

Reputation as emotional experiences – the use of psychophysiological measurements in corporate reputation research

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Introduction

Few studies of organizational reputation explicitly link the macro-level, sociological phenomenon of reputation with the micro-level psychological phenomenon of emotions. In addition, the study of reputation lacks proper empirical tools to combine these two levels.

We suggest that human emotions should be considered and studied as factors in reputation formation. In this paper we ponder the possibilities psychophysiological study of emotions can offer to organizational reputation research. We describe the experimental protocol for studying reputation and emotions with the psychophysiological methods, present our two on-going research projects and offer some empirical results from our first experiments.

In our studies we adopt the view that emotions guide human cognition and that *reputation as an emotional experience* has a powerful influence on stakeholder decision making. We argue that reputation is a set of beliefs within an individual that both affects and is affected by cognitive and emotional processes. We approach this view of reputation by combining communication research to psychophysiological measurements, which give detailed information on the unconscious emotional and motivational processes. The psychophysiological method uses physiological signals, such as facial electromyography (EMG), electrodermal activity (EDA), electrocardiography (ECG) and electroencephalography (EEG), for investigating different psychological processes (Cacioppo & al., 2000).

The main objective of our research is to examine why and how different dimensions of digital reputation or reputation in wired, open and online environments are associated with various positive or negative emotional and motivational processes. We are also interested in whether the evaluation of reputation by individual test persons is connected to psychophysiological responses evoked by the organizations (and/or their products, services and brands). Through our research projects we are hoping to gain a better understanding of how different emotional experiences within digital environments (news articles, social media content, using web services) influence individual perceptions of the reputation of a certain company.

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Reputation as emotional experiences

We start from the viewpoint that reputation is the overall quality or character of an institution, organization, group of individuals or an individual as seen or judged by a population of individuals. In addition to being viewed as a property of an organization, reputation is also enacted by these people (Dutton & al., 1994), it is a dynamic set of beliefs, evaluations and expectations that is built and modified in communicative actions between different publics over time, providing information on the organization's actions (see e.g. Aula & Mantere, 2008; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Reputation is thus a discursive construction (Dowling, 2006; Deetz, 1986; Czarniawska, 1997), not constant, but varying between different publics and over time.

Reputation is also a word used in common language and therefore is usually widely understood as such. The definition by Merriam-Webster defines reputation as “a: overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general b : recognition by other people of some characteristic or ability”. Hence reputation is not only about stories and thoughts, but also has an evaluative aspect incorporated in it. Compared to the concept of corporate image, reputation is by definition owned by the stakeholders instead of the company; reputation is the mental associations the stakeholder's actually hold (see e.g. Brown & al. 2006). Reputation is a concept and a meaning that is built and modified within the public, in their minds and in their narratives.

From a psychological point of view, individuals form impressions of a company, thus constructing its reputation, primarily through direct experience of the company or its products and services. Research shows that the primary driver of stakeholders' attitudes and their future actions is the direct experience the stakeholders have had with a company (e.g. Kazoleas, Kim & Moffitt 2001). Alternatively or in addition, they form opinions mediated by other people's opinions and influence (e.g. Bromley, 2000). In other words, if reputational experience is lacking, stakeholder will have to turn to reputational information (Mahon & Wartick, 2003; Puncheva, 2008), which can be offered by media, government information or acquaintances – or increasingly commonly by online discussions, online review services and search engines. Bromley (2000) differentiates these two paths of reputation creation as first-order mental representations and second-order collective (social) representations. Goates (2008) likewise distinguishes between these two, naming them experiential reputation and hearsay reputation, of which experiential reputation is generally regarded as more trustworthy.

In sum, reputation, in our view, consists of collections of stories told about an organization, its products, services and is created by stakeholders, which and who in fact through storytelling *define* the organization (see e.g. Smythe & al. 1992). Through the interpretations of stakeholders, corporate reputation is based on the actual actions of the whole company. And importantly, the organization cannot fully define or control their reputation: it's somewhat possible to push the associations to a favorable direction and thus aim to manage reputation, but not control it – that's why it is plausible to say that *reputation cannot be built but it needs to be earned* (Aula & Heinonen 2002).

The connection between reputation and emotions has been operationalized mainly in various reputational metric tools, of which the two most well-known are Reputation Quotient (RQ) and Fortune ratings. Fombrun (1996, 72) states that reputation is about a company's *overall appeal* to all its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals. His reputation meter (RQ, the Reputation Quotient, see Fombrun & al., 2000) is accordingly divided in two broader categories: (a)

emotional appeal and (b) rational appeal. Emotional appeal includes trust, admiration and overall feelings concerning the company. In turn, rational appeal is measured based on product or service quality, leadership, workplace environment, responsibility and financial performance.

Our goal is to justify and define the concept of emotional appeal related to reputation by using psychophysiological measurements, which give us detailed information on unconscious emotional and motivational reactions. We posit, following the views of MacMillian (2005) and Fombrun (1996) that reputation as an emotional experience has a strong impact on actions people take; for instance, positive corporate reputation affects the likelihood of supportive behaviors from all stakeholders (see e.g. Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). Further, as proposed in the reputation in relationships model by MacMillian & al. (2005), the consequences of reputation are defined in terms of stakeholder behavioral intentions, mediated by commitment and trust – and emotions.

Emotions have a strong impact on the actions people take. For example, people who are in a positive frame of mind tend to take more positive actions with more positive perceptions in general, while those with more negative framework tend to be more negative in their actions (e.g. Loewenstein et. al, 2001; Goates, 2008). If an individual is feeling happy (for any reason), they are more likely to make positive judgments about others (e.g. Bower, 1991). Neurobiology has demonstrated that in fact humans cannot even think without emotion, but emotion and cognition are deeply intertwined as on neurological level are the limbic system and the neocortex (Damasio, 2005, 1994). Moreover, affect is recognized as a factor permeating all others in influencing the acquisition, dissemination and utilization of knowledge (e.g. Beesley, 2005). Emotions can thus be seen as further guides to decision making when purchasing goods from one manufacturer instead of another (e.g. Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999).

Thus we argue that reputation is a set of beliefs within an individual that both affects and is affected by cognitive and emotional processes in decision making. We assume that emotions, even if often short-lived experiences, also influence the perceived reputation of a product or the company itself. Our long term aim is to find out whether this assumption holds and if it does, what kind of longer-term influences it has. Based on these arguments, our view of reputation formation is presented in Figure 1 below.

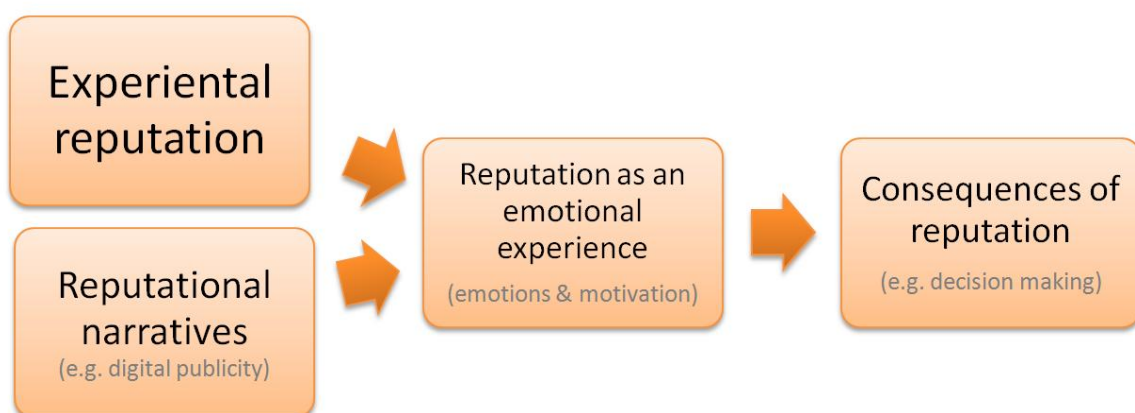


Figure 1: Two paths of reputation formation.

The high-emotion arena of digital publicity

We use the term digital publicity to refer to the novel communicational context of organizational communication. In the digital era, reputation formation is increasingly multi-focal, multi-voiced and multimodal. Advances in technology and the emergence of online and open communication environments have made reputation formation processes more elaborate and complex than ever before. Reputation management is no longer an interactive and unilateral process involving an organization sending out messages in the form of its action and stakeholders receiving those messages. Rather, the receivers are stakeholders communicating with one another (de Bussy & al., 2000), and an organization needs to communicate bilaterally with its stakeholders. In digital publicity, reputation and reputational stories are increasingly built by the public, in a collective process called "mass self-communication" by Manuel Castells (2009).

In addition, reputation formation in digital environments is marked by considerable uncertainty. The traditional word of mouth form of communication takes place within the social networks people have readily around them: family, friends, and colleagues. New digital communication contexts liberate an individual from the context of direct experience, providing him or her with increased autonomy (see e.g. Dellarocas, 2003). Further, in virtual contexts the distinction between institutionalized and personal communication arenas (Aula & Mantere, 2008) is narrower than within traditional media. As the open online institutionalized communication arenas welcome personal voices of often anonymous content contributors, traditional neutralized predominant meanings give leeway to a multiplicity of voices.

This multiplicity of voices may, however, be low on trust as "the Internet is often regarded as a low trust environment, making the distance between reputation claims and their realization particularly noticeable" (Scott & Walsham 2005, 315). Increased uncertainty further emphasizes the role of emotions. Psychological research suggests that in risky, ambiguous situations people are overpowered by their emotions, which lead them to make decisions less based on rational reasoning (LeDoux, 1996; see also Read, 2007; Dunn & al., 2005). This is why the plural-voiced, low-trust digital publicity context actually amplifies the significance of emotions.

Emotions and psychophysiology

In psychological research emotions are seen as biologically based dispositions that have an important role in the determination of human behavior (e.g., Lang, 1995). Most theorists endorse the view that emotions are constituted by three intertwined components: subjective feeling, expressive behavior and physiological arousal, others add motivational state and/or cognitive processing (Lang, 1995). According to the dimensional theory of emotion, all emotions can be placed in a two-dimensional space, defined by valence and arousal (e.g. Lang, 1995; Russell, 1980). The valence dimension varies from unpleasant to pleasant and the arousal defines the level of bodily activation related to the emotional experience and ranges from calm to excited state.

Other scholars have, however, suggested that the two main orthogonal dimensions of emotional experience are negative activation (NA) and positive activation (PA) axes (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). The NA axis extends from high-arousal negative emotions (e.g., fear) to low-arousal positive emotion (e.g. pleasant relaxation), and the PA axis from high-arousal positive emotion (e.g. joy) to low-arousal negative emotion (e.g. depression). It has been suggested that the self-reported NA and PA dimensions represent the subjective components of the two primary motivational systems, that is,

the behavioral inhibition system (BIS) related to withdrawal behavior, and the behavioral activation system (BAS) that is related to approach behavior (e.g. Watson et al., 1999). To simplify, the approach system directs an individual to experiences that produce positive feelings, pleasure and reward. The avoidance system, on the other hand, links to experiences triggering negative emotions. Since having a good reputation is seen to affect the likelihood of supportive behaviors from all stakeholders, this offers a clear connection with reputation, emotional appeal and approachability.

Many psychological studies have reported that emotions influence cognitive processes because affective conditions are used by people as salient information ready to formulate evaluations and judgments (*affect-as-information model*, see Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Forgas, 1995; Scott & Cervone, 2002). Moreover, neuroscientific research has demonstrated that emotions occur without awareness (Zajonc, 1980) and interact with attitudes, preferences, and judgments. As the majority of emotional responses are controlled by biologically given affect programs that operate automatically and independently of any conscious process (Dimberg, 1997), psychophysiological measurements have showed to be more sensitive than traditional measures due to their temporal and validity accuracy (Neumann & al., 2001). Nevertheless, as with any psychological measure, psychophysiological measures are not immune from inherent weaknesses (i.e. costs, ecological validity).

It is well established that Electroencephalography (EEG), Facial electromyography (EMG), Electro-Dermal Activity (EDA) and Electrocardiography (ECG) are useful and valid measures for investigating different emotional and cognitive processes (Cacioppo et al., 2000). Facial EMG has often been used to study the hedonic valence (e.g. Cacioppo et al., 1986). Increases in the activation of the cheek (zygomaticus major) muscle area have been associated with positive emotions, whereas increases in the activation of the brow (corrugator supercilii) muscle region have been associated with negative emotions (Witvliet & Vrana, 1995). Periocular (orbicularis oculi) muscle area activity appears to be particularly high during positively valenced high-arousal emotions (see e.g. Ravaja, 2004). For the measurement of arousal, electrodermal activity (EDA) is an important index. As people experience arousal their SNS (sympatic nervous system) is activated, resulting in increased sweat gland activity and skin conductance. EDA has been shown to correlate with self-reported emotional arousal in studies where affective pictures have been used as stimuli (e.g. Lang & al., 1993).

Electroencephalography (EEG) offers a good time resolution and a moderate spatial resolution for studying brain activation. In this regard, W. Klimesch (1998) well-documented that different EEG frequency bands have been associated with various cognitive, emotional and motivational processes. There is an agreement among the scholars that increased activity in the broad alpha band (8-12 Hz) is inversely related to underlying cortical processing; typically alpha band power decreases when the underlying cortical systems engage in active processing. In addition, frontal alpha asymmetry is a widely used metrics assessing approach/withdrawal motivational behavior (Coan & Allen, 2004). It must be emphasized that frontal asymmetries are not measures of positive or negative affects per se, but they tap a broader motivational tendency towards approach-related or withdrawal-related behaviors and emotions (Allen & al., 2001; Davidson, 1998). Furthermore, increased theta activity (4-6 Hz) is associated with cognitive processing (Klimesch, 1998).

Next we outline two experimental setups that can be used in studying digital reputation and, especially, how it is perceived and processed by an individual, and present some future research directions.

Research design and preliminary results

The aim of our first study was to study the emotional and motivational processes associated with digital reputation using advanced psychophysiological methods, and thus better understand digital publicity and its possible implications to reputation risk management. Considering the psychophysiological method the main purpose of our study was to conduct fundamental research in the study of reputation as emotional experiences using, for example, EEG, facial EMG and EDA measurements. We conducted two experimental settings looking into the psychophysiological effects elicited by reputation and two elements of digital publicity: news messages and peer comments.

Companies used as stimulus material in the experiments were selected from a longitudinal study of Finnish public listed companies, conducted yearly in cooperation with Finnish consultant company Pohjoisranta and Arvopaperi magazine. The study operationalizes and measures reputation using six dimensions, each of which is defined by four sub-attributes. The RepMap meter covers the dimensions of Corporate Culture and Management, Products and Services, Financial Excellence, Community Responsibility, Public Image, and Operational Dynamics (Aula & Heinonen, 2002, Aula & Mantere, 2008).

In choosing companies for our research, we used the entire dataset spanning from 2001 to 2008. Our selection criteria was to choose the best and worst performers as indicated by the yearly "overall reputation index", calculated as the arithmetic, unweighted mean of each of the six reputation sub-dimensions for each year of the longitudinal setting. While each of the six dimensions is its own and unique component, the dimensions share plenty (67%) of common variance as well, indicating that there is a clear common basis shared by the six dimensions; we label this common basis "overall reputation". Overall reputation is a good summary index in this first phase, useful in screening and sampling organizations for further analysis.

To evaluate the advantages of good reputation and disadvantages of bad reputation, we selected the ten best and worst overall performers as indicated by the overall reputation index and for the second experiment the tree top companies from these lists. Before the actual experiments took place the subjects were asked to fill out a RepMap form for all the 20 companies in order to ensure their subjective reputation evaluation could be used when analyzing the results.

The Experiment 1 was done by 53 participants and Experiment 2 by 41 participants, who were graduate and undergraduate students, ranging from 18 to 56 years of age, with mean age of 25 years. An effort was made to recruit participants acknowledged in economy, finance and communication.

Experiment 1 focused on psychophysiological responses during a reputation appraisal process where differing, good- and bad-reputed companies were evaluated by the subject. The companies (N = 20) were visualized using the company names only. Names written with plain text were shown individually in a randomized order while the subject was asked to rate the reputation of each company. Psychophysiological data was collected continuously during the whole session and after

the data collection the analyses were conducted for each of the 6 second segments during which the subject viewed a company name, and a 1 second pre-event baseline was included in the statistical analyses. This procedure is similar to ones used when studying emotions evoked by different types of visual stimuli and it is widely used in psychophysiological basic research (e.g. Aftanas & al., 2004). Our main interest with this experiment was to establish and validate psychophysiological responses related to reputation processing, which we managed to do.

Our hypotheses were:

- H1 Companies with a priori good reputation elicit positive emotion-related psychophysiological responses.
- H2 Companies with a priori bad reputation elicit negative emotion related psychophysiological responses.
- H3 Companies with good reputation elicit approach behavior-related psychophysiological responses, and companies with bad reputation elicit withdrawal behavior-related psychophysiological responses.

Our results confirm the first two hypothesis, thus show that a good reputation company elicits more positive affective reactions measured by the smiling muscles (*orbicularis oculi* as the major effect) and in addition elicits less alpha activation, which refers to attention and cognitive processing (as alpha is inversely related to attention). Likewise, reactions elicited by a bad reputation company include activation of the frowning muscle (*corrugator supercillii*) referring to negative emotions, and higher alpha activation, suggesting decreased attention. These obtained results are a good base to form hypothesis for the following, more targeted, research settings.

In Experiment 2 the main aim was to study how positive and negative news messages on good and bad-reputation companies affect the subject's perception of the reputation of these companies and his or her emotion- and motivation-related psychophysiological responses. We used a 2 x 2 x 2 within-subject design which involved a priori positive or negative news messages of companies with good or bad reputation, accompanied by comments (positive or negative) allegedly made by other readers. The context resembled a simple web page of a newspaper. The actual experiment had 48 trials in total, randomly presented, each of them lasting for 32 seconds.

This research setting enables us to study not only the effect of digital media messages on the company reputation but also the effects of accompanying comments by other readers, thus the approach makes it possible to study the social aspects of the recent development of online media.

Our hypotheses for the second experiment were:

- H4 A positive news message elicits more positive self-reported ratings and psychophysiological activity that is related to positive emotions.
- H5 Negative news messages elicit negative self-reported ratings and psychophysiological activity that is related to negative emotions;

H6 The emotional valence of the other reader's comments is contagious to the subject. That is, a positive news message followed by negative comments will be perceived more negative than a positive news message followed by positive comments, for example.

H7 Positive stimuli (i.e. news) elicit greater approach motivation as indexed by frontal EEG asymmetry.

The main results from the experiment 2 were surprising: stronger psychophysiological reactions (both smiling and frowning muscles in facial EMG) were achieved when the company reputation and news valence were in congruence, thus when positive news was shown of a good reputation company or negative news of a bad reputation company. Similar congruence results were shown between news and comment valence, as the results indicate greater attention and processing through the activation of the frowning muscle (corrugators supercilii) accompanied by higher EEG theta band activation (responses elicited when both news and comments were either positive or negative). Increased bodily activation through skin conductance (EDA) was recorded when the company reputation and comment valence were congruent. This reaction refers to the psychological phenomenon of consistency attraction (also described by Festinger, 1957), and is backed up by the increased attention observed through decreased alpha band activation.

The effects elicited by reputation and news in congruence refer to the interpretative effect caused by reputation, to which we refer as *reputation spiral effect*: messages containing information that supports the company reputation are well accepted and processed, whereas contrasting information causes discomfort and less attention. The difference of the reactions comparing news and comments combined with reputation can refer to source credibility, since the comments are most likely regarded as less trustworthy information. Relying on the self report data we might even say that positive reputation seems to act as a "parachute" for negative comments.

Regarding H7 the measurements showed the opposite: negative news alone regardless of the company reputation elicited greater approach motivation as indexed by frontal EEG asymmetry. This is in line with previous research indicating that negative stimuli generally receive more attention, since they indicate possible danger (e.g. Taylor, 1991; Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999).

Future directions

Our future research builds on the findings made in the first two experiments and aims to find out how audiences' emotional, mental images of media corporations and their brands affect media consumption decisions. In addition, we will find out to what extent the competitive advantage of media corporations can be explained by their emotional reputation when competing on market share and paying customers. We will look into the possibilities offered by psychophysiological research methods to the evaluation of media companies and the content they produce, again combining communication and sociological research to psychophysiological measurements. Our empirical goal is to analyze the ways media corporate reputation is communicated, mediated and interpreted in consumption situations and to build emotional profiles for media consumers based on our measurements and user interviews.

Our research setting is based on the hypothesis that emotional experiences and the actions and decisions they mediate have a significant effect on the willingness of media consumers to use the free and pay services offered by a media company. The question is extremely significant to the

media companies struggling with younger generations' habits of using media. The development of social Internet has revoked the monopoly media corporations used to have to the delivery of mediated content; now journalism-like content is produced on multiple platforms by citizen journalists, bloggers and normal users, and most of this content is available for free. We claim that this increased amount of options and entry points breeds the importance of the content provider's reputation. This is why besides traditional media companies, our project will also study the environments built by news aggregator companies and other online services increasingly used to mediate news content.

We base our hypotheses on the idea of *reputation as a frame*. Communication research has focused on the role of symbolic and communicative power in the society (see. e.g. Habermas & Rehg, 1996; Bordieu & Thompson, 1991; Castells, 2009) and especially to the power utilized by mass media. One of the ways this power is used is through framing: presenting something in a certain frame. Also in reputation research the term frame is used to represent how an organization is framed and thus presented in publicity (see Mahon & Wartick, 2003). We posit that not only the media is framing issues, but also the media company itself or actually its reputation is acting as a frame, influencing how the news actually is interpreted, and also a frame defining the willingness of media users to consume content within that frame, i.e. to consume that specific media. These frames are not meaningless, since they have a strong connection to trust and to human behavior: "People trust others who share their own symbols and interpretative frames as they can predict the behavior associated with those values" (Zucker, 1986; ref. Puncheva, 2008). That is why people use media they can trust and they can associate themselves with.

Reputation theories give us some tools to look at these framing interactions. For example in connection to corporate reputation Mahon & Wartick (2003) define issue reputation, stakeholder reputation and process reputation, each of which are affecting one another through complex interactions. They remind us once more that reputation is not determined solely by organizational action but through stakeholder interactions, produced framing effects and credibility transactions. Thus framing can also be a powerful tool in reputation management.

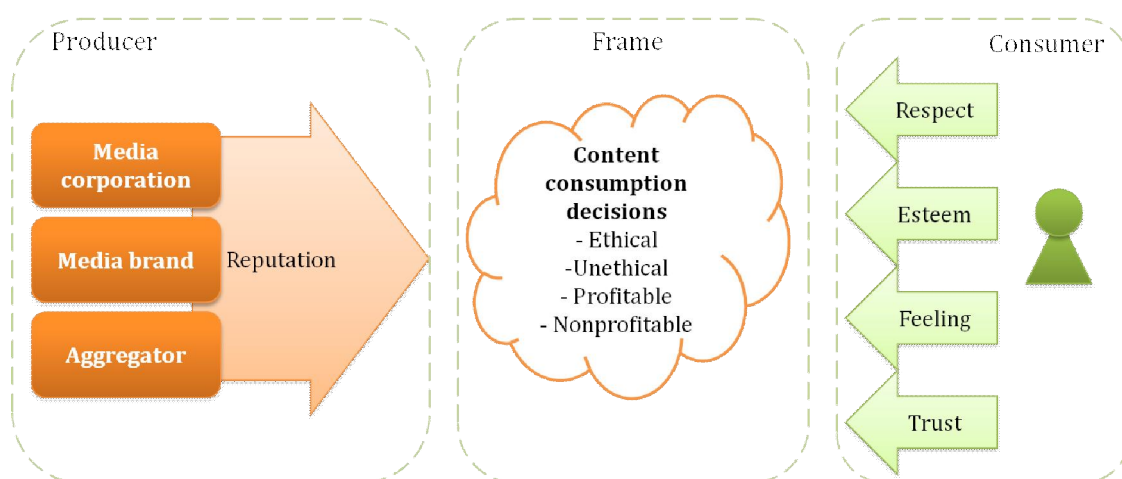


Figure 2: Reputation as a frame in media content consumption

Research questions for our coming studies are:

1. What is the effect of the media service/corporate reputation in media consumption decisions? Through what mechanisms this effect takes action?
2. What are the reputations of media corporations and do the reputational differences explain consumption patterns, thus possibly creating competitive advantage?
3. How can psychophysiological measurements be used in evaluating media content, media services and media corporate reputation?

We are approaching these questions using a three-fold research setting. We start with a content analysis of online media services, tracing how reputation and corporate brand is presented on the web sites and further within aggregate services through which news can be accessed. To cover the riddle of media consumption decisions in detail, we are using both psychophysiological measurements to tap into emotional experiences related to media corporate reputation and content consumption decisions; and interviews using verbal protocol analysis method (see e.g. Kuusela & Paul, 2000), thus placing the interviewees in front of a computer, asking them to do their normal media consumption routine and simultaneously stating arguments for their decisions. The combination of these methods allows us to approach the question of reputational effects in media consumption both on the unconscious emotional level and on the cognitive level exploring how individuals arrive to certain decisions.

Conclusions and discussion

Studies on reputation have connected the level of individual interpretations and human cognition on a theoretical level, but previously a proper method to examine these processes on an empirical level has been missing. Our research taps into the individual level of reputation formation and demonstrates that psychophysiological measurements are a tool, by which this gap can be filled.

Psychophysiological measurements provide several benefits when compared to traditional methods of self-reporting. Psychophysiological data can be collected continuously during the whole experiment (e.g., when interacting with a service) without the need to interrupt the subject to fill in questionnaire items. This also implies that psychophysiological signals have a good temporal accuracy throughout the whole experimental situation under study. Thus, inferences about processing changes during the task can be made. This would not be possible using solely self-reported responses collected at the end of the situation; after all, responses could be heavily affected by the very last moments of a long-duration experimental task. Using psychophysiological measurements it is possible to differentiate between the reactions elicited by, for example, news and comments alone in our second experiment presented above. In addition, self-reported data may be affected by the subject's tendency to answer in a socially acceptable way, whereas with the psychophysiological methods also unconscious processing may be studied.

Besides the ones used in these studies there are various other physiological signals that could be also recorded, like breathing rate, movement of the subject by accelerometers or tracking the gaze or changes in the pupils. However, there are limits to how much wires we can attach to the subjects. Having more than just one or two signals collected is not advisable either, since the interpretation is easier and more valid when there are more psychophysiological signals to look at. Since we are applying the psychophysiological method to a new area, the first experiments give us important guidelines for selecting the best signals for further studies of digital reputation.

One clear limitation posed by the psychophysiological method is the reduced ecological validity due to lab conditions. To ensure right variables are being measured (for example, company reputation instead of a visually appealing logo) it is impossible to fully cover the rich and detailed environment of digital publicity as the research method requires simplistic versions of the stimuli. That is why the preparations need to be made with extreme scrutiny.

Nevertheless, the results obtained from our first experiments firstly show that reputation in fact is at least partly emotional appeal and hence can be measured on an individual level through bodily reactions. Secondly, the results show that the valence of company-related content (e.g. news) also has emotional implications and thus consequences. As the connections between reputation and emotions and the effectiveness of psychophysiological measurements in this research has now been validated, it is possible to build more complicated research settings based on these findings. Further on, we will build on the gained understanding to describe and explain influences that can be evidenced between emotional experiences of individuals and their decision making processes concerning particular organizations and their reputations. Over time, we will be able to leverage such knowledge of reputation and emotions to propose not only *why* but also very specifically *how* to study the extent that the individual shows interest in particular organizations.

As through our future research we get more views to the processes related to actual decision making, we expect psychophysiological measures to yield unambiguous information on emotional, motivational, and brain processes related to digital reputation, working towards providing effective methods and an innovative approach to better understand and predict customer buying behavior, as well as client attitudes and willingness and ability to co-develop service offerings. We are hoping this will help to clarify the connection between reputation, emotional experiences and actual behavior in the marketplace.

In the following stages of our research we will also strive to find best ways to combine the usage of different research methods in the study of reputational experiences and their evaluations. We believe that a cross-methodology approach of combining for example interviews, textual analysis and psychophysiological measurements is the best way to approach the complexity of reputation formation. In addition, the goal in the next stage of our digital reputation research is to design ways by which we can better connect to business realities and, by extension, study the sociological insights that often are behind those realities.

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Project blogs and contact details:

<http://reputationproject.wordpress.com>

<http://media2project.wordpress.com>
