Corporate Identity Change

-A qualitative research of BP

Bachelor's Thesis in Business Administration

Title:	Beyond Petroleum, change in Corporate Identity
	- Caused by Public Opinion
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Date:	January, 2010
Subject terms:	Corporate Identity, Public Opinion, Brand Management

Acknowledgements

I would like to express our gratefulness to my tutor Börje Boers for his help and support and critical comments. Börje has shown patience and given me feedback through the writing process.

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Abstract

Background – Corporate identity has emerged as an interesting subject. Companies' care about how people perceive them and it is important for companies that people have a good impression about them. Catastrophes and other happenings can seriously harm a company. Corporate identity is concerned with the personality of the organization. It is designed to help the organization to achieve its goals. The term is rather complex and contains many different aspects.

One of BP's oilrigs in the Gulf of Mexico sank due to an explosion. It became an environmental catastrophe with oil spread over gigantic areas. BP was accused of acting slowly and preventing media to reach the polluted beaches. Further, they have also influenced the search results on Google. BP has created a bad reputation in the market due to the way they have been handling the oil spill. The public has started to question the actions by BP and they have started to express opinions about the company.

This study will cover the different expression the public opinion has been taken against BP. Further, it will cover how those impressions have been affected the corporate identity of BP.

Purpose – The aim of this study is to measure if and to which extent BP's Corporate Identity has been affected by public opinion, due to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in spring 2010.

Method – The study employs a qualitative method. The data is based on primary data collection from online newspapers journals and scientific books. The theoretical section is based on information gathered mostly from journals and scientific books while the information about the oil spill comes mostly from online newspapers.

Findings/Conclusions– My research found that the public opinion has been affecting BP's corporate identity negatively. Further, BP's actions after the disaster have contributed to the negative opinion about the company. The Greenpeace and Facebook action has helped to spread the public opinion.

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1 Introduction

In this section I will describe my study, introduce some basic concepts and discuss why it is an important and interesting subject. There is also a problem discussion, which is followed by a purpose.

1.1 Corporate Identity

Firms have become increasingly aware of the importance of developing and managing their corporate identity. The identity of a corporation has been recognized as a strategic resource of competitive advantage. Effective management of corporate identity can serve to address the needs of the firm's important stakeholders by motivating employees, and inspiring confidence in the company to all targets groups (Baker & Balmer, 1997, p. 342).

Corporate identity research is an emerging discipline that increasingly recognizes that the corporate brand is fundamentally different from the principles that guide classic brand management, since the corporate identity must be designed to appeal to all the firm's stakeholders (Balmer, 2001, p 261).

1.2 BP (Beyond Petroleum)

BP (Beyond Petroleum) is a global oil and Gas Company with its headquarter in London, United Kingdom. It is the third largest energy company and the fourth largest company in the world in terms of profit. BP has transformed from a local oil company to become a global energy group. It is now employing over 80, 000 people and operating in over 100 countries worldwide (BP, 2010a). The name Beyond Petroleum – expresses BP's desire to diversify into sustainable, greener energy (Time, 2010a).

BP wants to be recognized as a great company, with high competitiveness, and force for progress. It believes that it can make a difference in the world by giving the world heat, light and mobility. Its aim is to do that by providing energy that is affordable, secure, and does not damage the environment. BP is working in line with four principles in order to maintain being a great company:

- The principle of progressiveness is the principle of mutual advantage and to build productive relationships with partners and customers.
- The responsible principle refers to safety and development of people, communities and societies, which they operate. The aim is no accidents, no harm to people and no damage to the environment.
- The innovative principle refers to the push of today's boundaries and the creation of tomorrow's breakthroughs through people and technology.
- The performance driven principle refers to the delivery of promises through continuous improvements and safe and reliable operations.

(BP, 2010b)

1.3 The oil spill

In spring 2010, the world was shocked by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. It developed to be the worst oil spill in the United States history (Thesun, 2010). The scale of the spill and the government inability to stop the leak without the aid from BP has

proven that big oil companies has had and still has impact of national politics and as well as societies (Time, 2010b).

1.4   Public opinion in relation to corporate identity

The effect of public opinion has developed as emerging discipline as customers tend to care more about the social responsibility of the company. Surveys from both North America and Western Europe indicate that customers tend to care more about the environment and also that customers are willing to pay extra for an environmental friendly product (Balmer & Gray 1999, p.171).

The corporate identity is the mental picture that an audience have of an organization. The corporate identity indicates how people value the company's attributes. It tends to change over time. Typically, corporations can be badly affected by disasters and other unexpected events. Corporations work in order to improve their reputation. Consequently, corporations work continuously to improve their reputation to their stakeholders. The principal stakeholders are the stakeholders that the company has to care most about. These stakeholders tend to be the customers, distributors and retailers, suppliers, joint venture partners, financial institutions and analysts, shareholders, governmental regulatory agencies, social actions organizations, the general public and employees (Balmer, 2001, p.342).

1.5   Corporate Identity crises in BP

The oil spill has been costly and will continue to be expensive for BP. BP remains committed to remedying the harm that the spill has caused. The environment and the livelihoods of people across the region have to be built up again and that will be a long-term process (BP, 2010c).

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has endangered the Gulf ecology, raised questions about offshore drilling and hindered the U.S. Senate's climate change legislation. The public opinion about oil drilling has also changed. President Obama had earlier pledged to expand this area of drilling (Usatoday, 2010).

Prior to the oil spill have oil brands been ranked in Brandweek which is a respected research firm for brand popularity. BP was ranked number one in the gasoline category on the customer, engagement and loyalty index. BP brand dropped dead last after the spill, behind Exxon. Exxon was the last on the list after the devastating oil spill in Alaska 1989 (Brandweek, 2010).

1.5.1 *Problem Discussion*

There is a growing interest of managing corporate identity that has been underscored by 1980 survey in Britain by Market Options Research International. A survey showed that 77 per cent of the questioned leading industrialists believed that that the importance their firms attached to developing and promoting their corporate identity would increase in the near future (Schmidt, 1989, p.41).

When looking into the concept of corporate identity, a wide range of literature gives different definitions. The obvious implication is that it is difficult to define corporate identity.

The subject is interesting though it is combining two different fields. BP as such is interesting through it is an oil company and therefore has implications on the environment. I wanted to write my thesis in a current topic and something that was related to the environment. I gained interest in corporate identity after talking to my tutor about thesis subjects. I started off by reading a few articles about corporate identity and I came to the conclusion that the subject was complex.

I have gained more interest in the environment lately. It is not only me that has gained more interest in the environment but there is a general trend to act and think in a more environmental friendly matter. Companies have to adjust and try to cope with the new trend.

Further studies made me understand that public opinion has an impact on corporate identity. It made me narrowing down my subject and focusing on how the public opinion has affected the corporate identity of BP.

1.6   Purpose

The aim of this study is to find out if, and to which extent BP's Corporate Identity has been affected by public opinion, due to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in spring 2010.

2 Theoretical framework

The chapter will start with definitions where concepts will be explained. This will be followed with a background section where I talk more about BP as a company and also give insight to how the disaster happened. Further, I will give example of companies that has had similar corporate identity crises. The chapter is explained through a deductive approach where general information is explained in the first place and later on narrowed down.

2.1 Corporate identity

Corporate identity can be defined as the personality of the organization that is designed to help the business to achieve its goals. The corporate identity contains the following parts:

- Corporate design (flyers, brochures, logos, business cards, and stationary)
- Corporate communication (commercials, public relations, and information)
- Corporate behaviour (internal values, ethics and norms)

(Balmer, 2001, p.249)

The corporate design has developed to be important to improve corporate identity. Externalities such as logos, flyers and company brochures help to define a company. The logo gives the first impression of the business. It is why many companies put a lot of effort to their logos. A logo gives unique identity to the business and can be as important as the name of the business. Design of brochures and websites usually comes into play when making buying decisions (Balmer, 2001. p.254).

2.2 Corporate Identity and the relation to other concepts

Corporate identity is a mixture of elements that gives an organization its distinctiveness. It is related to many different concepts. This is illustrated below where different concepts are explained. The concept of corporate identity has been questioned and therefore there has been a lack of agreement on the natural roles of identity. Figure 1 is illustrating the presence of corporate identity in different management and marketing areas. Further, corporate identity may be seen as concept, philosophy and a process (Balmer, 2001. p.249-252).

2.2.1 Corporate brand

The corporate brand concept is related to corporate reputation, corporate image and perception. The focus on corporate brand is related to internal and external stakeholders, and networks. A corporate brand position can be derived from the organization's identity (Balmer, 2001. p.253).

2.2.2 Corporate communication

This is the way the business identity is made known to internal and external stakeholders, and networks. The corporate communication mix encompasses management, organizational, and marketing communications. Further, corporate communication has been stretched to include primary communication, secondary communication and tertiary communication (Balmer, 2001. p.253).

2.2.3   Organizational identity

This is the key element that distinguishes a business. This refers to how employees feel and think about the organization. It is often referred to as the characteristics of an organization, which are central, enduring and distinctive. The concept has many similarities with corporate personality and with corporate culture and it could therefore be difficult to distinguish (Balmer, 2001. p.254).

2.2.4   Visual identity

The concept refers to the extent business identity is disguised. Symbols representing the firm are common expressions of visual identity. Other expressions of business identity are business identity change programs. Four functions that can describe visual identity:
- Used to signal change in corporate strategy
- Culture
- Communication
- Change in fashion regarding graphical design

(Balmer, 2001. p.255)

2.2.5   Corporate image

Corporate image is the creation of a positive or negative image. The concept is problematic due to the multiplicity of interpretations and negative associations. The concept is based on the recognition that consumers buy brand products not only because of the quality but also because of the bias (Balmer, 2001. p.255). People develop attitudes towards companies because of their characteristics. Different people might perceive the same image in a completely different way. The images have a huge impact on buying decisions. It has been pointed out that people tend to humanise companies and give companies a personality. The sum of how people perceive a corporation is referred to as the corporate image (Spector, 1961. p.47).
Brown defined three broad approaches of corporate image:
- Psychology
- Graphic design
- Public relations

(Balmer, 2001. p.255)

2.2.6   Corporate personality

This is a concept that distinguishes and relates to the attitudes within an organization. It is linking together the concept of organizational identity and the concept of corporate culture. It is argued that an organizations culture is closely linked to the founder of the organization hence the founder establishes the culture of the organization. An organization is therefore facing problems when the founder chooses to resign. Corporate personality is a culture mix of corporate, professional, regional and other subcultures that together construct the business identity. It could sometimes be difficult to grasp that organizations have personalities similar to humans. The concept is also difficult to get an understanding of because the corporate personality may change from time to time (Balmer, 2001. p.256).

2.2.7 Corporate reputation

The corporate reputation is about getting a favourable reputation among key stakeholder groups. A favourable position is believed to give the organization a competitive advantage. It is believed that the following categories have an impact on the corporate reputation: Financial worth, traits and/or signals, formation, reputation expectations, norms, and reputational asset and mobility barriers (Balmer, 2001. p.256).
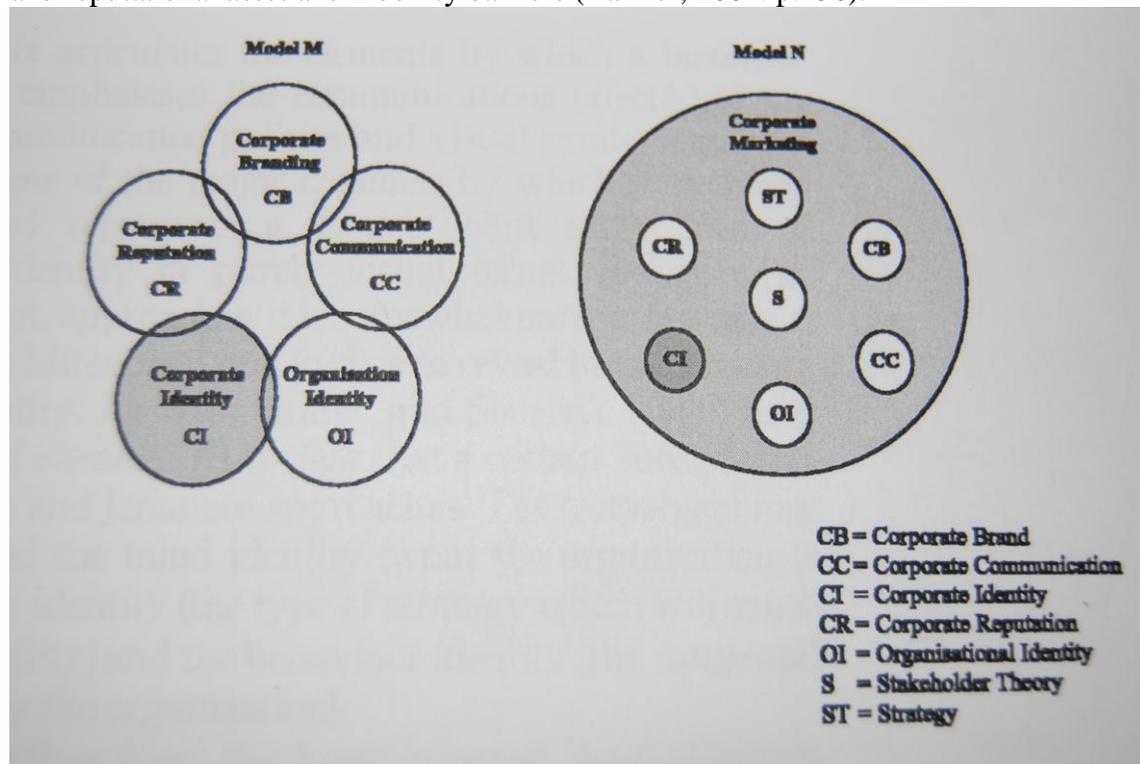
Figure 2-1 Corporate identity and related concepts (Balmer, 2001. p.260).

2.3   Corporate identity management (CIM)

The objective of CIM is to establish a favourable reputation with the organization's stakeholders. The attention is to appeal the stakeholders and to make them buy the organization's products and services. There is evidence proving that favourable corporate reputation gives an organization a competitive advantage. It is important to take into account the organizations historical roots, personality, corporate strategy, and the three parts of the corporate identity mix. Organizations that manage to achieve that are said to have achieved a comparative advantage. Additionally, reputation and performance are also influenced by developments in the external environment such as change made by competitors. The external environment is also affected by change in behaviour of customers, personnel and government. The figure below is illustrating the relationship between corporate identity and other factors that affect the corporate identity (Balmer & Reil. 1997. p.342).
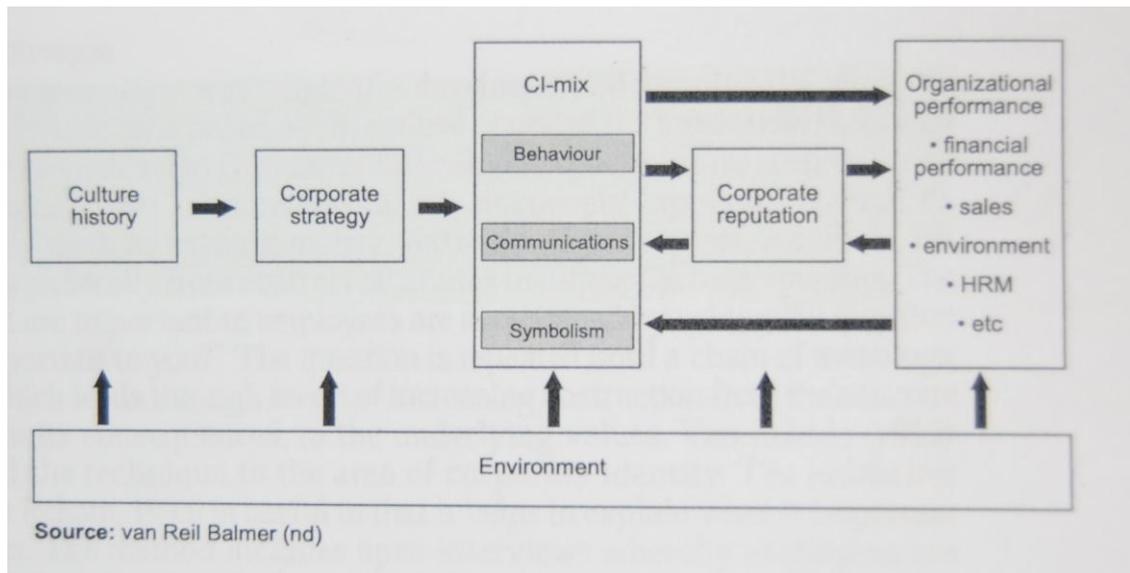
Figure 2-3 Corporate Identity and related factors (Balmer & Reil. 1997. p.342)

2.4 Public Opinion

Public opinion is a vital and enduring concept that is related to social science. It has been widely applied in psychology, political science and communicative research. The term public opinion is referred to as "the people". The fundamental concept of public opinion is openness and availability. Public does not necessarily apply full openness. A company may proclaim itself "public" by referring to that they are open and transparent. However, a company cannot be completely open and transparent hence they have to keep secrets to stay competitive (Price, 1992. p.26).

Public opinion is a central element in our society. Being able to express our opinion is central in a society. It is questioned whether public opinion is formed around social matters or constructed by special interests such as trade and industry, organizations, and political parties. Expressing the public opinion has developed to a liberal market oriented tradition. Recent years have shown that we have experienced a more critical thinking about companies and their actions (Blumer, 1948. p.543).

Public opinion in relation to ethics has developed to be a widely debated issue in Sweden as well as abroad. Several debaters have questioned the ethics of the industry. According to the critics have the business environment changed to become less transparent and less responsible (Weaver & Motion & Roper, 2000 p.366).

2.4.1 *Components of public opinion: attitudes and values*

People does not form opinions about a given issue based on the immediate situation only. More likely there are social environmental factors, preexisting knowledge, attitudes and values that have a big impact of the choice made. Attitudes and values have such a crucial role in the development of public opinion. Perhaps the most important concept in public opinion research is that of values and determining whether people form opinions on a specific topic. In general people are more likely to have a strong opinion about something when there are values attached to it. Values are adopted in early life and are likely to come from parents and schools. Values are not likely to change but grow stronger as people grow older. They are usually resistant to ordinary attempts of

persuasion and influence. The values are rarely changed by the influence of media, and they rarely shift as a result of positions or arguments expressed in a single debate. Still, values can be changed and in some cases completely changed by prolonged exposure to conflict values. Other exposures that might change values are discussion with people that are highly respected or development of significantly new evidence or circumstances.

An issue has to become generally recognized before attitudes can be formed about it. If an attitude is expressed to others by a number of people a public opinion s beginning to emerge. Not all people will agree on the opinion and others might not be interested. People forming a common public opinion might be of different interests. A seemingly homogeneous body of public opinion may be composed of individuals with different interest and values but with same aim of moving in the same direction. The attitudes must be useful to the person who holds it.

Environmental factors play a critical part in development of attitudes and opinions. The most persuasive is the influence from the social environment such as family, friends, neighborhood, and place of work, church, or school. People use to adjust their opinions to best fit with the social group to which they belong (Feldman, 1988. P.418).

Newspapers, radio, television, Internet, e-mail and blogs are usually less influential than the social environment. However, media have a significant impact in creating opinion but especially in enhancing opinions that are already established. Media also give the function to reinforce people to take action. Another function mass media have is to let individuals know what other people think. Media is also spreading the opinion by others to a lot of people and also to huge areas.

In countries with less literate population and strict media control is the importance of media been less influential when it comes to spreading public opinion. In those communities has the word of mouth a more significant importance. The word of mouth is spreading information slower and usually involving fewer people (Britannica, 2006).

2.4.2 *Sources of public opinion*

The mass media provide the public with information. The content and its attitudes shape public attitudes. The media spread news and report the ensuring effects of the news. TV, networks and newspapers have contributed to the public opinion. News is a picture of the reality. Very little of the information presented in the news is actually event driven The different media we experience in daily life are papers, television and Internet based media (Technade, 2007). It is believed that the purpose of newspapers is to state the facts about what is going on in the world around us. However, media has also been a way of manipulating the minds of people in order to change values and opinions. In general we believe that what is written in the newspapers is true. Often the facts are twisted to support the political views of the Newspaper or the journalist (Coursework, 2009).

Traditional media can sometimes be restricted by rules and regulations. Social networks allow people to bypass traditional media outlets, talk among themselves and come together around shared values (Fastcompany, 2010a)

2.5   Previous oil disasters

2.5.1 *Exxon Valdez case*

Exxon is the world's largest publicity traded international oil and Gas Company. It provides energy that is helping countries to develop their economies and increase their living standards all over the world. ExxonMobil is providing technology to deliver energy all over the world. It also produces and sells crude oil, natural gas and petroleum products. Exxon operates in most of the countries in the world and explores oil and gas on six continents. Exxon is committed to meet the worlds growing demand for energy in an economically, environmentally and socially and responsible manner" (Exxonmobil, 2010).

In March 1989, the tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground on the Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound, Alaska. The ship was on its way from Alaska to Los Angeles, California. The accident occurred when it was travelling outside normal shipping lanes in an attempt to avoid ice. Exxon Valdez was grounded for six hours and managed to spill approximately 10.9 million gallon of its 53 million gallon cargo of crude oil. Eight of the eleven tanks on the ship were damaged. It made the Exxon Valdez case the largest oil spill in the United States history until the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in summer 2010 (Epa, 2010).

The Exxon Valdez disaster differs from the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico through the oil was not leaking from a ship. Further, the spill in the Gulf of Mexico was much bigger (Mcclatchydc, 2010).

The spill threatened the corporate identity of BP and its environmental image was damaged. The management reaction to the oil spill was slow and the chairman never turned up at the site of the oil spill.

The oil industry reacted by increasing their coverage of environmental issues in annual reporting. The underlying assumption is that the media is able to change the public's perception about a particular issue (Seidl, 1988. p.60).

2.5.2 *The Shell case*

Shell experienced a lot of negative publicity after announcing its decision to sink their North Sea oil storage tanker in the Atlantic Ocean. Environmental protection groups, such as Greenpeace, started public offence against Shell. Greenpeace anti-Shell campaign received plenty of media coverage in both United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The initiatives from Greenpeace were successful in influencing the public opinion. The sales dropped significantly in Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom through a boycott of their products. Additionally, politicians outside the United Kingdom began to question the actions by Shell.

Shell reacted to the confrontation by placing ads in national newspapers in which they referred to independent research, which stated that Greenpeace made false accusations. Shell showed that their actions were in line with laws and regulations. Shell' statement even worsens the reactions from the public. People took their actions as a proof of the company's immorality and lack of social responsibility.

Later, new knowledge about its unethical behaviour in Nigeria came to the public knowledge. Shell's identity was negatively affected by the oil spill; additionally other oil companies were affected (Springer, 2010. p.61)

Shell learned from the negative consequences and reacted by initiating a debate with some of its stakeholders. Several environmental organizations along with other interest groups were invited to have a discussion with Shell. Shell also changed their communication style from "buffering" to "bridging". They thereby showed their vulnerable position in the society and they thereby changed their corporate identity. The discussion with the stakeholder led to a revised statement of business principles. They also promised to better keep their social responsibilities. A report was also published by Shell about ethics. Shell took action by founding and promoting a wide range of community projects in Africa. They have also been rewarded by the "Worldaware Award for Sustainable Development" (Springer, 2010. p.62).

3   Method

This chapter begins with a statement of the method in use. Furthermore, I will explain the data collection, the presentation of the collected data and the trustworthiness of the information.

3.1   Choice of Method

The information will be conducted in a deductive manner, more specific with qualitative secondary approach. The information about the oil spill is mostly conducted from online newspapers. The theoretical information will be based on research that has been done in prior. Information will also be gathered from Facebook and Greenpeace website; hence they have been a source of expressing public opinion.
Conducting the information with a qualitative method makes me fulfil the purpose. The research method is most suited to my research. It fit to my research method through the information is conducted in a natural setting and collected from a variety of empirical sources. Collecting information from both BP's website and from external sources gives me a wider and more differentiated perspective.
Research about Shell and Exxon is also presented in the theoretical framework. Those studies will be used to get ideas and inspiration to my study.
Studies about corporate identity has been done in prior, this study will however look into a BP and how the public opinion has been affected the corporate identity after they oil spill in the summer of 2010.
This study will look at different sources of public opinion that has been affecting the public opinion. The corporate identity mix has been used when analyzing the information.

3.2   Primary vs. secondary data

Primary data is data that is collected in order to help solving a problem. It can also be collected in order to take advantage of an opportunity on which a decision is pending. Secondary data is not developed in order to help solving the problem at hand. Data collected and preceded by others can be used in order to solve your own problems.
Secondary data collection has advantages in comparison with primary data collection. The data is collected quickly and the information gathering is usually less expensive than collecting primary data. However, primary data may suffer from not being available, relevant or accordant. If none of these criteria is, then primary data may be used rather than using secondary data (Scribd, 2010).

3.3   Qualitative vs, Quantitative Method

A qualitative research involves collecting of a variety of collected material such as case study, interview, observations, historical information and interactions. A qualitative research approach tries to find out why something is happening, through analyse of structured information. Information that could be analysed is interview transcripts, open-ended survey responses, emails, notes, feedback forms, photos and videos. It does not only rely on statistics and numbers, which is the domain of quantitative research. Quantitative research is mainly used to gain insight into people's attitudes, value system, behaviours, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. It can be used to in-

form business decisions, policy information, communication and research. Many formal approaches are used and among the most famous are focus groups, in depth interviews and content analysis. It is also common with instructed material such as feedback forms, reports and media clips. The collected information can easily be unstructured and messy when collecting and analysing the information. A way of making the information more synoptic is to structure the information in different groups (Qsrinternational, 2010). Quantitative research approach is less common than qualitative research approach. A quantitative research approach involves gathering data that is absolute. Such data is usually numerical data. The data can be examined unbiased which make the process of analyzing fast. The main idea behind quantitative research approach is the ability to separate things easily so that only what is it important for the research is analysed. Factors that are not important for the research are not being analysed. Tools are used in order to minimize biases. The result coming from the quantitative research is collected in numbers, which can be used in statistical formulas to present results (Wisegeek, 2010).

3.4 Inductive vs. deductive Research Approach

A deductive approach works from the more general to the more specific. This approach is widely known as the "top-down" approach. It is narrowing down information to more specific hypotheses that are tested with specific data.
An inductive approach works the opposite way, from specific to general approach. This is widely known as the "bottom up" approach. In inductive reasoning, it begins with specific observations and measures, in order to find patterns. A hypothesis is developed from specific observations, which are explored, and finally lead to general conclusions and theories.
These two methods have a very different feel when conducting the approach. An inductive approach is more explorative while the deductive approach is more concerned with testing and confirming hypothesis. Most social research involves both inductive and deductive approach but there is often a stronger part. It happens that researches observe patterns in the data that lead them to develop new theories or vice versa. It is common among researchers that they find data that leads them to develop new theories (Socialresearchmethods, 2006a).

3.5 Data collection

I was from the very beginning only considering collecting data from secondary sources. It became obvious to me in an early stage that it would not be possible for me to collect information from interviews. The people that I wanted to interview would be too hard to reach. However, the research can be done without interviews since much information is provided on Internet. Furthermore, the most efficient data collection is not done by interviews. It would be time consuming and too much of travelling. This led me to the conclusion that gathering secondary data was the way to go. The information will be gathered mainly from interviews and articles published online.

3.5.1 Secondary data collection

The theoretical framework in this study is based on secondary information. The information is collected from articles, journals and books. Most information about the BP's oil spill is collected online. That is because the accident has occurred recently and most information is provided online. The database that has been used to collect information is

mainly Google Scholar and JULIA. When searching in the databases keywords such as: "corporate identity", "public opinion", and "BP" have been used.

At an early stage I was considering doing interviews with the board of directors of BP and people affected of the oil spill. I came to the conclusion that I was able to collect the information needed from online sources and it was therefore not needed to collect information from the board.

3.5.2 Data presentation

The data will be presented both in written form and with graphs and numbers in order to get a better overview of the data.

3.5.3 Data analysis

The data is collected from several sources and information will continuously be processed. Information about the oil spill may change as time passes because of new information. This may change how the public view BP. Additionally; action made by BP may also change how people value the company.
Furthermore, information presented by BP may not be accurate. I have therefore compared the data presented by BP and the data presented by external sources.

3.6 Trustworthiness

3.6.1 Credibility

The credibility refers to whether the result of qualitative research is believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. The purpose of credibility is to understand the phenomena from the perspective of the participant's eyes. Finally, the participants are the only ones who can legitimate the results, giving their credibility (Socialresearchmethods, 2010b)

3.6.2 Transferability

The aim of a research is to produce information that can be applied in another setting than the study setting. No study, matter the method used, can provide findings that are universally transferable. The design of the study should show a contraction of the degree of the adequate transferability (Malterud, 2001a).

3.6.3 Dependability

The traditional quantitative view of reliability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability. Essentially it is concerned with whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice. But we can't actually measure the same thing twice -- by definition if we are measuring twice, we are measuring two different things. In order to estimate reliability, quantitative researchers construct various hypothetical notions (e.g., true score theory) to try to get around this fact.
The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The research is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes af-

fected the way the research approached the study (Driessen & Vleuten & Schuwirth & Tartwijk & Vermunt, 2005)

3.6.4 Reliability

Reliability is described to the extent that the results are consistent over time and also the accurate representatives of the total population. It also refers to the reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced when using a similar methodology. If a similar methodology can be used in order to get the same findings, only then is the research considered to be reliable (Golafshani, 2003).

3.6.5 Validity

Validity determinate if the research is actually measuring what it is supposed to measure and also how truthful the research results is. It is often referred to as if the study is measuring what it is supposed to measure. Researchers generally ask questions about the study and they ask for answers in other studies (Golafshani, 2003).
Internal validity investigates if the study is investigating what it is suppose to investigate. External validity refers to what context the findings can be applied (Malterud, 2001a).

4   Empirical Presentation

This chapter presents my empirical findings. The data is collected mainly from online newspapers
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4.1   Background

4.1.1   The accident

The first indication of trouble came 10 p.m. on April the 20 when a fire was reported. A huge explosion followed the fire (Reuters, 2010). The rig was burning for 36 hours before it finally sank. Efforts were done in order to stop the flames and prevent the rig from sinking. The crew had been working normally before the accident. Working on an oilrig has always been dangerous, but there has been a decline in the number of accidents in recent decades (BBC, 2010).
At the time of the accident, BP contractor Transocean was drilling in the Mississippi Canyon Block. The rig was drilling at BP's Macondo project with 126 employed on board. 117 people were able to escape and 11 of the workers died. The rescued people where taken by helicopter to New Orleans hospitals. The research for the missing 11 workers continued without success (Reuters, 2010). Patrul boats did the research during the night and deeper research continued Thursday morning. The rescue teams were hoping that the workers had reached lifeboats (Theaustralian, 2010).

4.1.2   The oilrig

The oilrig deepwater Horizon was owned by Transocean and leased to BP. The oilrig was bigger than a football field, 120 meter long and 78 meters wide and insured for $560 million. The platform was of the most modern type at the moment. It was drilling at 5,000 feet of water (Washingtonpost, 2010). According to Transocean was it no sign of problems before the explosion. Transocean is based in Zug, Switzerland, and the world's largest offshore drilling contractor. It is providing mobile offshore drilling units to help customers to find and develop oil and natural gas reserves. Transocean has more than 50 years of experience and has specialized in rigs. There are 18,000 employees in the company and their focus is safety and premier offshore drilling performance (Deepwater, 2010).

4.1.3   The affects

BP's first estimations of the oil spill were moderate estimates. That was because BP's first estimations were based on surface observations. The numbers were ranging from 1,000 to 13,000 barrels per day, and BP simply took a number in between and thought that number was not too conservative or defensible (Nola, 2010a).
It is clear that the spill was much larger than BP first claimed. BP had an interest in a low number since the fines from the government will increase by a higher number. BP was defending their results by referring that their estimations were made according to the industry experts and scientists, and based on the best data available at that time. BP responded to the new information given, by stating that they would take full responsibility no matter the magnitude of the oil spill (Nola, 2010b).

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is the worst environmental disaster America has ever faced. The disaster resulted in that millions of gallons of oil were spilled in the Gulf of Mexico. It will take months or years to fight the oil (CNN, 2010).

The spill in the Gulf of Mexico developed to be devastating for the environment and the livelihoods of the people across the region. The direct effects of the oil spill are the pollution of the beaches and the effect on the wildlife (Thefishsite, 2010).

4.1.4 The responsibility

BP has been held responsible for the disaster and has to pay for the long term and short costs for the cleanups, environment restoration, claims and economic investments. BP announces that the restoration of the Gulf of Mexico is an important milestone in their continued efforts to restore the Gulf coast. BP also point out that their work is on long terms and they will be there as long as it is required (BP, 2010c).

BP has been forced to sell off assets and oil fields in order to pay expenses from the oil spill. They have also been forced to sell of their stake in the biggest US oil fields to finance cleanup cost, fines and legal damages. PB can't afford expanding its business because all the money has to go to reconstruction of the damages (Chinadaily, 2010).

4.1.5 The President reaction

The reaction from the President of the United States came fast. Barack Obama held his first White House press conference in 10 months to announce an oil industry crackdown. Mr Obama reacted by suspending new deepwater well permits for six months and cancelling planned drilling of the coast of Virginia. Mr Obama also revieled that he took "absolute responsibility" for the administration's failure to move with "sufficient urgency" in ending a convenient relationship between regulators and the oil industry that could have contributed to the disaster. There is evidence that BP executives did not fully understand the extent of the oil spill. Mr Obama admits that his administration should have done more in order to push BP to release pictures in an earlier stage of the oil spill. Earlier released pictures would have given more accurate estimates, and resources could have been there in an earlier stage to limit the disaster. The President admits that he had been wrong about the oil industry's fail-safe procedures, and their preparation for a disaster.

The president declared that he gathered his team in the White House on the day the rig collapsed. Mr Obama denies the lack of urgency in tackling the disaster and states that it has been given the highest priority since the crises occurred.

President Obama held a speech to the present U.S. coast guard and to the people of the United States to express his understanding and support:

"To the people here in the Gulf, we are going to be standing by your side. And to Americans all across the country, come on down and visit."

(Whitehouse, 2010)

The president admits that BP is held responsible for the disaster. However, the US government is in charge with House's National Incident Commander, Admiral Thad Allen, supervising the operation. The president admitted that he had to rely on BP because the US government did not have the superior technology needed to stop the spill (Theaustralian, 2010).

4.2 **BP's reaction**

BP has expanded their scope of marketing during the time directly after the disaster. They started to run ads in 17 states, included Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. They were running ads in two states a year ago. BP spent more than $93 million on newspaper advertisements and TV spots in the weeks following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. It is three times as much money spent on advertisement as the year before, according to U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee. It is estimated that BP has spent over $100 million on advertising to prevent damage of the brand. The peak costs were in June, when the estimated sum of $3.59 million was spent on Google search and video search. A normal month before the disaster there was $57 thousand being spent on search improvements (Fastcompany, 2010b)

4.3 **The public opinion expression**

4.3.1 Employees restricted

BP workers have signed a contract that included a gag order, preventing them from talking to the media. Even BP employees working with the clean up was told not to speak to the public (Huffingtonpost, 2010a).
Further, it has been implications where media has not been given access to the polluted beaches. The restrictions has been limited both to the beaches but also to the workers who have been hired to clean up the spill. The restricted beaches are by definition public and open to everyone. It is therefore questioned whether BP has the right to intervene and act in their own personal best (Examiner, 2010).

4.3.2 Paying search results on Internet

BP has also used paid search engines to influence public opinion as people where looking for information about the oil spill and its consequences online. BP has been paying Google for the privilege of elbowing out news that did not benefit them. It has been spotted before how companies have been trying to influence search engine results, most recently in the pharmaceutical sector. The scale of BP's actions has never been seen before giving new knowledge about the power of companies.
BP's strategy seems to have been working, as their ads show up on searches like "spill", "gulf of", "offshore oil", "oil spill", "Louisiana coast spill" and "oil cleanup," but not "oil disaster." It is estimated that BP is spending at least $7,500 per day to earn the top position on top search position on searches related to the oil spill on Google, and another $3,000 a day to cover both Yahoo and MSN's Bing. The searches for the "oil spill" have increased dramatically on Google; in April was the number of searches 2,240,000 versus a 12-month average of 301,000.
BP is admitting that they have been paying search engines in order to favour them. They are refusing to discuss the money spent. BP is explaining their actions by picking the terms, which will help people who are most directly affected in the Gulf coast states with information about how to get in touch with them and make claims for loss of earnings. The main aim of paying search engines is to work as a marketing tool. Mainly to help local fishermen, local business, volunteers in the cleanup. Further, BP is revealing that BP's web team in Huston and London work in correlation with the marketing executives to make the best buying search terms.

When pressed for examples of the terms they've bought, Wine said, "Some examples would be 'oil spill' and 'claims.' The main aim is a marketing tool, to help the people who are most directly affected -- fishermen, local businesses, volunteers in the cleanup. We want people to be able to find us, so we can work out how to minimize the impact on their lives and businesses." Wine said it is the BP web teams in Houston and London, together with the company's marketing executives, who are engaged in buying search terms.

BP has a lot of experience of helping people since it counts for 97 percent of all flagrant violations in the industry, according to an analysis from the Center for Public Integrity (Huffingtonpost, 2010b).

4.3.3   The Greenpeace action

Greenpeace is a non-governmental environmental organization. They have offices in over 40 countries with a coordinating body in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The goal of Greenpeace is to ensure the ability of the Earths nature life in all its diversity. They are focusing on issues such as global warming, deforestation, over fishing, and commercial whaling and anti nuclear issues (Greenpeace, 2010).

The logo competition has a strong correlation with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Greenpeace has launched a new kind of competition that invited designers, industry experts, members of the public, to redesign BP's logo to better reflect the company's operations abroad. The winning logo will be used in an innovative and confrontational campaign against BP. Advertisement for the competition was put by Greenpeace on BP's headquartered in London to promote the competition. The action was meant to put pressure on the CEO Tony Haywards. The competition was also presented in newspapers to be further spread. The logo competition lasted for six weeks, ending on Monday 28th of June. Greenpeace argued that their logo distracted the company from what it really was standing for.

Landor designed BP's current logo with the features a green and yellow "helios" design. Experts as well as the public were therefore invited by Greenpeace to come up with a logo that better could reflect the company (Greenpeace, 2010a).
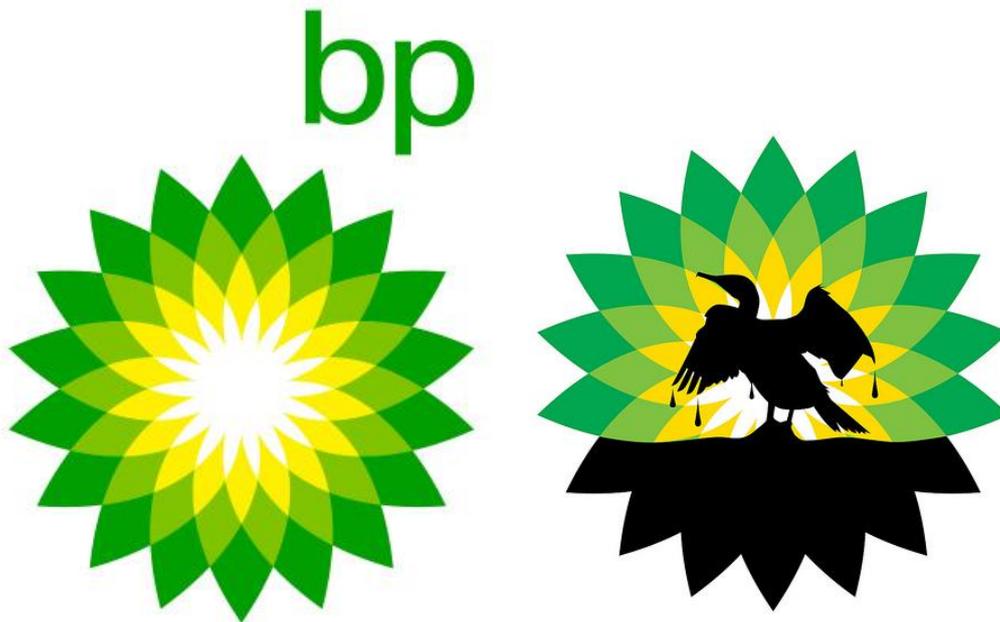
Figure 4-1 BP's logo (Cartype, 2010), Figure 4-2 Competition winner (Flickr, 2010)

The winner of the competition got his inspiration from a bird that is glued with oil and in panic. The logo is a reflection of what is happening to our world with a series of tragic events (Greenpeace, 2010b).

4.3.4 The Facebook action

A Facebook page "Boycott BP" was started in order to Boycott BP stations until the spill was cleaned up. Also branded BP products will be included in the boycott. Such products are Castrol, Arco, Aral, am/pm, Amoco and Wild Bean Cafe. People from all over the world have joined the Facebook group. Now is it over 800,000 members and the number is increasing (Facebook, 2010). Videos, pictures and comments have been shared on the page. The aim of using Facebook as tool was to spread the information fast. Using Facebook was seen as a faster way of spreading the word.
The Facebook page was closed down 9 hours to no particular reason. The message about the shutdown spread quickly. Rumours that BP had put pressure on Facebook came up. Another Facebook page was put up and gained 10,000 members in half a day. About 9 hours after the removal was the Facebook page reinstated. According to Facebook was the breakdown due to the automatic system that disabled the profile and removed all the content. The profile had to be checked manually before restoring the page. Facebook refused telling about how there automatic system worked, because letting people know would weaken its effectiveness (Techcrunch, 2010).
The responsible people for the BP Boycott page argue that Facbeook is carrying great responsibility and should have provided warnings and reasoned explanation before destroying a large and active community. They also argue that the way the page was removed caused confusion. Further, the founder of the Boycott page is arguing that no one could claim that the page was operated by someone that did not like the actions by BP. Further, have a right to criticize a company by name, and BP has no right to stop it (Tgdaily, 2010)

Figure 4-1 Screenshot Boycott BP (Facebook, 2010)

4.3.5 BP saving the brand or helping the people affected by the spill

BP has been spending a lot of money in order to save the brand. In such crises for a company is it important to allocate the resources in the best possible way. BP stated a compensation fund for those people that have been affected by the oil spill valued 20 billion dollar. A research has been done by CNN, in order to find out if the public approve or disapprove the compensation workers and business that have been affected by the oil spill. The compensation is going to be paid by BP but administrated by a neutral party (Climateprogress, 2010).

Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of creating a fund of billions of dollars to compensate workers and businesses that have been affected by the oil spill that would be paid by BP but administered by a neutral party.

Approve: 82
Disapprove: 18

Source: June 16, 2010 CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll.
N=534 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4.
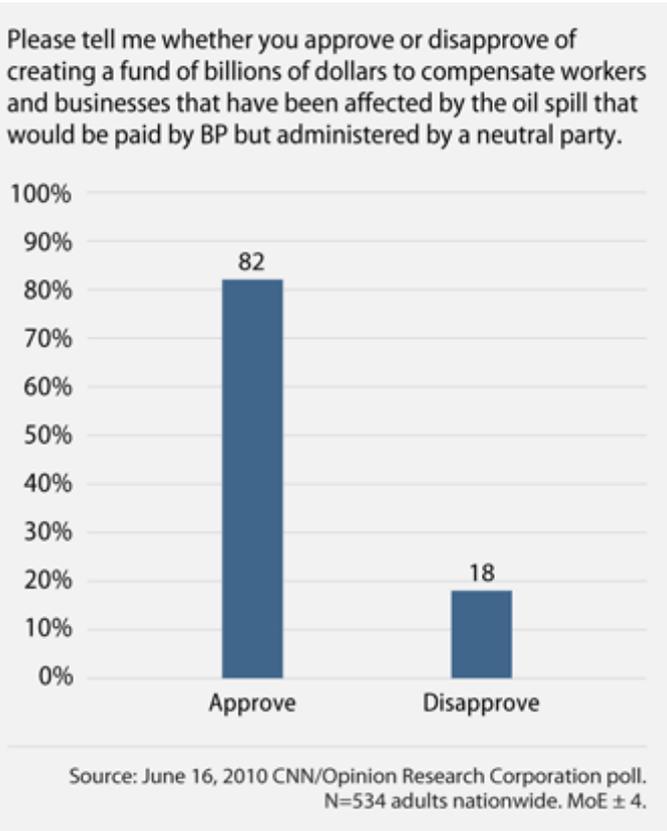
BP seems to be confused about how their compensation found for the cleanup should work and also how it could interfere with their profitability, according to many conservatives. The result came from a research made by CNN. 92 percent think that BP should prioritize cleaning up the oil spill rather than focusing on the interests of its investors and employees by continuing to make profits (Climateprogress, 2010).

What do you think BP's top priority should be: cleaning up oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and paying for the damage that the oil spill has caused, or protecting the interests of its investors and employees by making sure BP stays in business and makes a profit?

Cleaning up oil spill: 92
Making a profit: 7
Unsure: 1

Source: June 16, 2010 CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll.
N=534 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4.

(Climateprogress, 2010)

5 Analysis

This chapter will analyse the secondary data that has been collected and presented in the previous chapter. The data will be analysed with the aim of finding out whether the corporate identity of BP has been affected by the public opinion.

5.1 Introduction to Analysis

The purpose of this study is to find if and whether the corporate identity has been affected by the public opinion. The study is applied to the case of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. The information presented in this part refers back to the theoretical part. Referring back to the previous section improves the connection between the sections and the analysis becomes more relevant. This section will point out the most important factors that have influenced their corporate identity.

5.1.1 BP unpopular for several reasons

- BP launched their new slogan "Beyond Petroleum" and introduced their new logotype in year 2000. The introduction of their new logo was estimated to cost approximately 200 million dollar, covering expenses for advertisement in newspapers and magazines. The campaign became hardly criticized by environmentalists because of its green washing. They blamed BP for not showing their true personality.

- The responsibility about the safety has been unclear. BP has not taken their responsibility by given the workers and the environment a good deal.

- BP has been criticized for their lack of being prepared for unwanted happenings such leaks and dealing with the employees. Additionally, it has been troublesome for communities that have been affected by BP disasters, to get in contact with the company.

- BP has rushed to buy silence from people and organizations who have been trying to sue them in court. BP's actions communicate friction and make the consumers confused.

- BP has from the very beginning been downplaying the amount of oil flowing out from the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, BP has been buying search terms on Google.

- BP did several PR misses in handling the crises. The CEO, Tony Hayward did not act fast and did not take responsibility for the oil spill.

- BP has stated that they will continue drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, continuing using the deep-sea rigs that take even more risks than the rig that was leaking the spring and summer of 2010.

- It has been three similar oil leaks by BP, after the Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico. Those spills have been minor but it is showing BP's lack of action.

- BP was adding dispersants in the Gulf of Mexico in order to hide the oil. The oil was still there but it was covered which made it made it more difficult for the press to get an oversight of the disaster when taking pictures from above.

- A research was made by MIT Slogan Management Review. It came up with the result that the negative effects of unethical behaviour have a substantially greater impact on the consumers' willingness to pay than the positive effects of ethical behaviour.

(Fastcompany, 2010c)

5.1.2 Employees restricted to intervene with media

The theory tells me that corporate identity is a complex concept with a mixture of many different elements. Further, the main parts in the corporate identity are corporate design, corporate communication and corporate behavior. The most relevant concept related to media is the corporate communication. The corporate communication defines how companies communicate to internal and external stakeholders (Balmer, 2001, p 260). Media has impact on many factors in the corporate communication since it has many functions. The image of a company is likely to be communicated with media. Media's involvement in many different fields makes it a powerful tool. It is therefore important for companies to keep a good relationship and cooperate with media.

BP has restricted workers ability to talk and interact with media. Media has been source of spreading the information about the oil spill. BP has tried to limit the news spread about the oil spill by preventing media to come and see the polluted beaches. Further, the employees have been forced to sign a contract that is restricting them to communicate with media.

This information gives me a negative picture of BP and how its interaction with media. The way BP is restricting the employees to interact gives the impression of a closed company with little openness. This does not cope with the new business environment that is more liberal and open.

5.1.3 Paying search results on Internet

The theory framework tells me that attitudes and values have a big impact on the choice people make. Public opinions are strongly affected by the values of the societies. Further, media is a source of public opinion and also to enhancing opinions that is already established.

BP has been paying search engines to get favorable results. Their motivation to their actions is that people easier will get in contact with them. The main idea about search engines is that they should provide the most wanted information on top.

It is likely to believe that BP has understood the importance of search engines and how they can impact values, opinion and attitudes about companies. It seems like they are trying to hide information. People who are seeking results by using search engines will get inaccurate information because BP has influenced the search engine results. It could that their judgments are based on false permissions.

The corporate identity is very much influenced by the public opinion and media is a source of public opinion. BP has managed to limit the spread of negative media and they have therefore managed to limit the harm of their corporate identity.

5.1.4   The Greenpeace action

Visual identity refers to the extent the corporate identity is distinguished. It takes its impressions in symbols representing the company. The business identity is continuously changing through it is going to symbolize the future of the company. Further, the visual identity is covering expression though it is covering the strategy, culture, communication, and graphical design. The logo is often the first impression people perceive about a company and it is therefore important. The logo is trying to symbolize the company and the direction the company is moving. It is usually gives the first impression about the company (Balmer, 2001, p 259).

The logo completion threatened the visual identity of BP. The logo of BP is green and gives the impression of a company that is trying to work in cooperation with environment. The logo is important for BP because it is symbolizing the business idea of the company. Further, having a competition about the logo can confuse and scare customers away.
It has been showed several times that BP is not working in cooperation with the environment. Their logo becomes a falls impression. Greenpeace is a well known organization with a reputation of being honest and telling the truth. The Greenpeace logo competition has affected BP's corporate identity. The logo competitions were not very known to the public, to flavor BP.

5.1.5   The Facebook action

Facebook has grown to be a big community for sharing information among individuals. Companies and organizations have seen the benefits of using Facebook as a source of spreading information about the company and use it as a promoting tool. Information about the "Boycott BP" page was spread fast. People where able to share information about BP instantly.

Corporate identity is affected by the external factors. It was not possible for BP to control the information. The "Boycott BP" page shut down for only hours, which started speculations about that BP had forced Facebook to close the page. Facebook stated that the page was closed down due to an automatic system. The closedown of the page only triggered speculation about BP's involvement.
Facebook has developed very fast. Companies and organizations do not know how to handle the new source of information.

5.2 **Concluding the analysis**

BP's reaction to the oil catastrophe demonstrates their lack of understanding, as to how technology has changed the consumer marketplace. The public has reacted against BP. This has been shown in newspapers and TV, but also on social media such as Facebook. Also organizations such as Greenpeace have taken action. The Facebook group "Boycott BP page on Facebook" has received close to a million "Likes". Greenpeace held a BP logo competition with the aim of finding a logo that reflected the actions by BP. Facebook and other social websites have become a place for the public to express their opinions. Facebook has made it easy to spread your own opinion and read the opinion of others.

6   Conclusion and final discussion

This chapter concludes the analysis will analyse the secondary data that has been collected and presented in the previous chapter. The data will be analysed with the aim of finding out whether the corporate identity of BP has been affected by the public opinion.

6.1   Introduction

BP has developed a bad reputation in the market place. It is not only the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 2010, but also several minor happenings that have contributed to their reputation. BP is the biggest oil producer in the world. Every company is driven by profit and so is BP. BP is an oil company with its implications on the environment and it is therefore expected that people will have opinions about the company. They have many cost pools and they might have faced difficulties in allocating their resources after the oil spill. It could be that maintenance has been suffering from the benefit of the profit. It is questioned whether BP's actions after the oil spill has been beneficial for the company. They have received criticism from the public. The public has been threatening their identity from many different angels. Internet has made it possible to spread information much more rapidly than before.

6.2   Conclusion

Facebook has become a new source of expressing public opinion where people can share and read others opinions instantly. It has become important for companies to be prepared and know how to handle Facebook actions. It is important to understand that new threats are coming up all the time and companies have to be prepared. However, Facebook should not be seen as a threat but as an opportunity. Facebook and other social networks are here to stay and companies have to learn how to cope with it.

Corporate Identity is a complex concept and it can be difficult to get a full understanding. It became clear to me that BP is working with its corporate identity and they are trying to cope with the affects of the oil spill.

BP's corporate identity has been affected badly because they have not been able learn from their misstates and improve. It could be that BP is not used to those kinds of threats they have been exposed to and they are therefore surprised and unprepared. Playing with BP's logo such as Greenpeace has been doing is damaging their corporate identity. The oil disaster as such is damaging the company and the Facebook act has even further been harming the corporate identity of BP.

My focus has been how the public opinion has affected the corporate identity. By analyzing accurate sources of public opinion I have concluded that the corporate identity has been affected negatively.

6.3   **Fulfilment of the purpose**

Through analysing the empirical information and connecting the conclusion to the analysis have I been able to show that their corporate identity has been affected negatively.

Giving examples of Greenpeace and Facebook actions adds interest to the thesis. Facebook as such is a new phenomenon, which further adds interest to this thesis. It is obvious to the reader that their corporate identity has been affected negatively and purpose of this thesis has been achieved.

7 Implications & Future Research

7.1.1 *Further Research*

This study has been trying to find out whether the corporate identity has been affected by the public opinion. This study has been applied to BP and their oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 2010. The research has been limited to a short period of time and related to a specific disaster. Following BP could have expanded this research for a longer period of time to investigate how they cope with the corporate identity and change over time.

Another interesting implication could be to compare different companies that have been affected to similar disasters and try to find out how they have been dealing with the corporate identity change. It could be that BP has something to learn by looking at other companies, especially oil companies. Another alternative would have been making interviews with board of directors of BP. Such research should give insight about the management coop and deal with the crises that has accoutred. Seeing how the management thought about their corporate identity and the threats coming up would add an extra viewpoint to this thesis. Further, such a research would have been more time consuming and costly. Expenses coming up with such a research would be travelling and living costs. The aim of this study was not to make interviews but to base my thesis on secondary sources. A thesis with interviews with the board would be different and required more workload for me. Further, such a thesis would have a differently formulated purpose.

7.1.2 *Suggestions to BP*

BP has to make major changes to win back public opinion. It does no longer help to engage in promoting activities or paying search engines. BP has to change its motives, intentions and behaviour to win back public opinion. Providing meaningful action that is matching the scale of the disaster could contribute to construct the brand.

A suggestion to BP is to engage in social media in order to confront the threats but also to build trust. Such actions would overwhelm the collective memories of online communities and not just repair the damage done to BP's reputation by the disaster, but improve it forever. BP has to make change of their actions rather than influence what is already done. Most important, BP has to learn from the disaster and not make the same mistakes again.

7.1.3 *Opinions about BP*

It seems to me that BP has not been acting in their best interest when dealing with the accident. BP has been trying to limit the spread of news by buying search result at Google and also by limiting the employees' possibilities to interact with media. Their actions have been more about protecting the brand rather than acting in the best interest of the people affected. The money spent on advertisement after the disaster could have been better invested in the cleanup process. Further, BP has a responsibility to show transferability and act in a sustainable matter. BP as the biggest oil company has great power and responsibility. It is important for them and the market as a whole that they act in the best possible way. Further, it is expected that a big oil company should be

aware of the risks involved with oil drilling and the possible consequences if things goes wrong.

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