

The impact of Media Engagement on Improving Corporate Reputation: A study of Aramco's Media Communication Strategy

Dr. Adel Alneel

Senior Public Relations Representative

Media Communications and Coordination Department

Aramco, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

adel.bakhiet@aramco.com

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the role of media engagement in enhancing the corporate reputation of Aramco company and to determine the effectiveness of the adopted media strategies in achieving a positive image and building trust with the public and stakeholders. The study also aimed to assess the relationship between media engagement and media strategies in improving corporate reputation, as well as to identify ways to develop these strategies to keep pace with digital and media transformations.

The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, focusing on analyzing participants' opinions regarding the effectiveness of media engagement, its impact on corporate reputation, and the alignment of the company's media strategy with its corporate objectives. The study sample consisted of 250 participants representing various levels of employees and beneficiaries of the company's services. Data were collected using a scientifically designed questionnaire based on the 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the dimensions of media engagement, corporate reputation, and media strategies.

Keywords: Media engagement, corporate reputation, media impact, media communication, brand image, strategic communication

Introduction:

Companies and organizations across various sectors have come to realize that their reputation is no longer solely dependent on the quality of their content, products, or services. It now fundamentally hinges on their ability to achieve a strong media presence through effective media engagement. This engagement enhances their reach, broadens audience interaction, and solidifies their position in their target market.

Media engagement stands out as a crucial factor in boosting the media impact of corporate performance. It is a vital practice that contributes to strengthening corporate media communication. With the increasing importance of this engagement in enhancing corporate reputation, its role has become paramount in improving effectiveness and ensuring that messages reach the target audience efficiently. Media engagement is a pivotal tool in promoting businesses, not only through traditional news coverage but also via digital media platforms and social media, which have transformed the mechanisms of communication and interaction with the public.

2 .Related Studies

2.1 Harmoush's Study (2024), "**The Cultural and Media Role During Major Events: A Case Study of Expo 2020 Dubai**". This paper aimed to analyze and evaluate the role of cultural representation and media engagement during the organization of major events, using Expo 2020 Dubai as a case study. It focuses on how cultural tools can be used to shape a positive image of the United Arab Emirates as a hub for innovation and global communication. Among the key findings of the case study are that organizing major international events is a tool of soft diplomacy that contributes to

enhancing the image of host countries. However, it is crucial to ensure media monitoring and develop plans to avoid media crises. Continuous media monitoring and a constructive response to criticism in the international press are also essential. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of developing strategic plans based on lessons learned to improve the organization of major events in the future.

2.2 Abu Hamed's study (2023), "**The Role of Public Relations in Strengthening the Relationships of International Startups with the Local Community: XNGAGE Digital Solutions as a Case Study**" aimed to identify the role of public relations in strengthening the relationships of international startups with the local community, using XNGAGE Digital Solutions as a case study, through the use of a descriptive-analytical approach.

The study's results showed that the role of public relations in strengthening the relationships of international startups with the local community, using XNGAGE Digital Solutions as a case study, is significant. The study also found that the company's public relations department utilizes social media platforms to communicate with the local community extensively. Furthermore, the company's public relations department contributes significantly to attracting customers and employees.

2.3 Masoud's study (2022), "**A Study of the Impact of Obstacles to Employing Social Media in Public Relations on the Electronic Reputation of Egyptian Tourism Companies**". The study aimed to present and discuss the conceptual framework of electronic public relations and electronic reputation management, in addition to analyzing the relationship between the obstacles that limit the use of social media in Egyptian tourism companies and their ability to employ social media in managing their electronic reputation. The field study was conducted on Category "A" tourism companies in Egypt, where a survey form was designed and distributed to a random sample of tourism companies during May and June 2022. The study reached several conclusions and recommendations.

2.4 The study by Zeng, Sheng, and Jin (2024), "**The Impact of Influencer Reputation on Digital Engagement and Consumer-Brand Relationships**" aimed to identify the sub-elements of influencer value to understand their relationship to digital integration. These sub-elements include attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The study explored how these sub-elements influence digital engagement and sought to understand the causal relationship between digital engagement, consumer-brand relationships, and purchase intentions.

The analysis revealed that, among the sub-elements of the influencer value system, attractiveness and expertise have a significant impact on digital engagement. However, the influencer reputation sub-element was found to have little effect on digital engagement. Digital engagement was found to have a positive impact on consumer-brand relationships, and consumer-brand relationships, in turn, have a positive impact on purchase intentions. Influencer authenticity and self-identity, however, had a moderate impact when attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise influenced consumer-brand relationships.

2.5 Duran and Jimenez (2022), "**Reputation Building Thinking: How Social Media Engagement Should Be Understood for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises**". This study aimed to clarify the role of social media in building the reputation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It begins by acknowledging that while not always infallible, social media platforms possess immense potential in the digital environment. However, it is important to consider that the social media platforms used by SMEs are primarily marketing-focused, encourage customer interaction, and are short-term and results-oriented.

This study discussed the concepts of engagement and reputation, and suggests some limitations for SMEs in achieving a positive reputation. Although social media can manage a company's reputation, this is not always possible if certain important issues related to the nature of SMEs and the nature of social media platforms are not taken into account.

2.6 Lee's study (2021), "**A Study of Exhibition Performance and Exhibitor Efficiency in Overseas Trade Fairs: Company Characteristics and engagement in Exhibitions**" seeks to analyze the performance efficiency of exhibitors in overseas trade fairs and identify the reasons for inefficiency and differences according to their characteristics. The study adopted a theoretical approach based on study in the literature, in addition to an empirical analysis of companies that benefited from policies supporting overseas exhibitions. The results showed that net sales, export volume, product type, frequency of engagement in trade fairs, and the ratio of self-spending to total engagement costs affect export promotion performance. This study gains its importance from the fact that it measured the performance efficiency of exhibitions compared to the inputs contributed by exhibitors in trade fairs.

3 .Problem of the study

The problem addressed by this study lies in identifying the challenges faced by many companies and institutions in enhancing their corporate reputation. The absence of strategic media planning or weak coordination between companies, institutions, and media outlets can lead to a decline in public engagement or a failure to effectively communicate key messages, thus limiting the effectiveness of media efforts.

Therefore, the need arises to study the role of media engagement in strengthening communication strategies and corporate reputation by assessing its impact on improving corporate reputation. Based on the above, we can conclude that the problem of this study is the extent to which media engagement contributes to enhancing communication strategies and corporate reputation.

4 .Significance of the Study

- The study contributes to providing practical recommendations for organizers on how to improve their media engagement strategies to ensure their messages reach their target audience effectively.
- By analyzing the impact of media on corporate reputation, the study provides practical guidance for companies and institutions on how to improve their image and enhance trust.
- The study helps journalists and media organizations understand the factors that lead to more impactful media coverage, which is reflected in the quality of the media content provided.
- The study provides data and analyses those officials and policymakers can use to develop long-term media plans that enhance the reputation of companies and institutions.

5 .Study Objectives

This study aimed to identify the main objective: the role of media engagement in enhancing the reputation of companies and institutions, and to examine the impact of such engagement on reputation enhancement. The following sub-objectives stem from this main objective:

- To study the use of media engagement to enhance the corporate reputation of institutions and companies, and to build a sustainable collaborative relationship that achieves the goals of all parties.
- To study the extent to which media engagement impacts effective promotion and coverage in enhancing reputation, and to identify the factors that contribute to improving public presence and engagement.
- To understand the relationship between the quality of media coverage and the level of enhancement of the public image and corporate reputation of organizers, whether in traditional or digital media.
- To explore and analyze best media practices that contribute to maximizing the impact of media engagement in terms of public engagement, reaching the target audience, and achieving corporate goals.
- To present practical proposals that can help organizers and media professionals develop more efficient media cooperation plans, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of media engagement and contributing to its sustainability.

6 .Study Type

This study falls under the category of descriptive-analytical studies. It aimed to describe and analyze the role of media engagement in enhancing and improving corporate reputation. The study relies on analyzing media engagement, surveying participants' opinions, and using statistical methods to test the relationship between the studied variables.

This type of study depends on data collection and analysis, aiming to portray and analyze the nature, characteristics, and features of a specific population and the frequency of the phenomenon (Poul D. Leady, 1993). Descriptive studies do not stop at merely describing the phenomenon; they extend to describing the relationships and their interrelationships. This contributes to achieving a high degree of accuracy in formulating results and facilitates generalization and prediction (Arthur, Techniques, 1994).

7 .Methodology

Given the study problem, the most suitable methodology for achieving logical conclusions is the descriptive-analytical approach. This approach focuses on examining current facts related to the nature of the phenomenon (Mohammad Hussein, Samir, 1998). The survey method also helps in discovering specific relationships between different phenomena

within the study framework. This process allows us to identify accurate information related to the subject of the study (Badr, Ahmed, 1986). This methodology aims to record, analyze, and interpret the phenomenon in its current state, after collecting the necessary and sufficient data about it and its components through a set of organized procedures that define the type of data, its source, and the methods of obtaining it (Abdul Majeed, Mohammad, 1992).

The descriptive-analytical approach contributes to analyzing the role of media engagement in enhancing corporate reputation, with a focus on its impact on improving corporate reputation. This approach relies on collecting data about the nature of media engagement and the engagement strategies between the company and the media, and then analyzing this data to reveal its impact on the success of corporate reputation efforts.

8 .Study Variables

8.1 Independent Variable: Media engagement

8.2 Dependent Variable: corporate Reputation

9 .Study Community

The study community comprises all stakeholders involved in Aramco's media engagement initiatives. This includes:

- Executives, marketing and public relations teams, and media relations officers within the company. They are targeted to understand the company's media engagement strategies and their impact on the success of reputation enhancement efforts.
- Employees in traditional media (newspapers, television, and radio) as well as digital media (websites, blogs, and social media platforms). They are targeted to analyze their coverage of Aramco events and the media engagement strategies employed.
- Individuals who attend or follow Aramco events, whether in person or through media and digital platforms. They are targeted to measure the impact of media engagement on their decision to participate and the impression they form of the organization based on media coverage.

10 .Study Sample

This study is based on a convenience sample, and the sample size was determined to be 250 participants, distributed across three main categories. The first category includes officials and organizers within Aramco, including executives, public relations and marketing officers, and event organizers, with the aim of analyzing the media cooperation strategies adopted by the organization. The second category includes media professionals and journalists who deal with the organization, working in traditional media such as newspapers and television, in addition to digital journalists on websites and social media platforms, in order to study the nature of their coverage of events and the extent of the impact of media cooperation on the quality of the published media content. The third category includes the target audience for attending exhibitions and conferences, who attended Aramco events or followed them through various media outlets.

11 .The Importance of Reputation for Companies

Companies and institutions strive to enhance their corporate reputation as it is the core of their operational processes and the driving force behind their service and production activities. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that they continuously implement initiatives, programs, and plans that support their reputation and give them a significant long-term competitive advantage.

This reputation is built through a set of mental images that generate a positive public opinion about the company. Corporate reputation is one of the most important elements contributing to an organization's success, establishing its brand in the market, and maintaining its customer base. Any damage to its reputation can harm the brand and cause significant losses for the organization (Omar, Yahya El-Sayed, 2022).

Corporate reputation plays a significant role in the performance of institutions and companies by building trust and loyalty, attracting investments, drawing in talent and expertise, providing protection during crises, and enhancing market value. Based on the experiences of institutions and companies in providing their services and products to the public, building a positive reputation relies on their ability to manage situations they encounter with customers and their

capacity to offer distinctive solutions to their problems, in accordance with the values they uphold (Omar, Yahya Elsayed, 2022).

12 .Strategies for Enhancing Corporate Reputation

Reputation enhancement strategies are based on building an integrated system of values and continuous interaction. In the information age, companies enhance their reputation through proactive disclosure of supply chains, sustainability reports, and even the challenges they face. Transparency in presenting operational data builds a wall of trust that protects the company during crises.

In this context, media engagement is one of the most important strategies for building and enhancing corporate reputation. This is achieved by building long-term collaborative relationships with journalists and influential media platforms to ensure continuous and fair coverage that highlights the company's achievements and clarifies its positions regularly. Building a good corporate reputation is determined by a company's success in achieving effective communication within its ranks and among its human resources at all management levels. Effective internal communication is a key factor in companies' success in performing their tasks, developing their internal and external relationships, and implementing a distinctive communication plan based on clear scientific principles (Omar, Yahya El-Sayed, 2022).

13 .The Role of Media in Assessing Corporate Reputation

The media plays a crucial role in assessing corporate reputation, serving as a platform for verification and credibility. It also has the power to direct public attention toward specific issues. For example, if the media focuses on a company's sustainability efforts, it enhances the public's perception of its reputation in this area.

Furthermore, the media plays a pivotal role in assessing reputation during crises. Balanced media coverage that grants the company the right of reply helps mitigate damage, while a lack of media coordination can lead to a rapid erosion of reputation. In addition, the media contributes to assessing a company's ethical values by highlighting its community initiatives, transforming these initiatives from mere internal activities into a global reputational asset.

14 .Aramco:

Aramco one of the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals companies. Its global team makes an impact across all its operations, from supplying the world with vital oil to developing new energy technologies. Aramco is committed to the reliability and sustainability of its resources, which helps drive growth and productivity worldwide.

Aramco traces its beginnings to 1933 when a Concession Agreement was signed between Saudi Arabia and the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL). A subsidiary company, the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC), was created to manage the agreement. Later renamed Aramco (Arabian American Oil Company), crude oil production reached 500,000 barrels per day in 1949 (<https://www.aramco.com/ar/about-us/our-history>).

The company's vision is to be the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals company, operating safely, sustainably, and reliably. The company strives to provide its shareholders with the ability to realize value across various crude oil price cycles by maintaining its leadership in oil and gas production, generating greater value across the hydrocarbon value chain, and profitably growing its portfolio (<https://www.aramco.com/ar/investors/annual-report/strategy>).

On December 11, 2019, the company was officially listed on the Saudi Stock Exchange, making it the largest initial public offering in history and the world's most valuable publicly traded company (https://200listedsecurities.saudiexchange.sa/Resources/200ListedSecurities/ar/pdf/saudi_aramco.pdf).

14.1 Aramco: Current Status and Future Prospects

Aramco main business segments are exploration and production, refining, chemicals, and marketing, supported by general business activities.

The company's exploration and production business consist of the exploration, development, and production of crude oil, condensates, natural gas, and natural gas liquids (Aramco, Annual Report 2024, p. 16).

The refining, chemicals, and marketing business primarily includes refining, chemicals, base oils, lubricants, retail, distribution, supply, trading, and power generation activities (Aramco, Annual Report 2024, p. 16).

14.2 Aramco's Communication Strategy Framework

The executive communication strategy aligns with Aramco's vision and corporate strategy. It defines its strategic communication objectives and key strategic communication goals. The strategy also identifies the pillars that guide the executive communication approach and the entire content plan. All content created must reinforce and support these pillars, in accordance with the most important stakeholder groups (2022-2024 Corporate Communication Strategy, 2022 Content Plan Manual, Company Documents). The company's strategic focus areas include:

1. Expanding oil and gas production to reinforce the company's leading position.
2. Developing one of the world's largest integrated refining and marketing companies.
3. Reducing carbon emissions in the company's operations and developing low-carbon products and solutions.
4. Localizing the supply chain and supporting new business ventures to enhance long-term reliability and competitiveness (2022-2024 Corporate Communication Strategy, 2022 Content Plan Manual).

14.3 Aramco Strategic Communications Objectives

Aramco's communications strategy integrates and enhances the company's communications to positively influence stakeholder perceptions, decision-making processes, and support a favorable operating environment. Strategic communication objectives include building effective positioning platforms and integrated communication solutions through the following:

1. Enhancing awareness of Aramco's practical approach to a sustainable and inclusive energy transition.
2. Enhancing brand awareness, particularly in key Asian markets.
3. Developing continuously improved content and implementing enhanced campaigns across various channels in line with global trends (2022-2024 Corporate Communication Strategy, 2022 Content Plan Manual).

The strategy also aims to enhance the company's reputation among key stakeholders to incentivize positive decisions and behaviors through the following:

1. Enhancing reputation and fostering supportive behaviors among key stakeholders across all regions.
2. Elevating reputation-building initiatives and mitigating their impact to the company level.
3. Demonstrating added value through strategic integration and diversification for Aramco (2022-2024 Corporate Communication Strategy, 2022 Content Plan Manual).

The strategy also works to protect and influence future operating environments through the following:

1. Safeguarding the company's reputation in the areas of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and other key issues.
2. Prioritizing ESG reporting, climate change, energy transition, and the pursuit of carbon neutrality.
3. Demonstrating leadership in technological innovation for sustainable solutions (2022-2024 Corporate Communication Strategy, 2022 Content Plan Manual).

14.4 Executive Communications and Media Objectives

The Executive Communications and Media Coordination Department seeks to achieve several objectives aligned with the company's strategy, including:

- Driving commercial growth.
- Strengthening Aramco's position as a preferred partner in key growth markets in Asia.
- Supporting the growth and integration of the refining and marketing sector, including products and retail.
- Highlighting the expansion of the gas sector and its role in the transformation.
- Showcasing progress in growth sectors: manufacturing, construction, and transportation.
- Contributing to improving the work environment.
- Highlighting tangible progress towards achieving carbon neutrality and sustainability goals.
- Guiding the energy transition conversation towards providing reliable, sustainable, and affordable energy.

- Demonstrating technological leadership in critical energy transition areas by leveraging innovations in transportation, materials, and non-metallic solutions.
- Maintaining Aramco's position as a responsible corporate citizen in all host communities worldwide.
- Enhancing Aramco's position as an employer of choice for local and global talent (2022-2024 Corporate Communication Strategy, 2022 Content Plan Manual Company Documents).

The department implements detailed action plans regarding media practice aimed at enhancing corporate reputation, including: executive interviews, media engagement, exclusive content, media visits, media partnerships and sponsorships, coverage of executive agendas, and preparation of appropriate media content (media briefings, talking points, press releases, media circulars, official statements).

15 .Data Collection Tool

This study relies on the questionnaire as the main data collection tool, which will be designed to measure the opinions of organizers, media professionals, and the target audience regarding the impact of media engagement on corporate reputation, and the extent to which media cooperation contributes to improving corporate reputation. The questionnaire may also be supported by personal interviews with media professionals and event organizers to obtain more in-depth insights into effective media coverage strategies. In addition, media content analysis will be used to study the nature of press and digital coverage of the company's activities, which helps in assessing its impact on the audience and the image of the organizing body.

16 .Validity and Reliability Procedures

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was verified by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficients between the questionnaire items, their respective dimensions, and the total scale score. Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the instrument.

16.1 Internal Consistency Validity

To verify the internal consistency of the scale, the researcher administered it to a pilot sample of 60 individuals from outside the main study population. Pearson's correlation coefficients were then calculated between the score of each item and the total score of its respective dimension, as well as between the score of each item and the total scale score, using the SPSS statistical software. These procedures yielded the results shown below:

Table. (1) Indicators of internal consistency validity through Pearson correlation coefficients for statements regarding the role of media engagement in enhancing the effectiveness of media work

No	Statement	Connection with dimension	Correlation with the scale
.1	There is a clear policy in place to regulate media engagement within the company.	.712(**)	.593(**)
.2	Employees are encouraged to engage with traditional and digital media.	.764(**)	.598(**)
.3	The company uses social media platforms to enhance media engagement.	.802(**)	.584(**)
.4	The company provides employees with the necessary training for effective media engagement.	.751(**)	.596(**)
.5	Media engagement contributes to improving the quality of the company's media messages.	.786(**)	.676(**)
.6	Media engagement enhances the speed of response to events and crises.	.782(**)	.677(**)
.7	Media engagement contributes to increasing reach to the target audience.	.782(**)	.655(**)
.8	Media engagement contributes to building a positive image for the company.	.765(**)	.697(**)
.9	Media engagement helps improve relationships with stakeholders.	.791(**)	.729(**)
.10	The company faces difficulties in effectively organizing media engagement.	.407(**)	.330(**)

**The correlation is statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.01$).

The results in Table (1) show that all Pearson correlation coefficients between the statements of the dimension "The Role of Media engagement in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Media Work," the dimension itself, and the scale as a whole are statistically significant at the ($\alpha = 0.01$) level, with values ranging from 0.407 to 0.802. This indicates high internal consistency and good statement validity.

The highest correlations were for the third statement (Using Social Media Platforms: 0.802 with the dimension, 0.584 with the scale), followed by the fifth statement (Improving the Quality of Messages: 0.786). The tenth statement (Organizational Difficulties: 0.407) recorded the lowest value, which is still relatively positive and strong, indicating the overall coherence of the scale.

16.2 Data Analysis

To analyze the study results, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. The statistical methods appropriate to the nature of the data were employed as follows:

- Percentages and Frequencies: These were primarily used to determine the frequency of demographic variables and to describe the study sample.
- Cronbach's Alpha Test: This was used to verify the reliability of the questionnaire.
- Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations: These were used in descriptive statistics to determine the role of media engagement in enhancing the reputation of companies and institutions, and to study the impact of engagement on reputation enhancement.
- Pearson Correlation Coefficient: To measure the degree of correlation. This test is based on studying the relationship between two variables. It has been used to calculate internal consistency, construct validity of the questionnaire, and the relationship between the study variables.

17 .Results

- Media engagement plays a positive and effective role in enhancing the effectiveness of media work within Aramco by improving the quality of media messages, increasing the speed of response to events and crises, and building a positive public image among the public and stakeholders.
- The importance of using integrated and diverse media strategies in improving corporate reputation, protecting the company's public image, enhancing its credibility, and building trust with the public was highlighted, noting some variation in the assessment of the impact of media criticism and negative coverage.
- Aramco's media strategy is effective, focusing on unifying media messages, building a positive public image, and enhancing the company's position both locally and internationally.
- Participants were aware of the importance of developing future media engagement strategies through media innovation, digital data analysis, and the use of modern interaction tools.
- A strong correlation exists between the use of effective media strategies and the level of success in improving corporate reputation. Similarly, a positive correlation exists between the effectiveness and dynamism of media engagement and the company's credibility and trustworthiness.

18 .Recommendations

- Aramco should expand its media engagement across all digital and traditional platforms, focusing on providing diverse and balanced content.
- Adopt clear and targeted media frameworks when presenting company activities and news, emphasizing positive aspects and achievements, and minimizing the impact of negative news and rumors.
- Develop effective mechanisms for rapid response to negative news and developments, ensuring control over media messaging and maintaining the company's credibility.
- Aramco should enhance its use of digital analytics tools and audience data to understand audience interests and media behaviors, while developing innovative content that aligns with digital transformation.
- Aramco should develop a comprehensive media plan that connects all different media channels, both traditional and digital, and ensures consistency in media messages and integration of frameworks.

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