar to the study context were derived. The definitions of the dimensions based on their underlying items are given below, and the compilation of the reputation dimensions with their corresponding items is presented in appendix 2 and 3.

6.6.1 Service quality (SEQ)

Service quality is defined in this study as stakeholders' evaluation of the reliability of service offerings, timeliness and speed of service delivery, affordability of service, and the availability of easily accessible service points such as ATMs or customer service units.

6.6.2 Issue management (ISM)

For the purpose of this study, issue management is defined as stakeholders' assessment of a service organisation's effort in responding to, and resolving complaints, as well as the organisation's ability and expertise to respond well in a crisis or handle negative publicity.

6.6.3 Corporate communication (COC)

Corporate communication in this study is defined as stakeholders' evaluation based on the degree to which the service organisation provides useful information to stakeholders, consistently engages stakeholders, has an online presence, and the frequency of the organisation's advertisements.

6.6.4 Media reputation (MER)

Media reputation in this study refers to how well the service organisation is favourably projected in the media, as well as the relationship the organisation has with media writers.

6.6.5 Emotional appeal (EMA)

This study defines emotional appeal as the degree to which stakeholders of service organisations have a good feeling, trust and confidence, respect and are proud of their association with the organisations. It is also the extent to which they patronise and evaluate a service organisation based on the premise that the organisation is indigenous (that is, locally owned).

6.6.6 Branding (BRA)

In this study, branding is defined as stakeholders' perception of how well a service organisation can easily be differentiated from its competitors, how it projects itself in a concise and consistent manner which includes the use of colours and symbols, and how the organisation conducts itself towards achieving set goals (that is, the corporate culture).

6.6.7 Customer relations (CRL)

Customer relations is the extent to which a service organisation ensures its staff conduct themselves in a responsible and pleasant manner, as well the extent to which the organisation ensures that there are dedicated channels to meet customer needs and guarantee their satisfaction.

6.6.8 Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW)

Employee engagement and welfare refers to the effort a service organisation invests in ensuring that employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation, that a conducive working environment is provided for employees, that employees are treated fairly, and that staff are well-developed, empowered and trained. It is also the extent to which stakeholders perceive employees' reward and benefit plan as attractive, and how there is job security in the organisation.

6.6.9 Financial performance (FIP)

In this study, financial performance refers to stakeholders' evaluation of the ability of the service organisation to finance itself without going bankrupt, as well as the organisation's ability to keep up with the minimum acceptable financial threshold of the industry.

6.6.10 Innovation (INN)

Innovation is stakeholders' expectation that a service organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts, and that the organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful.

6.6.11 Social responsibility (SOR)

Social responsibility is stakeholders' expectation and assessment that a service organisation gives back to people and its local community, conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner, adheres to the principle of good governance, and actively engages in prominent societal discussions.

6.6.12 Governance and leadership (GOL)

For the purpose of this study, governance and leadership entails stakeholders' assessment of the reputation of the board of directors, as well as the leadership quality of the service organisation.

6.6.13 Empathy (EMP)

In this study, empathy implies the extent to which stakeholders adjudge a service organisation to be sensitive to its stakeholders' needs that go beyond the regular service offerings.

6.6.14 Risk Management (RIM)

Risk management implies stakeholders' perception of how the service organisation set up mechanisms to effectively manage situations that might constitute a risk to stakeholders, as well as the organisation's effort in ensuring it does not constitute risk to the industry it belongs to.

6.6.15 Regulatory Compliance (REC)

Regulatory compliance simply implies stakeholders' assessment of how well the service organisation adheres to its industry principles, rules and regulations.

6.6.16 Trustworthiness (TRT)

Trustworthiness is defined in this study as stakeholders' evaluation of the service organisation's transparency in its activities, and the degree to which they perceive that the organisation has no hidden charges.

6.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Research is considered good if it offers sufficient evidence, and an accurate account of findings (internal validity/credibility); if it can be used by someone in another situation (external validity/transferability); and if the research process and findings can be replicated (reliability/dependability) (Cohen et al., 2007; Scotland, 2012; Richie & Lewis, 2003). Thus, the issues of validity and reliability are crucial to this investigation as it establishes the credibility, transparency and authenticity of research findings (Alshenqeeti, 2014:43; Daniel, 2018:266; Neuman, 2011).

Validity involves the extent to which "a study reflects the specific concepts it aims to investigate" (Alshenqeeti, 2014:43). There are different types of validity such as face validity, construct validity, content validity and criterion validity (Bolarinwa, 2015:195). These various types of validity are mainly categorised into two groups: internal validity and external validity.

Internal validity is the degree to which an investigation measures what it intended to measure (Alshenqeeti, 2014:43). This validity answers the question: "Are the differences found related to the measurement? (Alshenqeeti, *ibid*). On the other hand, external validity is concerned with the generalisation of research findings. In this study, the internal and external validity, as well as the content validity are discussed in the subsection below.

6.7.1 Internal Validity of the Findings

As earlier mentioned, internal validity of this study refers to the extent to which the research design and the derived data enable the researcher draw credible conclusions (Mohajan, 2017:14; Devillis, 2006; Creswell, 2014). This study's internal validity was realised through the mixed method approach which involved the semi-structured interview and questionnaire. The researcher ensured that the semi-structured interviews conducted with various stakeholders (customers, employees, regulatory authorities and corporate communication office staff) generated in-depth and quality information by using interviewees who were experienced and knowledgeable about corporate reputation. The questionnaire was then developed using the extensive information derived from the interviews and literature review. Furthermore, internal validity was achieved in this study by pre-testing the questionnaire in order to ascertain that the questions were not ambiguous, that the respondents easily understood it, and that it was sufficient to address the research questions.

6.7.2 Content Validity

Content validity implies the extent to which the items in the research instruments adequately cover the construct being studied (Bolarinwa, 2015:197; Mohajan, 2017:17). As seen in the interview template (appendix 1), the interview questions were very relevant to the study and they were framed in a manner that helped address the research questions. In terms of the questionnaire, BCcampus (2019) notes that content validity can also be determined by carefully checking the questionnaire content against the conceptual definition of the construct being studied. The definition by Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martınez-Leon (2011:79) that "corporate reputation is the overall perception different stakeholders have about a company, evaluated through a set of dimensions and attributes that create value that are linked to the organisation and distinguish it from the rest" was adopted for this study. This guided this research investigation and the questionnaire items depict the definition and encapsulate the concept under study. Also, by using the mixed-method research design, the study ensured it adequately measured what it intended to measure. Thus, based on the aforementioned, the content validity of findings was established.

6.7.3 External Validity

Although the use of a mixed method approach further enhances the credibility and potential to generalise the outcome of this study, the applicability of this research findings to other context, aside from the service industry, cannot be fully ascertained as the study focused only on the perceptions of stakeholders of service organisations in Nigeria. It is however important to point out that this study did not seek to establish reputation dimensions for different types of organisations or contexts, but rather sought to establish precise dimensions of reputation for service organisations within the Nigerian business context.

Also, because this is not a validation study, the findings from the interviews and questionnaire were not subjected to a re-test. Subsequent studies that might want to use this study's findings in other contexts may need to test and re-test the findings to determine their suitability for the context under study.

6.7.4 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency with which research results/findings are replicated on repeated trials (Alshenqeeti, 2014:43). It is the extent to which a measure is trustworthy, predictable and stable (Bolarinwa, 2015:198). When a measure has good internal consistency, researchers should be more confident that the scores represent what they are supposed to (BCcampus, 2019). Reliability in this study was achieved through the use of a structured closed-ended questionnaire that was pre-tested to eliminate any ambiguity that may affect the final outcome of the research. In addition to this, a reliability test was conducted on data obtained from both the pilot test, and the questionnaire distribution to the larger population using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is the most used reliability test in scientific researches. The results of the coefficient from both the pilot test and large data collection were above 0.8, which indicates a high reliability since a coefficient score ≥ 0.70 is generally acceptable and considered reliable.

6.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was low risk as it did not require the organisations or respondents to delve into private/classified information, neither did it include any vulnerable group. First, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University after successfully concluding the online ethical training and tests. Thereafter, consent to interview employees of the selected organisations was obtained from both organisations. Getting consent was possible as the researcher explained to the human resource staff in each organisation that the study would not pose any risk to the organisation; that the study required no classified information about the organisation, but rather seeks to understand the factors that contribute to, and influence their favourable corporate reputation.

The researcher ensured that stakeholders' participation in the data collection process was totally voluntary and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research process at any time or stage without giving any reason for the withdrawal. The researcher obtained participants' consent by their acceptance and indication to participate in the research following the email that was sent to them detailing the nature and purpose of the study, as well as the intended questions to be asked. In addition to this, each interviewee voluntarily signed a consent form prior to the start of the interview.

Participants' confidentiality was guaranteed and all responses are referred to anonymously. Also, participants' stress-levels were at the barest minimum as the questions asked were what they were already privy to. The majority of the interviews were conducted in interviewees' offices where there were no threats to the participants or researcher. The same applied to the administration of the questionnaires.

6.9 SUMMARY

A robust mixed methodology was used in this study to collate data that are rich, adequate and credible to address the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among 15 selected stakeholders to identify and understand the dimensions they consider when assessing the sample organisations, and to understand the impact of reputation on them as stakeholders. Based on the information from the interviews, as well as the leads from the reviewed literature, a questionnaire was developed and a pilot test was conducted among 100 respondents. The questionnaire was then revised following the pilot study and the revised questionnaire was administered to a larger population of 220 respondents so as to have rich, useful and credible results that represent the dimensions of corporate reputation for service organisations. The empirical data analysis and results are presented in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

"It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently"

- Warren Buffet

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this study is to identify the dimensions of corporate reputation for service organisations from the perspective of four primary stakeholder groups – customers, employees, regulators, and corporate communicators. To achieve this, the mixed–method approach, involving the qualitative and quantitative methods, was used to have a robust and scientific data collection and result. As extensively explained in the preceding chapter, the qualitative method (interview), as well as secondary data from literature, informed the quantitative instrument of data collection (questionnaire). Two hundred and twenty (220) questionnaires were administered to the four stakeholder groups, and 208 copies of the questionnaire were recovered.

This chapter presents the findings from the data collection and analysis. The results are presented in order of the research questions. First, the outcome of the semi-structured interviews that was used to design the questionnaire is presented. Thereafter, the result of the exploratory factor analysis used to streamline the reputation dimensions to those that mostly reflect what stakeholders consider is presented. This is followed by the result of the multiple regression analysis that was used to address the second and third research question of the study, that is, the identification of the relevant reputation dimensions for banks and for mobile service providers. Additionally, the outcome of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used in examining the differences between stakeholder groups perception to the reputation dimensions is presented.

The fourth research question concerned the impact of corporate reputation on interviewees' as stakeholders of the selected organisations, and the findings are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion pertaining to the research findings.

7.2 QUALITATIVE DATA RESULT

From the 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with stakeholders, 13 reputation dimensions and 38 items emerged for service organisations. The dimensions and their assigned codes are: Service quality (SEQ), Issue management (ISM), Corporate Communication (COC), Branding (BRA), Customer Relations (CRL), Financial Performance (FIP), Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW), Innovation (INN), Social Responsibility (SOR), Empathy (EMP), Risk Management (RIM), Regulatory Compliance (REC), and Trustworthiness (TRT). The dimensions and their corresponding attributes are presented in table 7.23.

Table 7.23: Dimensions and items from semi-structured interviews

Dimensions	Codes	Items
Service quality	SEQ 1	The service is reliable
	SEQ 2	The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering
	SEQ 3	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points
	SEQ 4	The organisation's service offerings are affordable
Issue management	ISM 1	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints

	ISM 2	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)
Corporate communication	COC 1	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders
	COC 2	The organisation consistently engages with stakeholders
	COC 3	The organisation advertises
	COC 4	The organisation has an online presence
Branding	BRA 1	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts
	BRA 2	The organisation has a good culture
	BRA 3	The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner
	BRA 4	The organisation uses colours and symbols I like
Customer relations	CRL 1	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner
	CRL 2	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction
	CRL 3	The organisation prioritises customer service
Employee engagement and welfare	EEW1	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation
	EEW 2	The organisation engages in quality staff development, empowerment and training
	EEW 3	The organisation has a conducive working environment
	EEW 4	There is job security with the organisation
	EEW 5	The organisation treats its employees fairly
	EEW 6	The organisation has an attractive reward and benefit plan for employees
Financial performance	FIP 1	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.
	FIP 2	The organisation operates within the minimum acceptable threshold for non-performing loans

Innovation	INN 1	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts
	INN 2	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful
Social responsibility	SOR 1	The organisation gives back to people and its local community
	SOR 2	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner
	SOR 3	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance
	SOR 4	The organisation actively engages in societal issues
Empathy	EMP 1	The organisation is sensitive to customers' personal needs
Risk management	RIM 1	The organisation has a good risk management system or practice
	RIM 2	The organisation does not constitute risk to the deposit insurance fund
Regulatory compliance	REC 1	The organisation complies with industry standards
Trustworthiness	TRT 1	The organisation is transparent in its activities
	TRT 2	The organisation does not engage in fraudulent activity
	TRT 3	The organisation has no secret charges

Though some of these 13 dimensions derived from the interviews bore some similarities with those identified from literature (see section 5.6), four new dimensions that are not contained in literature emerged from the interviews. They are: *Risk management, Empathy, Issue management*, and *Customer relations*. As discussed in chapter 6, prior to conducting the interviews with stakeholders, the study identified 12 reputation dimensions from reputation literature on service organisations since this was an exploratory study. These dimensions from literature were to be merged with those derived from the semi-structured interviews in developing the questionnaire.

Equally of importance, the researcher observed that three dimensions from literature were not mentioned in any way or form by any stakeholder interviewed in this study. The dimensions are: Governance and Leadership (GOL), Emotional Appeal (EMA), and Media Reputation (MER). These dimensions were however still included in the questionnaire (see table 7.40 for dimensions and their items). In total, following the merging and regrouping of items and dimensions, 16 dimensions and 48 items were realised from the interviews and literature. These dimensions and items formed the questionnaire.

Table 7.24: Corporate reputation items and dimensions not mentioned by interviewees but included in the questionnaire

Dimensions	Codes	Items
Media reputation	MER 1	The organisation is favourably projected in the media
	MER 2	The organisation has relationships with journalists and media writers
Emotional appeal	EMA 1	I am proud to be associated with the organisation
	EMA 2	I have a good feeling about the organisation
	EMA 3	I have trust and confidence in the organisation
	EMA 4	The organisation is indigenous
	EMA 5	I respect the organisation
	EMA 6	Growing up into the brand makes me patronise the organisation
Governance and leadership	GOL 1	The boards of directors has a good reputation
	GOL 2	The organisation has a sound leadership

7.3 QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION AND RESPONSE RATE

As mentioned in the section above, the attributes and dimensions identified during the semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of both organisations, coupled with those identified from literature review were all merged to develop the draft questionnaire. Afterwards, the draft questionnaire was piloted to ascertain if the instrument was suitable to measure what it intended to measure, and necessary adjustment were made (see section 5.7.2.1 for explanation on the pilot test process).

Following the pilot test and expert review, the refined questionnaire contained 48 items across 16 dimensions (see appendix 2 and 3) and this was used to achieve the objectives of this study. A total of two hundred and twenty (220) questionnaires were self-administered to stakeholders of the selected service organisations – the bank and the mobile service provider. The questionnaires were equally split between the two organisations, that is, one hundred and ten (110) copies for the bank and one hundred and ten copies (110) for the mobile service provider. Because of the dynamics of stakeholders, the questionnaire was not equally shared among the four stakeholder groups since some stakeholder groups were naturally greater in number, and more accessible than others. Table 7.25 below presents how the questionnaire was distributed amongst respondents.

Table 7.25: Questionnaire distribution

	Bank	Mobile service provider	Cumulative total
Customer	50	50	100
Employee	50	50	100
Regulator	5	5	10
Corporate communicator	5	5	10
Total	110	110	220

A total of 106 questionnaires were recovered from respondents of the bank and 102 from respondents of the mobile service provider. This brought the total number of recovered questionnaires to 208, signifying a 94.5% response rate. This response rate is considered very high, useful and representative of the intended investigation. The breakdown of the recovered questionnaire copies from both organisations is shown in Table 7.26.

Table 7.26: Breakdown of recovered questionnaires

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	customer	92	44.0	44.2	44.2
	employee	96	45.9	46.2	90.4
	regulator	10	4.8	4.8	95.2
	corporate communicator	10	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	208	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		209	100.0		

7.4 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The primary aim of this study was to identify the relevant dimensions and items that make up corporate reputation in service organisations from the perspective of all four selected stakeholder groups. To achieve this, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), was conducted. One of the rules for conducting exploratory factor analysis is that there must be a minimum sample of 150 (Kyriazos, 2018; Pearson & Mundfrom, 2010; Izquierdo, Olea & Abad, 2014; Noar, 2003). The study sample (220 respondents) and the recovered data from the sample in this study (208) surpassed this condition.

Before conducting the EFA, the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to determine the suitability of factor analysis based on the sample responses. This is the required first step when conducting EFA (Izquierdo et al., 2014:396). The value 'Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy' is expected to be greater than 0.5; anything higher than 0.5 is better (Cohen et al., 2003). The test result returned a KMO of 0.585 which established that conducting the exploratory factor analysis was appropriate since it was > 0.5. Both the Bartlett's Test and the KMO results (shown in the table 7.27) also indicated that there was appropriate correlation (covariance) in the data for the researcher to proceed with the factor analysis. The last value in the table is the significance which is expected to be a value lower than 0.001, as we have it below.

Table 7.27: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.585
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2271.285
	Df	1128
	Sig.	.000

7.4.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Following the result of the KMO and Bartlett's Test of sphericity, EFA was performed. Factor analysis allows a researcher to streamline large numbers of dimensions or items to a smaller number that mostly represent the concept being studied. "It does this by summarising the underlying patterns of correlation and looking for clumps or groups of closely related items" (Lani, 2018; Pallant, 2013). The EFA was a necessary part of the analysis in this study as the researcher had identified several dimensions (16) prior to the quantitative data analysis. Also, this technique is most appropriate for investigations that seek to identify measures (the case in this study) or develop a scale.

The EFA using the Principal Axis Factoring technique and an orthogonal rotation (varimax) was carried out on the data. This rotation allows a degree of correlation between the factors in order to improve the inter-correlation between the items within the factors (Samuels, 2016). Factor analysis generates factor loadings (communalities) that signify the relationships between an item and each factor (dimension). For a factor loading to be statistically significant, it must have the least acceptable value of 0.3. Factor loadings ≥ 0.40 are more important and those ≥ 0.50 are considered extremely significant (Lani, 2018; Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010).

In this study, since almost all the items had factor loadings ≥ 0.3, only the items that had factor loadings ≥ 0.5, and loaded on only one factor (dimension) were considered relevant to the study. By implication, these items with factor loadings ≥ 0.5 have evidence of both discriminant and construct validity (Norzaidi et al., 2009).

Table 7.44 presents the factor loadings of each of the 48 items across the 16 dimensions. As earlier mentioned, all factor loadings ≥ 0.5 were extracted as they are considered relevant to corporate reputation in this study. The extracted items and corresponding dimensions are then presented in table 7.28.

Table 7.28: Factor loadings of items

Dimensions	Codes	Loading (communalities)	Variance
Service quality (SEQ)	SEQ 1	.616	9.248
	SEQ 2	.561	

	SEQ 3	.578	
	SEQ 4	.311	
Issue Management (ISM)	ISM 1	.512	6.511
	ISM 2	.665	
Corporate communication (COC)	COC 1	.545	4.922
	COC 2	.629	
	COC 3	.185	
	COC 4	.553	
Media reputation (MER)	MER 1	.567	4.264
	MER 2	.277	
Emotional appeal (EMA)	EMA 1	.698	4.113
	EMA 2	.387	
	EMA 3	.670	
	EMA 4	.115	
	EMA 5	.352	
	EMA 6	.282	
Branding (BRA)	BRA 1	.609	3.706
	BRA 2	.615	
	BRA 3	.632	
	BRA 4	.237	
Customer relations (CRL)	CRL 1	.617	3.414
	CRL 2	.688	
	CRL 3	.678	
Employee engagement and welfare (EEW)	EEW 1	.731	3.287
	EEW 2	.361	
	EEW 3	.335	
	EEW 4	.520	
	EEW 5	.579	
	EEW 6	.328	
Financial performance (FIP)	FIP 1	.518	3.135

	FIP 2	.330	
Innovation (INN)	INN 1	.599	2.974
	INN 2	.700	
Social responsibility (SOR)	SOR 1	.645	2.854
	SOR 2	.594	
	SOR 3	.643	
	SOR 4	.250	
Governance and leadership (GOL)	GOL 1	.688	2.710
	GOL 2	.672	
Empathy (EMP)	EMP 1	.221	2.602
Risk management (RIM)	RIM 1	.354	2.551
	RIM 2	.397	
Regulatory Compliance (REC)	REC 1	.679	2.402
Trustworthiness (TRT)	TRT 1	.624	2.337
	TRT 2	.341	
	TRT 3	.627	

Based on the above table, the 'Empathy' and 'Risk management' corporate reputation dimensions were eliminated since their items loading was ≤ 0.5. Thirteen other items were also eliminated since their factor loadings were below the minimum acceptable value. This brought the total number of significant corporate reputation items to 31 across 14 dimensions. The streamlined dimensions and items are shown in table 7.29.

Table 7.29: 14 dimensions and 31 items after EFA

Dimensions	Codes	Items
Service quality	SEQ 1	The service is reliable
	SEQ 2	The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering
	SEQ 3	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points
Issue management	ISM 1	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints

	ISM 2	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)
Corporate communication	COC 1	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders
	COC 2	The organisation consistently engages with stakeholders
	COC 4	The organisation has an online presence
Media reputation	MER 1	The organisation is favourably projected in the media
Emotional appeal	EMA 1	I am proud to be associated with the organisation
	EMA 3	I have trust and confidence in the organisation
Branding	BRA 1	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts
	BRA 2	The organisation has a good culture
	BRA 3	The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner
Customer relations	CRL 1	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner
	CRL 2	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction
	CRL 3	The organisation prioritises customer service
Employee engagement and welfare	EEW1	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation
	EEW4	There is job security with the organisation
	EEW 5	The organisation treats its employees fairly
Financial performance	FIP 1	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.
Innovation	INN 1	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts
	INN 2	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful
Social responsibility	SOR 1	The organisation gives back to people and its local community
	SOR 2	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner

	SOR 3	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance
Governance and leadership	GOL 1	The boards of directors have a good reputation
	GOL 2	The organisation has a sound leadership
Regulatory compliance	REC 1	The organisation complies with industry standards
Trustworthiness	TRT 1	The organisation is transparent in its activities
	TRT 3	The organisation has no secret charges

As submitted by Kanyongo (2006:333), most researchers determine the number of factors (dimensions) to be extracted using the Eigenvalue criteria. The Eigenvalues, and the Percentage of Variance Explained, were therefore used to determine the final factors (dimensions) that mostly represent corporate reputation.

Factors (dimensions) with Initial Eigenvalues ≥ 1.0 are considered significant and retained, while those with Eigenvalues less than 1.0 are eliminated (Hair et al., 2010). Based on the Eigenvalues (see Table 7.30), six out of the fourteen dimensions emerged as the final reputation dimensions for service organisations because their Eigenvalues exceeded 1. These dimensions explained 71.136% of the variation in the data. The Eigenvalues and Percentage of Variance Explained are presented in the table below.

Table 7.30: Eigenvalues and Variance of the six reputation dimensions

Dimensions	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**			**Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings**
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
Issue management	2.837	21.823	21.823	2.439	18.760	18.760	2.018

Service quality	1.678	12.905	34.728	1.124	8.648	27.408	1.670
Corporate communication	1.330	10.231	44.959	.863	6.635	34.043	1.009
Social responsibility	1.251	9.624	54.584	.705	5.426	39.469	.969
Branding	1.119	8.607	63.190	.639	4.912	44.381	.717
Trustworthiness	1.033	7.945	71.136	.515	3.965	48.346	.668

Based on the above table, the first dimension returned an initial Eigenvalue of 2.837 and this explained 21.823% of the variance in the data. The second dimension had an initial Eigenvalue of 1.678, which explains 12.905% of the variance in the data. Dimensions 3, 4, 5, and 6 had initial Eigenvalues of 1.330, 1.251, 1.119, 1.033, and they explained 10.231%, 9.624%, 8.607% and 7.945% of the variance respectively.

The Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings in the above table are calculated in the same way as the "Initial Eigenvalues", except that the extracted sums values are based on the common variance. Hence, the extracted sum will always be lower than the initial values since they are based on the common variance, which is always lower than the total variance (UCLA, 2019).

Additionally, the Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings values signify the distribution of the variance after the varimax rotation. Varimax rotation attempts to maximise the variance of each of the dimensions, so the total amount of variance accounted for is redistributed over the six extracted dimensions (UCLA, 2019).

Following the identification of the six dimensions based on the Eigenvalues, a reliability test was conducted using the Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 7.31, the coefficients of the six dimensions were well above the minimum acceptable value of 0.7. The six corporate reputation dimensions are therefore considered reliable for service organisations.

Table 7.31: Reliability of dimensions

Dimensions	Cronbach α
Issue management	0.915
Service quality	0.896
Corporate communication	0.864
Social responsibility	0.851
Branding	0.839
Trustworthiness	0.825

Furthermore, the findings presented in Tables 7.28, 7.30 and 7.31 confirm the reliability and the discriminant validity of the items underlying the six corporate reputation dimensions. Evidence of reliability and discriminant validity establishes the construct validity (Pallant, 2013; Trochim, 2006). The final reputation dimensions and underlying items are listed in Table 7.32.

Table 7.32: The final six reputation dimensions for service organisations

Dimensions	Items
Issue management	• The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints • The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)
Service quality	• The service is reliable • The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering • The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points
Corporate communication	• The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders • The organisation consistently engages with stakeholders • The organisation has an online presence

Branding	• The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts • The organisation has a good culture • The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner
Social responsibility	• The organisation gives back to people and its local community • The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner • The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance
Trustworthiness	• The organisation is transparent in its activities • The organisation has no secret charges

7.5 IDENTIFICATION OF REPUTATION DIMENSIONS FOR EACH SERVICE ORGANISATION

The second and third research questions involve the identification of the dimensions that are unique to each service organisation used in this study. Specifically, the research questions are:

- What are the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a service provider?
- What are the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank?

Based on the result of the EFA (see table 7.28), research questions 2 and 3 were addressed using the multiple regression approach. The findings are presented in the subsections below:

7.5.1 Reputation Dimensions for Banks

Table 7.33 shows the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank. The p-value indicates the significance level and the rule of thumb is when the significance (p-value) is < 0.05 then there is a significant relationship between the dimension and corporate reputation. Based on this, findings indicate that bank stakeholders consider all but one (Governance and leadership) of the reputation dimensions in their assessment.

On the other hand, the β (that is, Beta) in the table informs us of the contribution/weight of each of the independent variable to the dependent variable (Corporate Reputation). Thus, though 13 out of 14 reputation dimensions are significant to corporate reputation, Regulatory compliance (β =2.70, p-value = < 0.05) has the most impact on the reputation of a bank. This is followed by Trustworthiness (β =1.64, p-value = < 0.05), Service quality (β =1.34, p-value = < 0.05), Corporate communication (β =1.31, p-value = < 0.05), and thereafter, Social responsibility (β =1.29, p-value = <0.05).

This indicates that a drop in regulatory compliance, trustworthiness, service quality, corporate communication, and social responsibility efforts of a bank as perceived by stakeholders can lead to a corresponding reduction of the bank's reputation by 2.70, 1.64, 1.34, 1.31 and 1.29 units respectively. In other words, the corporate reputation of a bank is reduced following stakeholders' negative perception or evaluation of its regulatory compliance, trustworthiness, service quality, corporate communication, and social responsibility.

Table 7.33: Reputation dimensions for banks

Dimensions	Direct Effect (β)	T-Statistics	p-value	Decision
Service quality (SEQ)	1.34	5.91	.00	Supported
Issue management (ISM)	0.73	4.56	.00	Supported
Branding (BRA)	1.15	7.23	.00	Supported
Customer relations (CRL)	0.86	4.85	.00	Supported
Innovation (INN)	1.25	5.14	.00	Supported
Social responsibility (SOR)	1.29	7.72	.00	Supported
Media reputation (MER)	1.10	5.05	.00	Supported
Regulatory Compliance (REC)	2.70	5.40	.00	Supported
Trustworthiness (TRT)	1.64	9.26	.00	Supported
Corporate communication (COC)	1.31	5.91	.00	Supported
Employee engagement and	0.99	9.94	.00	Supported

welfare (EEW)				
Financial performance (FIP)	0.73	3.31	.00	Supported
Governance and leadership (GOL)	0.27	1.00	.32	Not-Supported
Emotional appeal (EMA)	0.78	4.56	.00	Supported

7.5.2 Reputation Dimensions for Mobile Service Providers

The third research objective of this study was to identify the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a mobile service provider (MSP). Just as earlier mentioned, the p-value indicates the significance level of each reputation dimension. The dimension is thus considered significant to corporate reputation if it is less than 0.05.

Table 7.34 shows evidence that all the reputation dimensions are relevant to MSP stakeholders except "media reputation" (MER) because its p-value was greater than 0.05. The β in the table indicates that service quality (β =0.283, p-value = < 0.05) has the most impact on the reputation of mobile service providers. This is followed by employee engagement and welfare (β =0.281, p-value = < 0.05), emotional appeal (β = 0.199, P-value = < 0.05), social responsibility (β = 0.185, P-value = < 0.05), and customer relations (β =0.172, p-value = < 0.05).

Table 7.34: Reputation dimensions for mobile service providers

Dimensions	**Direct Effect (β)**	**T-Statistics**	**p-value**	**Decision**
Service quality (SEQ)	0.283	4.34	.00	Supported
Issue Management (ISM)	0.084	5.12	.00	Supported
Corporate communication (COC)	0.149	7.32	.00	Supported
Media reputation (MER)	0.044	1.24	.24	Not-Supported
Branding (BRA)	0.166	4.51	.00	Supported

Customer relations (CRL)	0.172	8.67	.00	Supported
Innovation (INN)	0.109	9.22	.00	Supported
Social responsibility (SOR)	0.185	5.92	.00	Supported
Regulatory Compliance (REC)	0.074	4.89	.00	Supported
Trustworthiness (TRT)	0.126	7.36	.00	Supported
Employee engagement and welfare (EEW)	0.281	5.67	.00	Supported
Financial performance (FIP)	0.102	3.45	.00	Supported
Governance and leadership (GOL)	0.125	3.98	.00	Supported
Emotional appeal (EMA)	0.199	4.36	.00	Supported

The above also indicate that a decrease in stakeholders' perception of a mobile service provider's quality of service, employee engagement and welfare, emotional appeal, social responsibility, and customer relations, can lead to a decrease in the organisation's reputation by 0.283, 0.281,0.199, 0.185, and 0.172 units respectively. That is, the corporate reputation of a mobile service provider is reduced following stakeholders' negative perception or evaluation of its service quality, employee engagement and welfare, emotional appeal, social responsibility, and customer relations.

Based on the evidence in Table 7.33 and Table 7.34, there is minimal variance in the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank, and stakeholders of a mobile service provider. Of the 14 reputation dimensions, all except "media reputation" (p-value = 0.24), are considered by stakeholders of a mobile service provider, while all except "Governance and leadership" (p-value = 0.32) are positively and significantly considered by stakeholders of a bank. Where the difference lie is in the order of importance the reputation dimensions are for each organisation.

Albeit the difference in the impact level of the reputation dimensions for each organisation, it is safe to conclude that based on the findings in this study, the reputation dimensions for a service sector like banks, can also be applied or used in another service sector like mobile service providers.

Furthermore, the fact that stakeholders would consider dimensions like regulatory compliance, and trustworthiness before the dimension of service quality in a service sector like bank confirms that service organisations cannot merely rely on the service offering to be truly reputable. Several other aspects of its activities, such as how the organisation manages and resolves issues, as well as how well it communicates with, and engages stakeholders must be equally prioritised. The findings support studies (Covey & Brown, 2001; Steyn, 2003) that concluded that stakeholders' expectation of organisations have shifted from production of goods and services to other areas of the organisation's activities such as its contribution to society, communication with stakeholders, the corporate citizenship, etc.

7.6 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS' PERCEPTION OF THE REPUTATION DIMENSIONS

One major argument this study stressed was that various stakeholder groups will evaluate an organisation differently. This explains why the study used four primary stakeholder groups so as to have reputation dimensions that reflect what all primary stakeholders consider when evaluating the corporate reputation of service organisations. Existing empirical studies and literature (see Lloyds, 2007; Cornelissen & Thorpe, 2002; Chun & Davies, 2006) reveal how various aspect of an organisation will appeal differently to stakeholders, and as such, their evaluation or perception of the dimensions that make an organisation reputable, which also includes the attributes (or items) that define the dimensions will differ. To therefore examine whether there are any differences in the reputation dimensions considered by the stakeholders (customers, employees, regulators and corporate communicators), the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse the questionnaire responses from the four stakeholder groups.

Table 7.35 presents the breakdown of the ANOVA result between stakeholder groups and their perceptions of the various reputation dimensions. The ANOVA test confirms that indeed, differences exist between stakeholder groups' perceptions of the reputation dimensions. As seen in table 7.35, there is a large difference in the group means of at least some of the groups. The significance level for each of the dimensions also reveals the differences among groups, and the *F* value shows how strong the effect is.

Table 7.35: ANOVA result of stakeholder groups' perception to reputation dimensions

Dimensions	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service quality (SEQ)	3.783	3	1.261	5.298	.00
	48.556	204	.238		
	52.339	207			
Issue Management (ISM)	10.895	3	3.632	11.155	.00
	66.413	204	.326		
	77.308	207			
Corporate communication (COC)	8.596	3	2.865	10.183	.00
	57.404	204	.281		
	66.000	207			
Media reputation (MER)	20.968	3	6.989	13.065	.00
	109.136	204	.535		
	130.105	207			
Branding (BRA)	14.077	3	4.692	17.401	.00
	55.011	204	.270		
	69.089	207			
Customer relations (CRL)	10.560	3	3.520	9.362	.00
	76.704	204	.376		
	87.264	207			
Innovation (INN)	8.016	3	2.672	5.399	.00
	100.963	204	.495		
	108.980	207			
Social responsibility	4.580	3	1.527	3.959	.01
	78.675	204	.386		

(SOR)	83.255	207			
Regulatory	13.573	3	4.524	5.073	.00
Compliance	181.922	204	.892		
(REC)	195.495	207			
Trustworthiness	8.456	3	2.819	6.162	.00
(TRT)	93.322	204	.457		
	101.778	207			
Emotional	.823	3	.274	1.686	.17
Appeal (EMA)	33.177	204	.163		
	34.000	207			
Employee	26.498	3	8.833	32.374	.00
Engagement	55.659	204	.273		
and Welfare (EEW)	82.158	207			
Financial	7.446	3	2.482	3.983	.01
Performance	127.121	204	.623		
(FIP)	134.566	207			
Governance	4.418	3	1.473	1.894	.13
and Leadership	158.629	204	.778		
(GOL)	163.047	207			

p =. < 0.05

From the above table, it is evident that differences exist among stakeholder groups perception of the corporate reputation dimensions except "Emotional appeal" and "Governance and leadership". Much importance is not attached to the two reputation dimensions by the four stakeholder groups.

The result of the other 12 reputation dimensions is consistent with the findings in literature that indeed the reputation dimensions that inform each stakeholder group's assessment of the organisation will differ, and the order of relevance of the various reputation dimensions will also differ among groups. For instance, for Service Quality (SEQ), $F(3, 204) = 1.261$, $p = .00$, stakeholders' level of significance showed that employees (M = 1.93, SD = .44) were more statistically significant as compared to customers (M = 1.92, SD = .55), regulators (M = 1.80, SD = .40) and thereafter corporate communicators (M = 1.30, SD = .31). In essence, the result indicates that employees consider service quality more important as compared to other stakeholders

For Issue Management (ISM), F(3, 204) = 3.632, p = .00, stakeholders' level of significance showed that customers (M = 1.85, SD = .64) were more statistically significant as compared to employees (M = 1.66, SD = .54). The reputation dimension was however equally significant between the corporate communicators (M = 1.10, SD = .21) and the regulators (M = 1.10, SD = .00). In essence, the result indicates that customers consider issue management more important than other stakeholders.

For Corporate Communication (COC), F(3, 204) = 2.865, p = .00, stakeholders' level of significance also showed that customers (M = 2.28, SD = .32) were more statistically significant as compared to employees (M = 2.21, SD = .51), corporate communicators (M = 2.12, SD = .58) and thereafter regulators (M = 1.25, SD = .29). The result indicates that customers consider corporate communication more important as compared to other stakeholders.

For Media Reputation (MER), F(3, 204) = 6.989, p = .00, the significance level between employees (M = 2.75, SD = .72) and corporate communicators (M = 2.74, SD = .76) was very close. This was followed by customers (M = 2.42, SD = .73) and then regulators (M = 1.30, SD = .35). Result thus shows that employees consider media reputation more important as compared to other stakeholders.

Surprisingly, for Branding (BRA), F(3, 204) = 4.692, p = .00, stakeholders' level of significance showed that regulators (M = 2.93, SD = .47) were more statistically significant as compared to customers (M = 2.50, SD = .51), corporate communicators (M = 2.19, SD = .54) and thereafter employees (M = 1.55, SD = .39). In essence, the result indicates that regulators consider branding more important as compared to other stakeholders.

For Customer Relations (CRL), F(3, 204) = 3.520, p = .00, stakeholders' level of significance showed that customers (M = 2.33, SD = .70) were more statistically significant as compared to corporate communicators (M = 2.23, SD = .77), employees (M = 1.966, SD = .51) and thereafter regulators (M = 1.50, SD = .48). In essence, the result indicates that customers consider customer relations more important as compared to other stakeholders.

For Innovation (INN), $F(3, 204) = 2.672$, $p = .00$, stakeholders' level of significance showed that corporate communicators (M = 2.65, SD = .91) were more statistically significant as compared to customers (M = 2.07, SD = .71), employees (M = 2.01, SD = .70) and thereafter regulators (M = 1.40, SD = .46). In essence, the result indicates that corporate communicators consider innovation more important as compared to other stakeholders.

For Social Responsibility (SOR), $F(3, 204) = 1.527$, $p = .01$, stakeholders' level of significance showed that customers (M = 2.48, SD = .66) were more statistically significant as compared to employees (M = 2.16, SD = .60), corporate communicators (M = 2.05, SD = .56) and thereafter regulators (M = 1.80, SD = .42). In essence, the result indicates that customers consider social responsibility more important as compared to other stakeholders.

Surprisingly, regulators were not found to be statistically significant for Regulatory Compliance (REC), $F(3, 204) = 4.524$, $p = .00$ than other stakeholders. Rather, customers (M = 1.99, SD = 1.02) were more statistically significant as compared to employees (M = 1.92, SD = .95), corporate communicators (M = 1.20, SD = .42) and thereafter regulators (M = 1.00, SD = .00). In essence, the result indicates that customers consider regulatory compliance more important as compared to other stakeholders.

For Trustworthiness (TRT), $F(3, 204) = 2.819$, $p = .00$, stakeholders' level of significance showed that customers (M = 2.08, SD = .52) were more statistically significant as compared to employees (M = 2.05, SD = .84), corporate communicators (M = 1.40, SD = .41) and thereafter regulators (M = 1.37, SD = .25). In essence, the result indicates that customers consider trustworthiness more important as compared to other stakeholders.

Following the lead obtained from the ANOVA result, the hierarchy of the items underlying the reputation dimensions for each stakeholder group is presented in the following section.

7.7 REPUTATION ITEMS TO STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

To identify the order of relevance of the reputation items to each stakeholder, the researcher used descriptive statistics in form of abridged tables. The abridged table comprises the cumulative valid percentage of each stakeholder group response to each item. The researcher considers the abridged table highly effective in further addressing the difference in stakeholders' perception since it simplifies and clearly presents the order of relevance of each item underlying a construct to each stakeholder group. This eliminates the issue of confusion as to which item is more significant, and makes it easier to understand the research findings.

Since the questionnaire was a 5-point Likert scale comprising 'strongly agree' 'agree' 'neutral' 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree', the researcher, for the abridged tables, merged the response categories *Agree and Strongly Agree* as **AGREE**, and *Strongly Disagree and Disagree* as **DISAGREE.**

7.7.1 Reputation Items for Customers

Table 7.36 is the abridged table which presents in descending order the relevant reputation items for customers. Items with a cumulative percentage below 50% in the "AGREE" response category were considered irrelevant and eliminated since they do not represent what at least half of the respondents consider important for corporate reputation.

Table 7.36: Relevant items for customers

Dimension and Code	Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Issue Management (ISM 1)	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints	86.9	9.8	3.3
Service Quality (SEQ 2)	The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering	83.7	7.7	8.6
Corporate Communication (COC 4)	The organisation has an online presence	83.7	9.8	6.5
Service Quality (SEQ 1)	The service is reliable	82.6	10.9	6.5
Issue Management (ISM 2)	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)	81.5	15.2	3.3
Corporate	The organisation provides useful	81.5	13	5.4

Communication (COC 1)	information to stakeholders			
Branding (BRA 1)	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts	77.2	14.1	8.7
Trustworthiness (TRT 1)	The organisation is transparent in its activities	77.2	14.1	8.7
Customer Relations (CRL 2)	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction	76.1	16.3	7.6
Regulatory Compliance (REC 1)	The organisation complies with industry standards	76.1	15.2	8.7
Innovation (INN 1)	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts	75	15.2	9.7
Trustworthiness (TRT 3)	The organisation has no secret charges	75	19.6	5.5
Emotional Appeal (EMA 3)	I have trust and confidence in the organisation	75	18.5	6.5
Service Quality (SEQ 3)	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points	72.9	17.4	9.8
Social Responsibility (SOR 1)	The organisation gives back to people and its local community	72.8	19.6	7.6
Corporate Communication (COC 2)	The organisation consistently engage with stakeholders	71.7	16.3	12
Media Reputation (MER 1)	The organisation is favourably projected in the media	70.6	19.6	9.7
Emotional Appeal (EMA 1)	I am proud to be associated with the organisation	70.6	21.7	7.6
Innovation (INN 2)	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful	70.6	20.7	8.7
Emotional Appeal (EMA 2)	I have a good feeling about the organisation	68.5	23.9	7.6
Social Responsibility (SOR 2)	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner	68.5	21.7	9.8
Customer Relations (CRL 3)	The organisation prioritises customer service	67.4	16.3	16.3
Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW 5	The organisation treats its employees fairly	67.3	23.9	8.7

Branding (BRA 3)	The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner	64.1	23.9	12
Branding (BRA 2)	The organisation has a good culture	56.6	29.3	14.1
Financial Performance (FIP 1)	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.	55.4	27.2	17.4
Social Responsibility (SOR 3)	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance	53.2	29.3	17.4
Governance and Leadership (GOL 1)	The boards of directors have a good reputation	51	28.3	20.7
Governance and Leadership (GOL 2)	The organisation has a sound leadership	51.1	25	23.9

Table 7.36 shows interesting findings of the items relevant for customers. It is interesting to see that an item underlying service quality was not the most relevant to customers; rather, it was issue management. In fact, the two items underlying "issue management' dimension were in the top 5 relevant items considered by customers when evaluating corporate reputation. This is interesting, because it is often assumed that customers are mostly concerned with service quality, and as a result, some organisations do not prioritise other aspects of the organisation that appeal to customers.

The aforementioned is however not intended to undermine the importance of the service quality of an organisation. As it is clear from this study's finding, the second most relevant item for customers when evaluating a service organisation relates to the service quality dimension, which states that "the organisation offers a timely and fast service offering". Out of the 31 items underlying the 14 dimensions after EFA, the items underlying the service quality dimension were 2nd, 4th, and 13th; of which the first 2 items out of the 3 items each had a valid percentage of over 75%. The last items had a valid percentage of 72.9%, as seen in the abridged table above. This shows that as much as service quality may not be the main or sole determinant of corporate reputation, it is still a crucial reputation dimension for any service organisation.

7.7.2 Reputation Items for Employees

The relevant items for employees are shown in Table 7.37. Result shows that employees find all the items relevant to corporate reputation. This outcome might be tied to the fact that since employees are primarily responsible for the implementation of most of the reputation items, it is expected that they would understand the items' importance and impact on the organisation's reputation. More so, since employees are internal stakeholders, their response might be explained by their inside perspective and knowledge about what drives the organisation.

Though employees consider the items underlying the *governance and leadership* dimension relevant to corporate reputation, it is surprising to see that the items "reputation of the leader" and "the organisation has a sound leadership" ranked in the bottom four of relevant items. It is also significant to note that this was the case for customers (see table 7.36) – these items were the last two items based on their order of priority. Hence, based on the outcome of this study, it can be concluded that, while the leadership dimension is significant in building and managing corporate reputation, stakeholders (customers and employees) will first consider other dimensions like issue management, service quality, corporate communication activities, employee engagement and welfare, branding, social responsibility, and innovation when assessing a service organisation.

Table 7.37: Reputation items for employees

Dimension and Code	Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW 1)	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation	99	1	0
Service Quality (SEQ 2)	The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering	97.9	2.1	0
Corporate Communication (COC 1)	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders	95.8	4.2	0
Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW 5)	The organisation treats its employees fairly	92.7	5.2	2.1
Innovation (INN 1)	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts	92.7	5.2	2
Branding (BRA 2)	The organisation has a good culture	90.6	8.3	1
Service Quality (SEQ 1)	The service is reliable	89.5	8.3	2
Social	The organisation conducts its business in	89.5	8.4	2.2

Responsibility (SOR 2)	an ethical and fair manner			
Emotional Appeal (EMA 3)	I have trust and confidence in the organisation	88.6	9.4	2.1
Service Quality (SEQ 3)	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points	88.5	11.5	0
Financial Performance (FIP 1)	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.	88.5	8.3	3.1
Issue Management (ISM 1)	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints	87.5	6.3	6.2
Customer Relations (CRL 1)	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner	86.5	10.4	3.1
Emotional Appeal (EMA 1)	I am proud to be associated with the organisation	85.4	11.5	3.1
Media Reputation (MER 1)	The organisation is favourably projected in the media	83.3	15.6	1
Trustworthiness (TRT 1)	The organisation is transparent in its activities	81.2	11.5	7.3
Corporate Communication (COC 4)	The organisation has an online presence	79.2	14.6	6.2
Issue Management (ISM 2)	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)	78.1	18.8	3.1
Customer Relations (CRL 3)	The organisation prioritises customer service	78.1	14.6	7.3
Social Responsibility (SOR 1)	The organisation gives back to people and its local community	77.1	17.7	5.2
Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW 4)	There is job security with the organisation	76.1	15.6	8.3
Branding (BRA 1)	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts	76	18.8	5.2
Regulatory Compliance (REC 1)	The organisation complies with industry standards	73.9	21.9	4.2
Customer Relations (CRL 2)	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction	68.8	19.8	11.5
Branding (BRA 3)	The organisation projects itself in a clear	67.8	21.9	10.4

	and consistent manner			
Social Responsibility (SOR 3)	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance	66.7	22.9	10.4
Innovation (INN 2)	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful	61.5	31.3	7.3
Governance and Leadership (GOL 1)	The boards of directors have a good reputation	61.5	20.8	17.7
Trustworthiness (TRT 3)	The organisation has no secret charges	60.4	19.8	19.8
Corporate Communication (COC 2)	The organisation consistently engage with stakeholders	50	31.3	18.7
Governance and Leadership (GOL 2)	The organisation has a sound leadership	50	33.3	16.7

7.7.3 Reputation Items for Regulators

Analysis of the regulators' response to the reputation items shows that of the 31 items, only 20 were relevant to service organisations from a regulator's perspective. As earlier mentioned, items with less than 50% 'Agree' were eliminated. In essence, the reputation items not considered by regulators of service organisations are: continuous engagement with customers, brand differentiation, good corporate culture, the organisation's projecting itself in a clear and consistent manner, employees' responsible conduct, organisation's leadership, reputation of the directors, organisations identifying with what is in vogue, carries employees along in its activities, job security, and employees' fair treatment. These items respectively represent the item codes COC 2, BRA 1, BRA 2, BRA 3, CRL 1, GOL 1, GOL 2, INN 2, EEW 1. EEW 4, and EEW 5.

From the regulators' responses in the table below, it appears that this group of stakeholders is interested in only the organisational aspects that directly concern their work/responsibility as regulators of a service organisation. Other activities the organisation implements will not influence their perception of the organisation as regulators. Hence, as long as service companies continuously implement the items in the table below, they will be favourably perceived by their regulators. As a consequence, regulators' favourable perception guarantees the smooth running of the organisation by helping it sustain its licence to operate.

Table 7.38: Reputation items for regulators

Dimension and Code	Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Service Quality (SEQ 1)	The service is reliable	100	0	0
Service Quality (SEQ 3)	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points	100	0	0
Issue Management (ISM 1)	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints	100	0	0
Issue Management (ISM 2)	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)	100	0	0
Corporate Communication (COC 4)	The organisation has an online presence	100	0	0
Regulatory Compliance (REC 1)	The organisation complies with industry standards	100	0	0
Trustworthiness (TRT 1)	The organisation is transparent in its activities	100	0	0
Service Quality (SEQ 2)	The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering	90	10	0
Customer Relations (CRL 2)	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction	90	10	0
Customer Relations (CRL 3)	The organisation prioritises customer service	90	10	0
Social Responsibility (SOR 2)	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner	90	10	0
Corporate Communication (COC 1)	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders	80	20	0
Media Reputation (MER 1)	The organisation is favourably projected in the media	80	20	0
Financial Performance (FIP	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.	80	10	10

1)				
Social Responsibility (SOR 3)	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance	80	20	0
Trustworthiness (TRT 3)	The organisation has no secret charges	80	10	10
Social Responsibility (SOR 1)	The organisation gives back to people and its local community	70	20	10
Emotional Appeal (EMA 1)	I am proud to be associated with the organisation	60	30	10
Emotional Appeal (EMA 3)	I have trust and confidence in the organisation	60	40	0
Innovation (INN 1)	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts	60	30	10

7.7.4 Reputation Items for Corporate Communicators

As Table 7.39 shows, communication office staff consider all the items relevant to achieving a favourable corporate reputation, with the lowest item scoring 60%. Just as in the case of employees, the result of the reputation items for corporate communicators is better understood when the profile of respondents in this stakeholder group and their role in organisations is considered. Respondents in this group comprised communication experts and directors who are highly knowledgeable of what corporate reputation entails, and who are normally tasked with building and maintaining the corporate reputation. Also, this group of people communicate and interact with various stakeholders in the discharge of their duties, and so by implication, they are more aware of what contributes to the corporate reputation. Hence, it is unsurprising that all the reputation items were considered relevant by them.

Table 7.39: Reputation items for corporate communicators

Dimension and Code	Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Service Quality (SEQ 1)	The service is reliable	100		0
Service Quality (SEQ 2)	The organisation offers a timely and fast service offering	100		0

Service Quality (SEQ 3)	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points	100		0
Issue Management (ISM 1)	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints	100		0
Issue Management (ISM 2)	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)	100		0
Corporate Communication (COC 1)	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders	100		0
Corporate Communication (COC 2)	The organisation consistently engage with stakeholders	100		0
Corporate Communication (COC 4)	The organisation has an online presence	100		0
Media Reputation (MER 1)	The organisation is favourably projected in the media	100		0
Branding (BRA 1)	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts	100		0
Branding (BRA 2)	The organisation has a good culture	100		0
Branding (BRA 3)	The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner	100		0
Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW1)	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation	100		0
Employee Engagement and Welfare (EEW5)	The organisation treats its employees fairly	100		0
Customer Relations (CRL 1)	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner	100		0
Customer Relations (CRL 2)	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction	100		0
Social Responsibility (SOR 1)	The organisation gives back to people and its local community	100		0
Social Responsibility (SOR 2)	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner	100		0
Regulatory Compliance (REC	The organisation complies with industry standards	100		0

1)				
Trustworthiness (TRT 1)	The organisation is transparent in its activities	100		0
Emotional Appeal (EMA 1)	I am proud to be associated with the organisation	100		0
Innovation (INN 1)	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts	100		
Financial Performance (FIP 1)	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.	90	10	0
Social Responsibility (SOR 3)	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance	90	10	0
Trustworthiness (TRT 3)	The organisation has no secret charges	90	10	0
Governance and leadership (GOL 2)	The organisation has a sound leadership	90	10	0
Governance and leadership (GOL 1)	The boards of directors have a good reputation	70	30	0
Customer Relations (CRL 3)	The organisation prioritises customer service	70	20	10
Innovation (INN 2)	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful	70	30	0
Emotional Appeal (EMA 3)	I have trust and confidence in the organisation	60	20	20

7.8 IMPACT OF CORPORATE REPUTATION ON STAKEHOLDERS

As discussed in chapter 6, data derived from the interviews were analysed by first transcribing the data, grouping similar responses into categories, and creating themes for each category based on the content and nature of responses (also enabled by the knowledge obtained from existing literature).

After an analysis of interviewees' responses, it was evident that all stakeholders agreed that they are more attracted to service organisations that are favourably perceived. However, increased employee motivation and retention, positive word-of-mouth and referral, prestige and confidence, customer loyalty, and reduced organisational scrutiny emerged as having the dominant impact of corporate reputation on stakeholders. The impacts are discussed below.

7.8.1 Prestige and Confidence

When stakeholders are confident in a service firm, and are proud to be associated with it, the organisation has achieved a good reputation (Empson, Muzio, Broschak, et al., 2015:291; Nyokabi, 2018). There was a general consensus among employees that a good corporate reputation gives them bragging right before employees of less reputable organisations, increases their confidence with customers and regulators, and also increases their staff prestige and confidence. One employee said:

Working in a reputable organisation like this makes me proud of myself. I mean, when you are associated with a highly reputable organisation, it even boosts your self-confidence and gives you the impression that you are smart and you know what you are doing. I remember how being selected from the recruitment exercise alone felt like a major milestone because of how competitive it was, thousands of applicants apply yearly. I do not think I would feel same way if I was selected by a non-reputable organisation.

This indicates that a good reputation does not only attract staff, it also boosts their morale of working in the organisation. The prestige and confidence do not only apply to employees, as another interviewee, a customer, explained that the good reputation of the organisation increases her confidence in the organisation because she is certain that "*the organisation will deliver on its promises and I will experience a good service. Even when there are few glitches, I understand that it will be a once-off thing because the organisation has a history of not falling in its service.*"

The customer's statement gives credence to the assertion of various researchers (Guru et al., 2015:137; Yasin & Bozbay, 2012:508; Shanker et al., 2002), that a strong corporate reputation increases customers' trust and confidence, as well as encourages them to give the organisation the benefit of the doubt in trying times. Likewise, another interviewee (a corporate communicator) affirms that a good corporate reputation boosts employees' and customers' confidence in the organisation. According to him, *Because the organisation is known for doing the right things, most stakeholders, especially the customers become assured that they will experience a good service provision when they visit the organisation, and even when they use our online platforms. For instance, because we have the safest online banking platform, our customers are confident that their transactions are secure. Our employees are also mandated to treat complaints immediately, so in the event that a customer has some issues, such issues are resolved within 24 hours. I believe in terms of customer feedback and complaint management we top other banks.*

7.8.2 Increased Employee Motivation, Productivity and Retention

All employee respondents acknowledged that the reputation of the organisation motivates and encourages them to give their best when performing tasks. One of the employees explained this influence saying:

I am confident that I can't just lose my job anyhow. You know reputable organisations have job security when compared to those that their Managing Director or CEO can decide to fire staff just for the fun of it. That cannot happen here so I know the main thing that can make me lose my job is under-performance so I am constantly motivating myself to deliver and stand out.

The above indicates that a favourable corporate reputation increases staff productivity because they understand that their output determine their progress and job security. Scholars (Nguyen et al., 2019; Guthrie, 2017:180) state that increased staff productivity naturally translates to increased firm productivity which consequently increases the organisation's financial performance and enhances the corporate reputation. Interestingly, it was deduced from another employee's response that although a good reputation encourages staff's productivity and retention, this influence is not attributed to the attractiveness of the organisation's salary packages and remuneration alone, but rather to the organisation's good culture and enabling environment. This idea is demonstrated in the following quote from the employee:

When a company is reputable and the employees in the organisation are happy with the company, there is room for growth, healthy competition, people will strive to do their best, and this will consequently increase turnover, and reduce the attrition rate (that is, number of people leaving the company). Employees at one of those banks where their remuneration is a bit low when compared to other banks are always proud and eager to say they love their job because *they are well appraised, there is transparency in their KPIs, there is adequate training, they are well exposed, and they are overall satisfied.*

The interviewee's view is supported by Dockel (2003) cited in Nyokabi (2018:23), who stated that a higher salary is not what determines employee retention, but rather, if salaries are considered reasonable and other important factors like training, work-life policies, support from superiors, and career development are present, employees will stay loyal to such an organisation. Even though there seemed to be an agreement among most interviewees that corporate reputation leads to an increase in staff retention, one employee was of the opinion that a good reputation was not enough to retain staff. According to him:

The good reputation of the organisation attracted and encouraged me to work here because it gave the impression that the organisation will be a good employer. Unfortunately, I have other expectations that the organisation has not been able to meet. Now, inasmuch as it is great to be a staff here, the corporate reputation is not enough to retain me because I will seek for other opportunities that can meet these expectations I have. The good thing is working with an organisation of this magnitude will increase my chances of getting an even better offer.

This above statement shows that corporate reputation serves as an indicator of how well an organisation is a good employer, and it also gives employees a greater chance of career progression. Ironically, the statement also suggests that it is possible for an organisation to be truly reputable but still experience employee turnover due to some dissatisfactions. Though the employee respondent did not provide his reasons for seeking new opportunities, an explanation can be derived from Taylor's (2010) categories for employee turnover, namely: pull factors, push factors, unavoidable turnover, and involuntary turnover. Because the interviewee acknowledged the strength of the organisation's reputation and had no issues with the regular operation of the organisation, his reason for seeking new opportunities falls within Taylor's "pull factor" and "unavoidable turnover".

Taylor explained the *pull factor* as factors that employees find tempting and irresistible, and/or represent their aspirations. These factors usually have nothing to do with internal activities or processes within the organisation and examples include higher salary and benefits, better career opportunity, and perception of superior corporate reputation of the organisations attracting them.

On the other hand, *unavoidable turnover* happens when employees seek to move company due to circumstances beyond their control, such as health issues, family situations, change of career path, or further studies.

7.8.3 Increased Patronage and Brand Supporting Behaviours

This impact of corporate reputation is grounded in various literature (see Walsh, Beatty & Holloway, 2015:173; Bracey, 2011; Ljubojevic & Ljubojevic, 2008; Carreras et al., 2013; Greyser, 2003), and was earlier discussed in this study (see section 3.5). Reputation scholars assert that a major reason for striving for a favourable corporate reputation is to get stakeholders to exhibit desired attitudes and behaviours. In fact, this can be regarded as the first and primary impact of corporate reputation on stakeholders, which also acts as a catalyst for other impacts of reputation on the organisation or stakeholders. That is, stakeholders' increasing service patronage and exhibiting brand supporting behaviours consequently increases the financial performance of the organisation which also attracts investors and employees, and gives it a competitive advantage.

One of the interviewees (a customer) in this study attested to this impact by stating that corporate reputation influences customers to exhibit brand supporting behaviours, leads to increased service patronage, positive word of mouth and loyalty. In her words,

The best brand of any organisation, especially those that are purely service-based, are its customers because it is easier to get more customers from a customer that is happy with your service. If I know a company is reputable and trustworthy, nobody needs to ask me, I will speak for it.

The interviewee stressed that the influence of corporate reputation is more significant for customers because non-customers or the general public will believe the reviews of a person that has patronised the organisation (that is, a customer), over the organisation's advertisements or PR claims. The interviewee also added that

The corporate reputation, especially that of banks, influences the customer to be confident and trust the bank because customers will only want to put their money in banks with the lowest risk *perception. Moreover, if the bank is reputable, even the customers that are not savvy enough to understand the intricate workings of the bank will be influenced, and become confident in it.*

Similar to the above statement, another customer simply described the influence of corporate reputation as "increased patronage and loyalty". According to this interviewee, "*in the case of mobile service providers, customers mainly consider the quality of service and innovation and any mobile service provider that can offer these two things will enjoy customers' loyalty and increased profit.*"

However, another customer disagreed with the notion that a good reputation influences customer loyalty. According to him, *"reputation does not have anything to do with customer loyalty, rather, loyalty is earned by the organisation's quality of service offerings."* The customer was of the opinion that if an organisation is excellent in other areas of its activities, but has a poor to average service quality, it will not earn its customers' loyalty.

7.8.4 Reduced Organisational Scrutiny

An interviewee (a corporate communicator) was of the opinion that reputable organisations may not necessarily experience much scrutiny by regulators when compared with less reputable organisations because regulators will be "*highly interested in the affairs of less reputable organisations because they want to ensure they are doing the right thing.*"

Likewise, another respondent (an employee) believes regulators are influenced by corporate reputation because they develop reservations towards less reputable organisations, and develop a certain respect for those that are reputable. Citing the bank as an example, the interviewee stated that:

Regulators become more confident in top-tier banks because they know that with the profit, return on investment (ROI), and return on asset realised by the organisation, the customers' deposit are safe and there is less probability for a failed bank. This confidence is based on the reputation the top tier banks have because they always record good profit.

Simply put, reputable organisations experience less scrutiny than less reputable counterparts. However, one of the regulators interviewed in this study disclosed that *"while a favourable* *reputation enhances confidence in the organisation, it does not necessarily protect the organisations from scrutiny."*

Based on the above discussion on the influences of corporate reputation, it is clear that stakeholders are influenced by the corporate reputation in various ways. A positive corporate reputation influences stakeholders' increased patronage and loyalty to the organisation, which gives the organisation an advantage over the less reputable ones. It also promotes healthy competition and growth among employees by encouraging them to achieve the best in the performance of their duty. Apart from that, it influences employees' favourable attitude towards other stakeholders such as the customers, suppliers, etc., and as employees are usually the first point of contact in organisations, their attitude influences other stakeholders' perception of the organisation. In the same vein, reputation influences regulators to become more confident in organisations that are favourably perceived.

7.9 DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this study was to address the question - *what should the dimensions of corporate reputation for service organisations constitute of?* As earlier mentioned, this was achieved through a mixed-method approach involving interviews and questionnaires. Findings show that of the original 16 dimensions accumulated from the interviews and existing studies, six dimensions mostly represent what stakeholders of service organisations consider when evaluating corporate reputation. These six dimensions shown in figure 7.13 explain 71% of corporate reputation in service organisations.

Figure 7.13: Corporate reputation in service organisations based on research outcome

Findings also reveal that stakeholders do not give much attention to whether a service organisation is indigenous or not. As long as the organisation is able to meet their expectations by quickly and effectively resolving issues, offering reliable and timely service, as well as disseminating relevant information to stakeholders, the organisation will be patronised.

There was also a consensus among the four stakeholder groups that 'affordability of service' is not a significant criterion that affects their evaluation of the reputation of a service organisation. This finding supports studies (see (Walsh, Beatty & Holloway, 2015; Bracey, 2011; Ljubojevic & Ljubojevic, 2008; Carreras et al., 2013; Greyser, 2003) that assert that if an organisation appeals to stakeholders, and if it has earned its stakeholders' trust and confidence, it can charge premium prices.

Surprisingly, though the "social responsibility" dimension emerged as one of the final six dimensions for service organisations, 'organisations getting involved in issues and dominant topics in the society' was not considered a relevant reputation item by stakeholders. To stakeholders, an organisation's charitable giving to society, its adherence to the principles of good governance, and conducting its business ethically are more important to the corporate reputation.

Of the six items underlying 'emotional appeal' dimension, only two were considered relevant by stakeholders. However, the dimensions did not make the cut of the overall reputation dimension of service organisations. Based on Davies' (2011) assertion that reputation measurement comprises cognitive or emotional measures, or a combination of both, the outcome of this study suggests that for service organisations, the cognitive (rational) dimensions of corporate reputation are more significant than the emotional dimensions. That is, stakeholders' assessment of the service organisations is more about the 'facts' – what they see, hear, and know of the activities of the organisations. Furthermore, though the emotional appeal dimension features in popular reputation measurement instruments (e.g. RepTrak and Reputation Quotient), it is not regarded as a reputation dimension in others (e.g. corporate personality scale, Worcester's (2009) pillars of reputation).

Interestingly, the fact that 'service quality' was not the most important reputation dimension in a service sector like banks reiterate assertions of scholars (Guru et al., 2013; Steyn & De Beer, 2003; 2012; Smith et al., 2013:133; Kitchen & Laurence, 2003) that indeed, stakeholders' expectations and 'judgment' of organisations have evolved from the perception of service of service quality to other crucial aspects of an organisation, as well as its contribution to society. Based on the findings in this study, 'issue management' was the most prominent reputation dimension for a service organisation. The fact that issue management is the strongest reputation dimension indicates that though service quality may attract customers to the organisation, how issues are resolved and managed determines their continuous association with the organisation.

In conclusion, when an organisation knows and understands the factors that influence its stakeholders' favourable assessment, it is able to align its activities and favourably position itself before stakeholders. It is believed that the identified dimensions in this study will ultimately aid service organisations to strategically build and manage their most significant intangible asset – reputation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

"An organisation's reputation is a reflection of how it is regarded by its multiple stakeholders"

- Feldman, Bahamonde, and Bellido

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the presentation of the data analysis and result in the preceding chapter, this final chapter summarises the research findings, and the research questions are unambiguously addressed. The study's contributions to theory, as well as the managerial contribution to service organisations are also discussed. Furthermore, recommendations for future research, as well as recommendations for organisations, based on the outcome of the study are offered in order to help service organisations earn stakeholders' favourable perceptions. Lastly, the limitations of the study are highlighted and the chapter ends with a concluding remark.

8.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

"Although the concept of corporate reputation has already gone through decades of development, empirical literature's attempts to measure the construct haven't evolved at the same rate…. This gap needs to be addressed given that signalling perceptions of corporate reputation can often be problematic for firms" (Feldman et al., 2014:58). It was upon this premise this study was based.

Even though some instruments for measuring corporate reputation have been developed over time, scholars (Feldman et al., 2014:59; Dowling & Gardberg, 2012; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012:22; Kanto et al., 2015:410; Chun, 2005:99) have underscored how these instruments are problematic owing to the fact that they were developed for all kinds of organisations (offering both goods and services). The dimensions in the instrument were also derived from either a single stakeholder group, or the general public who may or may not be stakeholders of an organisation (see chapter 4 for extensive discussion). By virtue of this, scholars (*ibid*) have called for the need to have reputation dimensions which are industry-specific in order to have a more accurate measure of corporate reputation.

So far, little work has been done to identify the unique reputation dimensions of service organisations, especially in developing contexts like Nigeria, and as researchers (Soleimani et al., 2014:1004; Wang et al., 2003:76) assert, studies on service organisations are usually supported with evidence from developed countries, and generalising the findings from developed countries to developing countries may be inaccurate and problematic.

In line with this, Shamma (2012:163) posited that reputation dimensions might be influenced by some cultural factors in the environment in which the organisation is situated. As such, a scale developed in one context (e.g. in one type of industry, with one stakeholder group, or one country) should not be considered valid in different contexts without a thorough investigation (Davies, 2011; Balmer & Greyser, 2006). It was against this background that this study sought to explore the reputation dimensions of service organisations within the Nigerian business context from the perspective of multiple primary stakeholder groups.

The study incorporates existing data from theories, and findings from literature on corporate reputation, especially those that explored what constitute the dimensions of corporate reputation in service organisations. Using the Systems theory, stakeholder theory, the reflective paradigm, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaire surveys, the study sought to explore and identify the unique dimensions of reputation of service organisations within the Nigerian context. Two large service organisations (a bank and a mobile service provider) were used as the sample organisations because they are highly patronised, reputable, and have multiple stakeholder groups. Data was derived from both internal and external stakeholder groups of both organisations namely: customers, employees, regulators, and corporate communication office staff. The four stakeholder groups represent the primary and major stakeholder groups of any service organisation.

Fourteen potential dimensions that influence stakeholders' evaluation of service organisations were identified after the Exploratory Factor Analysis conducted on the recovered data. They are: Service quality, Issue management, Branding, Innovation, Trustworthiness, Corporate communication, Emotional appeal, Regulatory compliance, Social responsibility, Employee engagement and welfare, Media reputation, Governance and leadership, Customer relations, and Financial performance. These dimensions were used to address the research questions posed in this study.

8.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As previously mentioned, a bank and a mobile service provider were selected as the sample service organisations for the study, and the retained dimensions after the EFA were used to specifically address the first three research questions. The main research question of the study was:

1. What are the dimensions considered by stakeholders of the selected service organisations when evaluating corporate reputation?

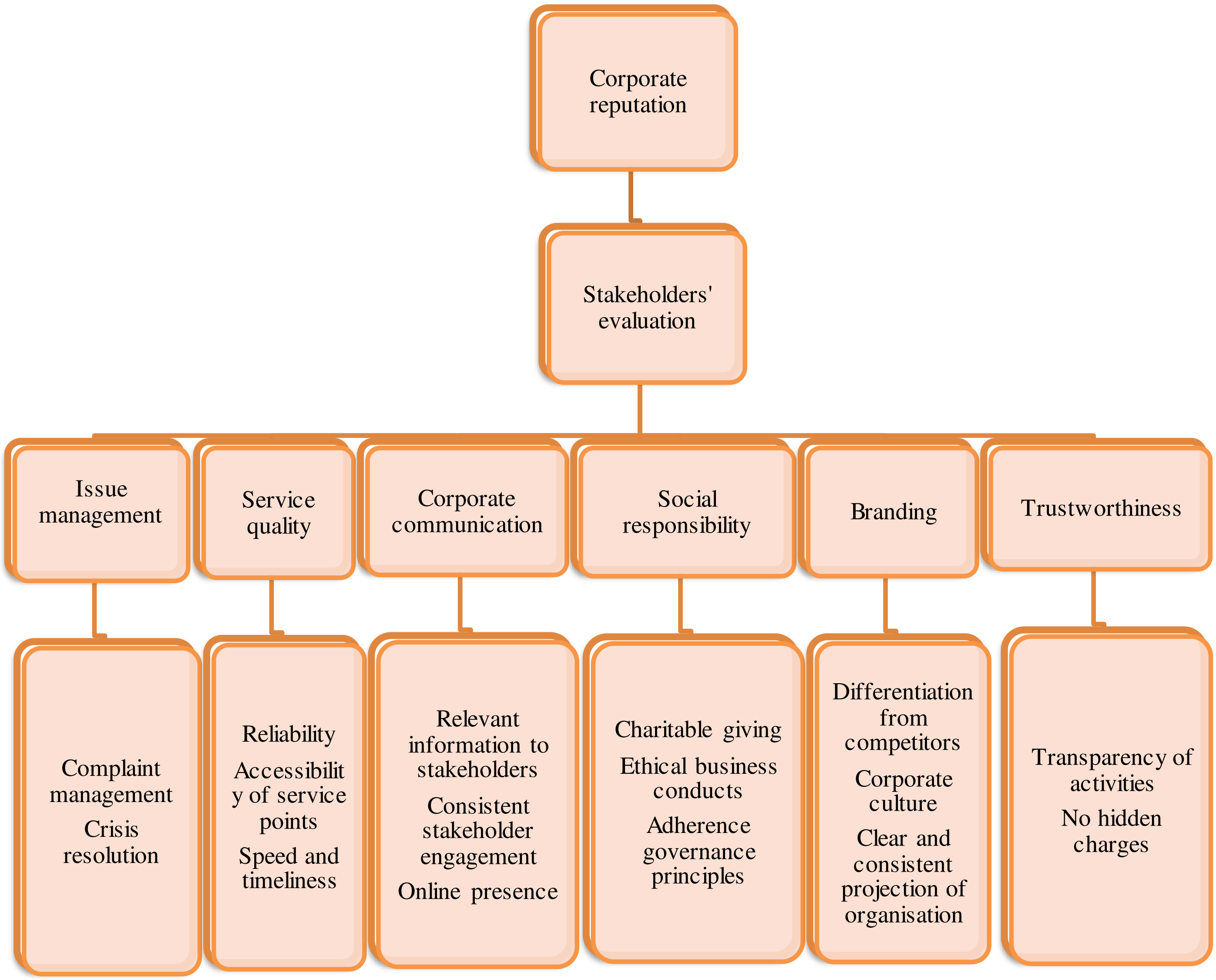
Secondary questions were:

2. What are the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a service provider?
3. What are the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank?

4. What is the influence of corporate reputation on stakeholders of service organisations?

Following the identification of the fourteen dimensions after EFA, it was important to extract the dimensions that are most relevant to service organisations. To achieve this, the Eigenvalue was used and results indicated that the most significant reputation dimensions for service organisations are *Issue management, Service quality, Corporate communication, Social responsibility, Branding*, and *Trustworthiness*. The identification of the most significant reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders when evaluating a service organisation thus addressed **the primary research question** (What are the dimensions considered by stakeholders of the selected service organisations when evaluating corporate reputation?). The operationalisation of the six dimensions is shown in figure 8.14.

Figure 8.14: Corporate reputation in service organisations



Source: Research outcome

Comparing the final six reputation dimensions identified in this study with those contained in the existing instruments showed evidence of variance. For instance, of the seven dimensions in the RepTrak instrument, that is, product/service, performance, citizenship, innovation, leadership, governance, and workplace, only two bore similarities with the final six dimensions identified in this study. They are Product/service (service quality) and Citizenship (social responsibility). This variance may be tied to the fact that the RepTrak was developed for all types of organisations, and the dimensions were derived from the perspective of the general public who may or may not be stakeholders of the organisation (see section 4.10.1.3 for detailed discussion on the RepTrak).

Furthermore, the "Emotional appeal" dimension, a prominent dimension in popular measurement instruments (RepTrak and the Reputation Quotient) was not among the most relevant reputation dimension in this study, although it was among the retained dimensions after the EFA. This indicates that the rational dimensions of reputation, that is, what is seen and known are more significant to stakeholders when evaluating corporate reputation than the emotional dimensions.

Dowling and Gardberg (2012) however point out that reputation measures that are based on only cognitive dimensions are sometimes criticised because certain stakeholders may not have the access or knowledge to evaluate the organisation's work practices, other internal practices, or corporate performance. Though this viewpoint is valid, the items underlying the identified reputation dimensions in this study do not require any internal knowledge or confidential information because they are generic in nature. Stakeholders can evaluate and speak on these dimensions and items without needing intimate or confidential information from the organisation.

Furthermore, based on the regression analysis conducted on the EFA result, it was concluded that there is minimal variance in the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank, and stakeholders of a mobile service provider. All the dimensions except "*media reputation*" are significant to stakeholders of a mobile service provider when evaluating corporate reputation, while, all except "*governance and leadership*" are significant to stakeholders of a bank evaluating corporate reputation. The order of relevance of the dimensions for each of the service organisation however varied. Based on the outcome of the regression analysis, **research questions 2 and 3** were thus answered. The same reputation dimensions can be applied to a service sectors like banks, and mobile service providers.

The fourth research question explored the influence of corporate reputation on stakeholders selected for this study. This was addressed through the semi-structured interviews. The study found that corporate reputation impacts stakeholders in different ways and these impacts are also established in other existing studies. Specifically, the study found that corporate reputation gives stakeholders prestige and confidence, increases employee motivation, productivity and retention, increases customers' patronage, encourages brand supporting behaviours such as positive word of mouth and referrals, and it reduces organisational scrutiny.

The outcome of this study suggests that corporate reputation is a multi-faceted concept – that is, various factors (dimensions) make up corporate reputation. In earlier chapters, this study adopted Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martınez-Leon's (2011) definition that emphasised the need for organisations to investigate the specific dimensions that influence stakeholders' positive assessment, because reputation results from an aggregate of all stakeholders' perception. Following the outcome of this research, the corporate reputation of services-based organisations can be defined as follows:

> Corporate reputation is stakeholders' collective evaluation of the organisation's Issue management practice, Service quality, Corporate communication, Social responsibility, Branding, and Trustworthiness.

Though this definition captures the study's findings, it can be concluded that there is no one dominant definition that encapsulates what corporate reputation is to all stakeholders. This assertion is strengthened by the ANOVA result of stakeholder groups' perception to the reputation dimensions in this study. The ANOVA result showed evidence of variance between stakeholder groups' perception to each of the reputation dimensions. The finding is consistent with Rajablu et al.'s (2015), Helm's (2007) and Luoma-aho's (2015) stakeholder theories, that posit that each stakeholder will evaluate reputation differently, based on their expectations, interactions, and overall satisfaction with the organisation.

For instance, customers may evaluate reputation in terms of the organisation's service quality, corporate communication and issue management, while employees may evaluate reputation in terms of the organisation's media reputation and leadership. Regardless of this variance however, identifying the dimensions or factors that influence stakeholders' perceptions will enable organisations to better align their activities to match stakeholders' expectations. By so doing, a favourable corporate reputation will be achieved.

8.4 INTERPRETATION OF REPUTATION DIMENSIONS

This section analyses the final six reputation dimensions that emerged from this study based on the eigenvalue output. The analysis of the dimensions is done in terms of the statistical result of the dimensions, the items that describe the dimension, literature on service organisations that support or contradict the findings, as well as the significance of the dimensions in the study context (service organisations in Nigeria).

8.4.1 Issue Management

The first dimension, issue management, refers to the organisation's ability to address anomalies in its operations, specifically in terms of how quickly complaints are responded to and resolved, and how the organisation responds in times of crisis.

The issue management dimension is the most significant reputation dimension for service organisations as it accounts for 21.823% of corporate reputation, while the other five factors account for 49.313% of corporate reputation. By implication, if a service organisation does not effectively manage issues with stakeholders, its chances of earning a favourable reputation become slim.

The strength of the issue management dimension is unsurprising, because the collapse of many service companies in Nigeria has been linked to one or more issues that plagued the organisations and were badly managed or not at all (a brief context of this was provided in section 1.2). The strength of the issue management dimension is also unsurprising because of the unique nature of service organisations – a situation whereby organisations are dominantly characterised by intangibility. In this situation, because service provision (production) and service experience (delivery) are experienced concurrently, stakeholders may be co-producers or co-creators of services (Zeithaml et al., 2009). This exposes the organisation to potential issues, as stakeholders may have questions or experience difficulties in the co-production process, and as result, the organisation's ability and approach to managing issues becomes a very critical factor that affects stakeholders' positive or negative perceptions.

No previous empirical study on the dimensions of reputation contains the issue management dimension identified in this study. The closest to it is seen in Trotta and Cavallaro's (2012) study, which investigated the reputation dimensions of banks in the Italian business context. They identified "complaints management" as an item that influences favourable reputation although the item was categorised under 'regulatory compliance'. No explanation was given about the item or dimension so it is even uncertain whether the 'complaint management' referred to how the bank dealt with complaints raised by the regulators; or how regulators perceived the bank's effort in managing complaints raised by stakeholders.

Besides the aforementioned study, what is often seen in literature is "issue management" being discussed as a corporate communication function that can be strategically implemented to build corporate reputation (see Cornelissen, 2017; Neill, 2015; Dowling, 2006). Nonetheless, "how the organisation manages complaints", as well as "how the organisation deals with negative publicity" was repeatedly listed by almost all interviewees in this study as a factor they consider when evaluating the reputation of the sample service organisations. This new dimension that emerged as the most significant establishes that reputation dimensions are unique to each type of organisation and country, and using dimensions derived from other contexts is inappropriate.

8.4.2 Service Quality

The service quality dimension refers to the reliability of service offerings, and the speed with which the service is provided. It also refers to the accessibility of service points such as ATMs and customer service units.

In this study, the reliability and timeliness of service offering, as well as the accessibility of service points emerged as the important items underlying the dimension. Affordability of service was eliminated after the EFA. The reason for this could be that since two prominent and reputable service organisations were used for this investigation, stakeholders of these organisations are more interested in experiencing a seamless service than the affordability. One of the interviewees' (a customer) statements may also further explain this. The interviewee noted that "I patronise this organisation because the quality of service is good and reliable. Even though there are other companies offering the same service for less, I do not mind paying the extra cost because the stress of patronising those other organisations with unreliable and bad service will be much more than what I pay to enjoy a stress less service".

It is not out of place that service quality emerged as the second significant reputation dimension because stakeholders will not even patronise an organisation if the quality of service (QOS) is poor. Moreover, a service organisation that wants to be profitable and relevant in the long run is expected to know how important it is to consistently deliver high service quality. In this era where there are multiple competing service firms offering the same service, the QOS serves as a powerful tool for an organisation to gain competitive advantage over others and be reputable (Esmaeilpour, 2018; Abd-El-Salam et al., 2013). Service/product quality features as a major dimension of corporate reputation in almost all existing studies. It is seen in popular instruments like the FMAC list, the RQ, RepTrak, Worcester's pillar of reputation, as well as in other studies by researchers like Shamma and Hassan (2009), Trotta and Cavallaro (2012) and Llyod (2007). The items underlying the dimension such as "reliability of the company's products and services" as seen in the RQ and RepTrak is also one of the service quality items in this study.

8.4.3 Corporate Communication

Corporate communication refers to the extent to which the service organisation provides useful information to stakeholders and how stakeholders are consistently engaged. It also involves the effective utilisation of the organisation's online presence through which stakeholders can connect with the organisation and vice-versa.

Corporate communication has indeed become a crucial aspect of organisational activities as demonstrated in various studies (see Shamma, 2012; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2007; Guru et al., 2013). Organisations reach multiple stakeholders and foster better understanding of their evolving needs in order to align their interests with that of the organisation through corporate communication. By so doing, organisations position themselves favourably before stakeholders, which consequently influences stakeholders' assessment of the organisation.

Based on the significance of corporate communication, it is surprising that the dimension is not featured in popular dimension-based reputation measurement instruments like the FMAC list, Reputation Quotient and the RepTrak. However, it appears either as a reputation dimension or item in studies by other researchers (see Worcester, 2009; Shamma & Hassan, 2009; Macmillian et al., 2003). Similarly, researchers Doorley and Garcia (2015) acknowledged and emphasised the importance of communication by including it in their definition of corporate reputation (see section 3.3.5). In this study, corporate communication was the third most significant dimension after issue management and service quality. Of the 14 dimensions retained after EFA, corporate communication alone explained 10.231% of corporate reputation.

In addition, of the four items that made up the corporate communication dimension in this study, only one item - "the organisation advertises" was considered insignificant by stakeholders because the factor loading was below 0.5. Though this item does not also feature in any of the popular measurement instruments, it is identified as a reputation dimension or item in other studies (see Helm, 2005; Caruana & Chircop, 2000; Worcester, 2009). A common factor observed in the studies in which it appears is that the sampled organisations were product-based organisations, and this study focused on service-based organisations. The different types of organisation may therefore account for the difference.

Based on this, it can be concluded that although advertisement may be an effective choice tool for creating and increasing the organisation's publicity, it is not a significant criterion considered by stakeholders when evaluating a service organisation. Rather, service businesses should intensify the efforts invested in other areas of corporate communication as identified in this study, their issue management practices, service quality, branding, social responsibility, and their trustworthiness.

Equally of importance is the fact that stakeholders of sophisticated and big service organisations like the ones sampled in this study expect modern online technologies that function efficiently and easily. Besides the fact that stakeholders of these organisations are sophisticated and do not mind paying extra costs for ease of service, the two organisations are "daily need" organisations and it is unrealistic to expect stakeholders to visit the organisation for every issue encountered or for every service required. Going by the outcome of the relevant items underlying corporate communication, this study provides evidence that the presence of information and communication technologies (ICT) in large service organisations, that is, the organisation's online presence, makes a significant impact on stakeholders' assessment of the corporate reputation.

8.4.4 Social Responsibility (SR)

The items measuring the social responsibility dimension in the study refers to the organisation's effort in giving back to people and its local community, how the organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner, and the organisation's adherence to the principle of good governance in the environment it functions.

As scholars (Covey & Brown, 2001, Steyn, 2003) asserted almost 2 decades ago, the role of organisations in society has shifted from being mostly focused on profit for shareholders to a community approach with a focus on corporate social responsibility. When comparing the dimensions identified in this study to those in existing instruments and literature, it is evident that the significance of *social responsibility* in the building and evaluation of corporate reputation remains unchanged (see Olmedo-Cifuentes, 2014; Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012; Shamma & Hassan, 2009; Ponzi et al., 2011; Fombrun *et al.,* 2000; Helm, 2005). In fact, there is a growing interest and emphasis on the social responsibility efforts of organisations such that it could be the singular factor to distinguish an organisation, and give it an edge even over other 'reputable' organisations.

This finding in this study contradicts Shamma and Hassan's (2009:326) finding that CSR is not a significant reputation dimension in the US telecommunication industry. A mobile service provider was one of the two service organisations selected for this study, and results show that CSR is a fundamental reputation dimension for mobile service providers in Nigeria. Moreover, many existing instruments and studies contain "social" items or dimensions comparable to the *Social responsibility* dimension in this study. Helm's (2005) study identified two dimensions called "*Commitment to charitable and social causes",* and "*Commitment to the environment".* The Reputation Quotient also contain a dimension called "*Social and environmental responsibility."* The RepTrak™, which is a slightly expanded version of the RQ, also features two similar dimensions namely "*Governance"* (ethical behaviour and fairness in doing business) and "*Citizenship"* (supports good causes, positive influence in society, and environmental responsibility). The significance of social responsibility as a dimension of corporate reputation is also seen in several other studies like Kim and Kim (2017), Trotta and Cavallaro (2012), Hillenbrand (2007), Maden et al. (2012), Esen (2013), Dutta and Imeri (2016), and Shamma and Hassan (2009).

This study therefore concludes that social responsibility is a core corporate activity and strategy for service organisations to achieve a strong reputation. Among other areas, service organisations should focus their SR mainly on charitable giving, ethical business conduct, and adherence to the laws that govern a business in its environment. Doing so will positively influence good evaluations of the organisation.

8.4.5 Branding

Branding in this study refers to how the organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts, how the organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner, and its corporate culture – that is, its behaviour and how it conducts its activities.

Over the years, the corporate brand has evolved to be a key driver for service organisations to distinguish themselves and favourably position themselves before stakeholders. Various scholars (Balmer & Gray, 2003a; Mcdonald et al., 2001; Davidson, 2003; Argenti & Drunkenmiller, 2004) emphasise how the corporate brand is a major factor that influences corporate reputation, especially the reputation of service organisations. The dimension also features as a prominent reputation dimension in many empirical studies (see Lloyd, 2007; Lim et al., 2015; Vahabzadeh et al., 2017; Schultz et al., 2012) as is the case in this study.

For instance, Lloyds (2007) in his investigation of the dimensions that influence the reputation of a service organisation (bank) in New Zealand, identified the 'corporate brand' as one of the nine reputation dimensions considered by the bank's stakeholders (refer to section 4.10.4 for the other dimensions identified by the researcher). Lloyds' finding, together with this study's finding and those in the empirical studies cited above validates reports and researchers' (Holmes report, 2012; Kitchen & Laurence, 2003) claim that in the service sector, stakeholders' decisions, especially patronage decisions, would depend more on the company and people behind the brand and less on the benefits of the service provided. 'Branding' has therefore become a core factor that distinguishes, and influences a positive stakeholder assessment of a service organisation.

Hence, together with the other five reputation dimensions that emerged in this study, service organisations that are able to achieve a clear differentiation that appeals to stakeholders in terms of its QOS, price (not necessarily cheaper), value, experience, and/or its demonstration of a culture that appeals to stakeholders will achieve a strong reputation.

8.4.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study refers to stakeholders' perception of the degree of transparency regarding organisational activities, as well as the organisation not having hidden charges.

The role and importance of trust in the reputation of service organisations cannot be undermined. Trust is particularly crucial for service firms, since the quality of service cannot be pre-determined due to its intangible nature. Trust is strengthened when the organisation conducts its business with integrity (Keh & Xie, 2009:733), that is, it is transparent in its business activities

Similar items or dimensions as the trustworthiness dimension in this study are found in other studies and measurement instruments. For example, Newell and Goldsmith (2001) developed the Corporate Credibility Scale – a measurement instrument that is based on 'trust'. In the same vein, "trust" appears a dimension of reputation in the RepTrak® Pulse instrument by Ponzi et al. (2011). Likewise, "Trust and confidence" and "informative transparency with stakeholders" were identified by Trotta and Cavallaro (2012) as items in their study on the reputation dimensions of banks in the Italian context. Trust is therefore a significant contributor to the reputation of service organisations. Apart from the item underlying the 'trustworthiness' dimension in this study, the presence and implementation of the first five reputation dimensions identified in this study equally contribute to fostering stakeholders' trust in the organisation. When trust is established, stakeholders will become confident and loyal to the organisation which ultimately results in increased profit for the organisation, and a stronger reputation.

The discussion of the reputation dimensions in this section has addressed the two major arguments in this study – (1) that the dimensions of reputation vary according to the type of organisation and (2) that the dimensions of reputation vary according to the context (country) the organisations are situated within.

The conclusion is that although the reputation dimensions of service organisations overlap with those of other organisations, they do also differ significantly especially in terms of issue management, corporate communication and branding. Also, this study concludes that reputation dimensions vary according to the context within which the organisation is being investigated, and as such, for any reputation measure to be considered reliable and valid, it must be derived from the environment the organisation is situated within. As it is evident from the 6 dimensions identified in this study context, none of the existing measurement instruments, particularly the RepTrak, FMAC, and the Reputation Quotient that form the basis of most media rankings, accurately depict what constitute the corporate reputations of service organisations in Nigeria. The difference in the dimensions contained in the instrument and those identified in this study is large. Specifically, the RepTrak, popularly used by the Reputation Institute measure CR along 7 dimensions namely product/service quality. Meanwhile, this study found issue management, service quality, corporate communication, social responsibility, branding and trustworthiness to be the relevant reputation dimensions in the study context. Therefore, using the RepTrak as a measure of corporate reputation will produce inaccurate result.

8.5 THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study's contribution to theory (knowledge) and practice are discussed below:

8.5.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study makes a significant scholarly contribution towards the development of a unique and valid instrument for measuring the reputation of service organisations, particularly in a developing country context. Though corporate reputation research has received increased attention in the past years, less attention has been given to exploring the dimensions of reputation (Carroll, 2016:616), and the studies on reputation dimensions are usually conducted in developed countries. More so, previous corporate reputation measurement instruments were mostly derived from the general public's perspective and the instruments were developed for all kinds of organisations. This study thus contributes to theory by investigating a particular niche segment – service organisations – from the perspective of the primary stakeholder groups of these organisations.

The outcome of this study reveals the precise reputation dimensions for service organisations, as well as the variance in the reputation dimensions when compared to those developed for other organisations (as seen in existing studies). This is significant because very little investigation has been done on the reputation dimensions of service organisations even though scholars have called for the need to have precise reputation dimensions for these organisations. For example, Kim and Choi (2003) emphasised the need to have precise reputation dimensions for service organisations and argued that, because of the intangibility of services, the impact of corporate reputation may be more significant in service organisations than other organisations. The result of this study could thus champion the process or having a valid and reliable reputation measurement instrument for service organisations.

Furthermore, this study investigated the dimensions of corporate reputation in a new and developing context, Nigeria. No previous study has investigated what constitutes the corporate reputation of any type of organisation in this context. This study thus represents the first investigation about the dimensions of corporate reputation in Nigeria. This is significant, as Shamma (2012) and Wang et al. (2003) pointed out the need to have reputation dimensions that are derived from the environment the organisation is situated within. These scholars believe reputation might be influenced by some cultural factors and applying the dimensions derived from one country to another may be problematic and inaccurate. The findings of this study confirm the scholars' position and provide insight into what constitutes the reputation dimensions of service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context.

The dimension *issue management* did not appear in any of the existing instruments measuring reputation but emerged as the 'main pillar' of corporate reputation in service organisations in this study. This adds to the study's significance, as a new dimension that could be further explored in future reputation studies is identified and presented.

In sum, the findings in this study make three major contribution to theory. Firstly, it established that the outcome of investigations on reputation dimension will vary across industries because the modus operandi across industries differ, and as a result, stakeholders' expectations and the criteria used in evaluating each industry will also differ. Secondly, the study provides evidence that indeed, each stakeholder group perceives corporate reputation differently, hence, measuring reputation with instruments that were derived from the perspective of only one or two stakeholder group will produce an inaccurate measure of reputation.

Lastly, it established that what constitutes corporate reputation is determined by stakeholders' perception of the organisational practices, and the dominant environmental factors the organisation is situated within. Therefore, using measurement instruments that were not derived from the context in which reputation is being measured will equally produce inaccurate results. As it is apparent from the outcome of this study, none of the existing measurement instruments are on their own, an accurate reflection of the dimensions of reputation for service organisations in Nigeria. This study therefore significantly pioneers and contributes to the establishment of the corporate reputation dimensions for service organisations in Nigeria from the perspective of four primary stakeholder groups of the organisations.

8.5.2 Managerial Contribution

Organisations do not achieve a good reputation only on the basis of good performance, but on how stakeholders assess their abilities and efforts in meeting their other expectations. Therefore, identifying and understanding what stakeholders' assessment of the corporate reputation are based upon is the first step to achieving a strong reputation. By virtue of this study, managers of service organisations are equipped with precise reputation dimensions that will enable them to be cognisant of core areas to focus on in their reputation building programmes, as seen from the perspective of their primary stakeholders.

Additionally, the stakeholder groups and the methodology employed in this study provide managers with insight for an effective stakeholder relationship management. The study clearly highlights each stakeholder group's perception of the reputation dimensions and items (see section 7.5), which will enable managers to tailor organisational activities based on the interests of each stakeholder group identified in this research. There is also evidence that some reputation dimensions and items are of similar importance among some stakeholder groups; this suggests an opportunity for managers to have a more strategic and integrated stakeholder communication.

As a consequence, implementing the reputation dimensions that emerged from this study will benefit service organisations by enhancing the corporate reputation, and increasing stakeholders' trust and confidence in the organisation. It will also encourage stakeholders to exhibit brand supporting behaviours, increase employees' and organisational performance, and ultimately build stakeholders' confidence in the organisation.

8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.6.1 Recommendation for Organisations

The significance of corporate reputation has increased over the years. In fact, recent studies emphasise how corporate reputation drives many organisations (see Coombs, 2019; Pires &

Trez, 2018; Almeida & Coelho, 2018; Cornelissen, 2017), and make up over 80% of the organisation's market value (Belasen, 2008; Orukari, 2010; Eccles et al., 2007).

Besides the fact that the world economic crisis in the late 2000s, as well as other crises companies have experienced in the last decade have also strongly reinforced the importance of corporate reputation, there are myriads of organisations offering the same service and stakeholders have many options to choose from. This has made corporate reputation the distinguishing factor between these organisations, the ultimate determinant of an organisation's legitimacy and competitiveness, as well as a pointer to stakeholders about the organisation's competence.

However, corporate reputation cannot be built or managed unless stakeholders' expectations and assessment criteria are known. The outcome of this study helps with the aforementioned as it reveals six reputation dimensions stakeholders consider when evaluating service organisations. These six dimensions are issue management, service quality, corporate communication, social responsibility, branding and trustworthiness. To therefore be truly reputable, organisations must ensure that their stakeholders rate them highly on all six dimensions.

In essence, corporate communicators or managers tasked with the responsibility of managing the corporate reputation must ensure that adequate effort is invested in managing issues or complaints between the organisation and its stakeholders, as this is the most important action that influences stakeholders' perception. Corporate communicators or managers must also ensure that the quality of service offered matches and exceeds stakeholders' expectation. Likewise, the organisation's social responsibility efforts, in terms of the organisation's contribution to people and immediate environment; how the organisation conducts its business ethically; and how the organisation adheres to the principles of good governance must be effectively portrayed and communicated with stakeholders.

In addition, managers will have to pay attention to the corporate brand, especially in terms of how the organisation differentiates itself from competitors, how it projects itself to stakeholders, and its corporate culture. Lastly, corporate communicators or managers have to consistently and effectively remind stakeholders of the transparency of organisational activities, and support this by providing platforms for enquiries and dialogue in order to earn stakeholders' trust. By implementing these precise reputation dimensions, organisations will be able to align their activities with stakeholders' expectations, which will ultimately lead to a favourable corporate reputation. Consequently, as realised in this study, a good reputation will benefit the organisation by increasing stakeholder patronage and loyalty, increase positive word-o- mouth and referrals, reduce the attrition rate of staff, increase employee's commitment to work, and also give the organisation an edge when compared to less reputable organisations.

8.6.2 Recommendation for Further Research

Since the service sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in most countries and the largest contributor to the economy in countries like Nigeria, US, Japan, Singapore, Brazil, and India, it is pertinent to replicate this investigation in other types of service companies, as this study only focused on two service organisations namely banks and mobile service providers.

In as much as the researcher believes that this study is a good start to having a valid instrument for measuring the reputation of service organisations, it is risky to assume that the results of this study would be suitable for all types of service companies. It could be expected that the dimensions would at least somewhat differ when applied to, or investigated in other service companies such as those in hospitality, airlines, or tourism. The difference could vary based on various factors like the media exposure some organisations enjoy or have access to, or the financial ability large organisations have to engage in some activities (e.g. charitable giving). Some organisations may also promote their services more prominently than others, which makes stakeholders more informed about them. Further research is therefore required to identify the reputation dimensions for other service organisations, or to ascertain the extent to which the reputation dimensions of other service organisations differ from those identified in this study.

Subsequent research investigating the corporate reputation dimensions of banks and mobile service providers in other developing countries would also be most valued. This would help reduce the dearth of studies on reputation dimensions in developing countries, and also compare and determine the degree of variance in the reputation dimensions across the various countries. As mentioned earlier, a new dimension, issue management, emerged as a principal dimension for service organisations in Nigeria. It could thus be expected that new dimension(s), based on the cultural or environmental factors that influence organisations in other developing countries would also be identified in further studies.

Lastly, as a study increases its sample size, so will it obtain more significant results. Further research should consider using a larger sample size. This study's sample size consisted of 15 respondents for the semi-structured interview, and 220 respondents for the questionnaire survey; while this is considered significant and adequate for the investigation, future research could use a larger sample in order to have a more robust investigation.

8.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with any research, there are certain limitations to be carefully considered when drawing conclusions from the outcome of this research. Firstly, though this study makes a significant contribution to reputation studies, especially as it concerns the reputation dimensions of service-based organisations, care must be taken not to generalise the outcome of this study too broadly since the identified dimensions were not subject to a re-test.

Subjecting the dimensions to a re-test further establishes the validity of the dimensions, especially when the purpose is to develop a measurement instrument. However, since the goal of the study was not to develop a measurement instrument, but rather to identify the reputation dimensions for service organisations which could then lead to the development of a measurement instrument, re-testing the dimensions was not paramount. Subsequent studies that might want to use this study's findings in other contexts may need to test and re-test the findings to determine their suitability for the context being studied.

Generalisations can also not be made that the dimensions can be applied in all contexts, since the study was conducted in a single country, Nigeria. Although the use of a mixed method approach further enhances the credibility and potential to generalise the outcome of this study, the cross-cultural validity of the dimensions, which would allow for international comparability, cannot be ascertained. However, it is important to point out that some of the dimensions contained in the second instrument of data collection (questionnaire),were derived from validated studies that were conducted in other countries. Albeit, it is still risky to generalise this study's findings to other countries without further research.

Additionally, the dimensions were derived from stakeholders of two highly reputable and well-patronised service organisations. Though much variance was not seen in the reputation dimensions considered by stakeholders of a bank, and those considered by stakeholders of a mobile service provider, there is no assurance that the dimensions would be a good fit for other types of service organisations like airlines or consultancies, or other industries (e.g. agriculture).

8.8 SUMMARY

Over the years, corporate reputation has received significant attention from numerous disciplines mainly because of its contribution to the success of organisations through the involvement of multiple stakeholders. This attention is not limited to academic disciplines alone but also to practice. The King Report on Governance for South Africa 2009 and the King Codes of Governance Principles (King III) mandated the boards of South African organisations to recognise that stakeholders' perceptions of the organisations affect the corporate reputation.

As much as it is common knowledge that the macro-economic setbacks of the last two decades came with a broadening of responsibilities that forced organisations to look beyond their product/service offering to a more stakeholder approach in order to be reputable, the effect of stakeholders' perception (reputation) is more significant in some organisations than others.

Service organisations are more affected by the consequences of a negative reputation than product/manufacturing organisations due to the intangibility of services. This is because, unlike product-based organisations, services cannot be felt or assessed before purchase, so the corporate reputation naturally becomes the indicator for stakeholders to know which service organisations to patronise and which to avoid. Albeit the significance of reputation in these organisations, there are no precise reputation dimensions to aid organisations align their operations with stakeholders' expectations.

Insights from existing studies underline how crucial it is for organisations, especially service organisations, to identify the components and drivers of their reputation in order to manage it successfully. To assist such organisations, this study investigated what the reputation dimensions of service organisations should entail. The findings were presented and discussed in chapter 7 and in section 8.4.

The major findings in this study are four-fold: (1) that the reputation of service organisations is driven by six major dimensions. (2) There is not much variance between the reputation dimensions for banks, and those for mobile service providers. (3) Significant differences exist in the reputation dimensions for each stakeholder group. As such, organisations could employ the stakeholder theory, which advocates that the need of each stakeholder group of an organisation must be understood and catered to if such an organisation desires to be profitable and sustainable. (4) Lastly, the good reputation of the organisation will influence stakeholders to increase their support and loyalty, encourage them to exhibit brand-supporting actions like referrals and positive word of mouth, increase staff productivity and commitment, and increase stakeholders' trust, prestige and confidence in the organisation.

To conclude, corporate reputation is a strategic asset that must be prioritised and managed with the same zeal as the other resources of the organisation. However, managing this strategic asset is only possible if the dimensions it consists of are known and understood. Identifying these reputation dimensions was the main goal of this study and this was achieved through a robust mixed-method approach involving the qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative method (questionnaire). The identification of the 6 reputation dimensions and 16 items for service organisations in this study therefore contributes towards the strategic building and management of the organisations' biggest intangible asset – corporate reputation.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

This template covers questions for the face-to-face semi-structured interview with stakeholders of the organisations (a bank and a mobile service provider) selected for this study, namely: **customers, employees, regulatory authorities, and corporate communication specialists**. Questions were constructed to explore the concept of corporate reputation, and address the research questions of this study.

1 ***What is your general perception of service organisations in Nigeria***. [*By that I mean your opinion on the behaviour and performance of service organisations and why*].

Follow-Up question(s) as necessary

2 Do you consider the organisation reputable?

Follow-Up question(s): [If yes, ask why. If no, ask why? If neutral or unsure, ask why?]

3 From your perspective, what are the factors that make the organisation reputable? *[By that I mean what are your expectations of the bank/mobile service provider; what qualities make the bank/mobile service provider attractive, and why].*

Follow-Up question(s) as necessary

4 What impact(s) does the corporate reputation have on you as a stakeholder of the organisation? [*That is, in what ways do you think you are influenced by the corporate reputation*].

Follow-Up question(s) as necessary.

END

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BANK

Faculty of Humanities,
Mafikeng campus,
Private bag X2046
Mmabatho 2745.

Dear Respondent,

I am a PhD candidate of North West University, South Africa, and my research is aimed at identifying the dimensions/factors that constitute the corporate reputation of service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context. The corporate reputation, that is, how an organisation is perceived and rated by stakeholders like you ensure the organisation's profitability and sustainability. Hence, it is imperative to know the factors that are most important to you when evaluating these service organisations. In order to achieve the above stated aim, banks and mobile service providers have been chosen as examples of service organisations for this study since they are highly patronised and familiar organisations.

Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire **as a customer, employee, regulator or corporate communicator of the banking sector**. This will approximately take 10 minutes of your valuable time. All information you provide will be treated anonymously and your privacy will be protected. If you wish to be updated on the findings of the study, please let me know and I will gladly do so. Your time and attention is sincerely appreciated.

Kind regards,

Oyindamola Ajayi

1. Please indicate the capacity in which you are answering the questionnaire

Customer ☐ Employee ☐ Regulator ☐ Corporate communicator ☐

2. Answer the following statements based on their level of importance to you. Please do not skip any statement and do not tick more than one box per statement.

It is important that:

		Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**
SEQ 1	The service is reliable					
SEQ 2	The organisation offers a timely and fast service delivery					
SEQ 3	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g. ATMs or customer service points					
SEQ 4	The organisation's service offerings are affordable					
ISM 1	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves					

	complaints					
ISM 2	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)					
COC 1	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders					
COC 2	The organisation consistently engages with stakeholders					
COC 3	The organisation advertises					
COC 4	The organisation has an online presence					
MER 1	The organisation is favourably projected in the media					
MER 2	The bank has relationships with journalists and media writers					
EMA 1	I am proud to be associated with the organisation					
EMA 2	I have a good feeling about the organisation					
EMA 3	I have trust and confidence in the organisation					
EMA 4	The organisation in indigenous					
EMA 5	I respect the organisation					
EMA 6	Growing up into the brand makes me patronise the organisation					
BRA 1	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts					
BRA 2	The organisation has a good culture					
BRA 3	The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner					
BRA 4	The organisation uses colours and symbols I like					
CRL 1	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner					
CRL 2	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction					
CRL 3	The organisation prioritises customer service					
EEW1	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation					
EEW 2	The organisation engages in quality staff development, empowerment and training					
EEW 3	The organisation has a conducive working environment					
EEW 4	There is job security with the organisation					
EEW 5	The organisation treats its employees fairly					
EEW 6	The organisation has an attractive reward and benefit plan					

	for employees					
FIP 1	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.					
FIP 2	The organisation operates within the minimum acceptable threshold for non-performing loans					
INN 1	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts					
INN 2	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful					
SOR 1	The organisation gives back to people and its local community					
SOR 2	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner					
SOR 3	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance					
SOR 4	The organisation actively engages in societal issues					
GOL 1	The boards of directors have a good reputation					
GOL 2	The organisation has a sound leadership					
EMP 1	The organisation is sensitive to customers' personal needs					
RIM 1	The organisation has a good risk management system or practice					
RIM 2	The organisation does not constitute risk to the deposit insurance fund					
REC 1	The organisation complies with industry standards					
TRT 1	The organisation is transparent in its activities					
TRT 2	The organisation does not engage in fraudulent activity					
TRT 3	The organisation has no secret charges					

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MOBILE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Faculty of Humanities,
Mafikeng campus,
Private bag X2046
Mmabatho 2745.

Dear Respondent,

I am a PhD candidate of North West University, South Africa, and my research is aimed at identifying the dimensions/factors that constitute the corporate reputation of service organisations operating within the Nigerian business context. The corporate reputation, that is, how an organisation is perceived and rated by stakeholders like you ensure the organisation's profitability and sustainability. Hence, it is imperative to know the factors that are most important to you when evaluating these service organisations. In order to achieve the above stated aim, banks and mobile service providers have been chosen as examples of service organisations for this study since they are highly patronised and familiar organisations.

Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire **as a customer, employee, regulator or corporate communicator of a mobile service provider**. This will approximately take 10 minutes of your valuable time. All information you provide will be treated anonymously and your privacy will be protected. If you wish to be updated on the findings of the study, please let me know and I will gladly do so. Your time and attention is sincerely appreciated.

Kind regards,

Oyindamola Ajayi

1. Please indicate the capacity in which you are answering the questionnaire

Customer ☐ Employee ☐ Regulator ☐ Corporate communicator ☐

2. Answer the following statements based on their level of importance to you. Please do not skip any statement and do not tick more than one box per statement.

It is important that:

		Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**
SEQ 1	The service is reliable					
SEQ 2	The organisation offers a timely and fast service delivery					
SEQ 3	The organisation has easily accessible service points e.g.					

	ATMs or customer service points					
SEQ 4	The organisation's service offerings are affordable					
ISM 1	The organisation quickly responds to, and resolves complaints					
ISM 2	The organisation responds well in a crisis (that is, dealing with negative publicity)					
COC 1	The organisation provides useful information to stakeholders					
COC 2	The organisation consistently engages with stakeholders					
COC 3	The organisation advertises					
COC 4	The organisation has an online presence					
MER 1	The organisation is favourably projected in the media					
MER 2	The bank has relationships with journalists and media writers					
EMA 1	I am proud to be associated with the organisation					
EMA 2	I have a good feeling about the organisation					
EMA 3	I have trust and confidence in the organisation					
EMA 4	The organisation in indigenous					
EMA 5	I respect the organisation					
EMA 6	Growing up into the brand makes me patronise the organisation					
BRA 1	The organisation can be easily differentiated from its counterparts					
BRA 2	The organisation has a good culture					
BRA 3	The organisation projects itself in a clear and consistent manner					
BRA 4	The organisation uses colors and symbols I like					
CRL 1	The staff conducts themselves in a responsible and friendly manner					
CRL 2	The organisation ensures customer satisfaction					
CRL 3	The organisation prioritises customer service					
EEW1	Employees are adequately carried along in all activities and decisions made by the organisation					
EEW 2	The organisation engages in quality staff development, empowerment and training					
EEW 3	The organisation has a conducive working environment					

EEW 4	There is job security with the organisation					
EEW 5	The organisation treats its employees fairly					
EEW 6	The organisation has an attractive reward and benefit plan for employees					
FIP 1	The organisation has the financial ability to sustain itself.					
FIP 2	The organisation operates within the minimum acceptable threshold for non-performing loans					
INN 1	The organisation comes up with new service features that gives it an edge over its counterparts					
INN 2	The organisation identifies with what is in vogue – that is, the organisation is chic and youthful					
SOR 1	The organisation gives back to people and its local community					
SOR 2	The organisation conducts its business in an ethical and fair manner					
SOR 3	The organisation adheres to the principle of good governance					
SOR 4	The organisation actively engages in societal issues					
GOL 1	The boards of directors have a good reputation					
GOL 2	The organisation has a sound leadership					
EMP 1	The organisation is sensitive to customers' personal needs					
RIM 1	The organisation has a good risk management system or practice					
RIM 2	The organisation does not constitute risk to the deposit insurance fund					
REC 1	The organisation complies with industry standards					
TRT 1	The organisation is transparent in its activities					
TRT 2	The organisation does not engage in fraudulent activity					
TRT 3	The organisation has no secret charges					