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**Do consumers really care about corporate responsibility: highlighting the  
attitude-behaviour gap?**

**by**

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**Abstract**

According to the press in recent months a good corporate reputation for responsible marketing is a key element in business success. One justification for this is the assumption that consumers are interested in how company's behave and this has an influence upon their consumption behaviour. There is also the suggestion that a financial payoff is to be gained from good behaviour. Conflicting reports in previous research cast doubt upon the reliability of these assumptions, and there are few studies which unequivocally support positive consumer purchasing in return for responsible marketing. This paper reviews current opinion and evidence in relation to the growing interest in corporate reputation and reports findings from focus group research which casts doubt upon the efficacy of corporate reputation to influence positive consumer purchase behaviour.

**Keywords:****Corporate responsibility****Consumers****Purchase behaviour**

## **Introduction**

The last few years have seen growing interest in the way that business behaves. Public organisations, the government, consumer groups and the media have all raised concerns about certain unsavoury business activities (Osborn 1999; Smith and Quelch 1993; Elliott 1990). Recent high profile cases such as Shell's Brent Spar fiasco, Ford's racism in Dagenham and British Airways 'dirty tricks' campaign against Virgin have raised public awareness to the negative side of business activity. Such poor behaviour has provoked others to consider the value and vulnerability of their own image, and corporate reputation management has become a major concern. There is a universal truth within business circles that organisations need to maintain public confidence in the legitimacy and integrity of their operations and business conduct. To undermine this 'licence to operate' by behaving unacceptably is to expose your organisation to a range of sanctions from the public (RSA Inquiry 1995).

However, so far this assumption has not fully been tested. How true is it to say that consumers will react unfavourably towards a company which commits commercial sins? What form will that reaction take; mere vocal dissent or full product boycott? If consumers are shown not to be that interested in corporate reputation, what does that say about the millions of pounds being spent by companies on reputation strategies? Are consumers really that important; would firms do better to target their efforts at other stakeholders such as financiers and employees? This paper will firstly define what is meant by corporate reputation, examine the literature to date in this field and conclude by discussing evidence from focus group research which suggests that there may be flaws in the inherent belief that consumers care about corporate reputation.

### **What do we mean by 'corporate reputation'?**

Corporate reputation means many things to many people, but there is general agreement that it focuses upon stakeholder perceptions concerning an organisation's performance

and behaviour. The belief is that if the perceptions are positive, the reputation will be enhanced and the stakeholders will be supportive. An organisation's reputation is the sum of every activity it undertakes which impacts upon the community, intentionally or unintentionally. This reputation may be perceived differently by each stakeholder (Saxon 1998), and past perceptions of behaviour inevitably influence the future expectations of each stakeholder. Potentially those expectations exert an influence on the purchasing behaviour of that public.

Insert Figure One about here

### **What makes a 'good' reputation**

Corporate reputation is the sum of many factors, some of which are suggested by Figure One. Management Today publish an annual chart of Britain's 'Most Admired' Companies rated upon, for example, quality of management, financial performance, capacity to innovate, as well as community and environmental performance. Regularly certain names dominate the lists; Marks and Spencer, Tesco, BT and Cadbury. Central to the Management Today survey is the breadth of factors upon which reputation rests, since different stakeholders value different strengths. What is more certain is that business leaders today consider corporate reputation to be a crucial element of organisational success (RSA Inquiry 1995). Fisher (1996) describes how more companies are making it an explicit corporate goal to raise their position in Fortune's annual survey of corporate reputation; some companies even tie executive bonuses to their performance in these stakes. Saxon (1998) cites the development of the role of 'chief reputation officers' whose job is to manage the firm's image, while elsewhere CEO's are percolating down the need for all employees to protect the company's image. One asks why today is this more true perhaps than in the past? What companies are finding is that it is crucial to differentiate themselves from their rivals, and the 'something else' they need would seem to be 'reputation' (Trapp 1998). Trapp suggests that consumers vote with their wallets for reputable companies, as in the case of the Body Shop or Ben and Jerry's. The idea is that the companies stand for something which 'touches' the consumer, and as such has the potential to enhance corporate reputation. This interest in corporate reputation looks set to grow beyond 2000, with greater attention in public relations being paid to managing

corporate image particularly with the greater potential risks that companies face from an astute public interest in their activities (Patterson 1993). Media interest in corporate crises has grown, and reputation management is no longer a peripheral fad but a core business function, as PriceWaterhouseCoopers' 'Reputation Assurance' scheme would indicate (Caulkin 1998).

### **Why does good reputation matter?**

A company's reputation encompasses the public's beliefs about it based upon their experience of its behaviour, its products, what they have heard about it and read about it. One can have a good reputation or a bad reputation with the public, or perhaps even worse still, no reputation. A reputation has to be earned, and most companies would desire a positive reputation if given the choice primarily because current wisdom suggests that it will assist an organisation to sustain competitive advantage among its peers. Saxon (1998) suggests that reputation is linked to various outcomes including return to investors, lower costs of capital, stock price, and the likelihood of successful partnerships and alliances. Many other benefits are cited in the literature, including an ability to attract top talent and extend product offerings (Caminiti 1992; Bainbridge 1997).

More commonly suggested is the potential benefit a good reputation will have in its presumed effect on consequent stakeholder behaviour, particularly consumers. The argument put forward is that corporate reputation is augmented due to the emergence of the more sophisticated and discerning consumer, aware of advertising manipulation, and presented with diverse competitive offerings from a range of sources (Caulkin 1998). Reputation is believed in some cases to be used as a criterion in purchasing decisions, contributing to the sales of a product, while conversely, a bad reputation may even contribute to product rejection or avoidance by consumers and stakeholders. It is not simply about 'being liked'; hard-nosed commercial gain drives the intense focus upon corporate reputation (Fisher 1996). The issue of corporate reputation has received a lot of

positive press and faced little challenge, but is business confidence in this panacea justified?

Certainly corporate reputation is built upon more than financial success. Caminiti (1992) cites superior quality and reliability in products and services as a major factor, while 'doing the right thing' in terms of the treatment of employees, society, customers and the environment is another key factor (Vergin and Qoronfleh 1998). Historically 'new consumerism' with its vocalised dissatisfaction with inferior product performance, unsafe and unsound business practices and social issues has played its part in questioning the traditional assumptions of the original marketing concept (Abratt and Sacks 1988). Smith's (1995) 'caveat venditor' position may not yet have been reached, but certainly 'consumer sovereignty' is the position in which many marketers find themselves as we enter the new millennium. Companies have had to pay attention to the criticism which taints the whole business community when offenders are brought to the attention of the public. The result has been that many companies are responding by taking a socially responsible approach to their business. Typical examples are B&Q's anti-ageist employment policies, Levi Strauss's rejection of sweat shop labour or Burger King's inner-city educational programmes. The feeling is that the interests of business will be served by being 'nice', not least the contribution to the bottom line. Other companies contribute percentage profits to charity, or invest in ethical funds to the tune of two hundred billion dollars every year (Verschoor 1997).

Not everyone agrees with these charitable strategies, and the long established views of Friedman (1970) and Levitt (1958) are still echoed today by cynics who agree with their proclamations that long-run profit maximisation is the only true key to success. Nevertheless, there is a hostile environment ready to face any company which today acts in a socially irresponsible manner. The speed and scope of media reporting, and the reach of global communications such as the Internet mean that business crises are not only more readily reported but also more widely (Fry 1997; Caulkin 1998). Public Relations Journal reported that news coverage of business 'crises' had increased by 45%, and that most

television news departments had teams specifically focusing upon consumer complaints and business mistakes (Patterson 1993). Social activists such as Greenpeace, or Friends of the Earth today are more professional, radical and effective in their vilification of corporate wrongdoing than in the past, while legislation which demands disclosure of information and public accountability is driving the corporate desire to set higher standards. It has been shown that a stock of goodwill stands a company in good stead when faced with a crisis, as demonstrated by Marks and Spencer when under a cloud of child labour allegations, and British Airways who weathered the Virgin scandal. Hypocrisy if uncovered is rarely tolerated as Texaco found when their policy of 'dignity and advancement for employees' was exposed as a sham in the discovery of institutionalised corporate racism. An expensive lawsuit in 1996 publicised their shortcomings causing a fall in stock value of one billion dollars. That Texaco suffered so publicly and financially highlights the issue of the good deeds/good profits proverb. Several authors have suggested that a company who balances stakeholder interests over mere shareholder interests will do better (Dragon International 1991; Caulkin and Black 1994; Verschoor 1997). However support for this view has not been unequivocal, and a study by Griffin and Mahon (1997) on the chemical sector found a more varied level of corporate social performance vis a vis financial performance. Although the relationship between good deeds and profits is inconclusive, most studies appear to suggest a positive link (Russo and Fouts 1997; Kangun and Polonksy 1995). Griffin and Mahon (1997) point out that twenty five years of incomparable results and methodological variety make it difficult to answer the question definitively.

### **Do consumers really care?**

It is being suggested that individualism and an interest in benefits beyond material satisfaction are emerging as powerful consumer trends. Forte and Lamont (1998) feel that consumers are increasingly making purchases on the basis of the firms role in society. Corporate behaviour (see Figure Two) is cited as an important determinant in the decision making process (Dragon International 1991). Vershoor (1997) suggests 75% of



consumers in one study claim they would switch brands and retailers to support a good cause linked to a product. The Cone and Roper study cited in Simon (1995) found that 85% of respondents had a more positive image of a company that supported something they cared about, with 51% saying they would be more likely to pay more for a product or service associated with a cause important to them. Roberts (1996) also identified the existence of the 'socially responsible consumer', while Creyer and Ross (1997) found that a company's level of ethical behaviour is an important consideration during the purchase decision. They found that consumers do expect ethical behaviour from companies (at least in the USA) and they were willing to reward ethical behaviour and pay higher prices for that firm's product. However, the study revealed that the products of unethical firms are still bought, but that consumers expected them to be cheaper. The 'punishment' is the inability to charge higher prices. The Cone and Roper study found a gap between attitude and purchase behaviour, where although respondents had socially responsible attitudes, only 20% had actually purchased something in the last year because the product was associated with a good cause. This attitude gap was also admitted by Roberts (1996).

Insert Figure Two about here

What seems to be emerging is that although consumers express willingness to make ethical purchases linked to good reputation, the reality is more likely to be that responsible corporate behaviour is not the most dominant criterion in their purchase decision. Price, quality and convenience are still the most important decision factors with consumers purchasing for personal reasons rather than societal. The Dragon International Study (1991) and the Cone and Roper (Simon 1995) study raised some interesting aspects of consumer purchase behaviour in relation to corporate reputation and responsible behaviour. Through focus group discussions the attitudes of consumers were investigated with the following findings being revealed:

1. Consumers are interested in corporate reputation, and are concerned about issues that do not directly affect themselves. Their purchasing decisions may be more discriminatory if they were given more information about ethically and socially responsible activities.
2. Consumers had not been active in linking purchase behaviour decisions to responsible corporate behaviour, but there was interest in this link.
3. Consumers recognise the economic objectives companies must fulfill and do not expect them to solve the world's ills. However, there are certain standards expected re: the environment, employee welfare and equal opportunities.
4. Consumers are more likely to support positive actions than to punish bad behaviour. Boycotting was unlikely if the product was one they relied upon.
5. New factors were entering the arena upon which companies were being evaluated such as environmental performance and community involvement.
6. Only 26% of respondents could name socially responsible companies, and only 18% could name a 'least socially responsible' firm.

What these findings reveal is that many consumers are relatively uninformed about responsible corporate behaviour and activities. It would seem that Caminiti's view that "if the eighties are remembered fondly for anything it will be that they created the sharpest, most educated consumers marketers have ever faced" only partly holds true. These studies demonstrate that at this point in time social performance and corporate reputation may not be as important in influencing consumer purchase decisions as general consensus might have us believe.

Indeed, the idea that consumers should be a main target for corporate activities related to responsibility and reputation building may itself be inherently flawed. Other groups - government regulators, activists, city financiers, industry press and employees - may be more responsive than consumers to the efforts of reputation management.

## **The study**

Because of the lack of consensus over consumer attitudes and behaviour towards corporate reputation, the authors felt it would be helpful to investigate the situation further. Dragon International (1991) summed up past research by concluding that the link between purchasing decisions and responsible corporate behaviour was still in the early stages, but likely to develop in the future. Consumers did not see corporate reputation as a substitute for product quality, but rather that it would reinforce decisions. We are now almost nine years on from that study; has that link strengthened, or are consumers still reluctant to translate attitudes to purchases?

The study aimed to investigate the following questions raised by past research:

- is the link between purchase decision and responsible corporate behaviour still in the early stages of development?
- has the link developed sufficiently to justify current interest in corporate reputation by business?
- does the attitude-behaviour gap identified in the past still exist?
- are consumers aware of the activities of companies?
- what corporate behaviour issues are important to consumers?

Drawing on past research by Dragon International as a framework, qualitative research was conducted in the form of focus group discussions, based on an unstructured set of questions. Two groups of participants were involved; the gender balance was 50:50 male to female; one group were under 35, the other over 35 years. To gauge broad based opinion the profile of the participants included university students, management professionals, skilled blue collar workers and retired people, drawn from a convenience sample. The students and management professionals were university educated, while the other respondents were educated to secondary school level. The method of research was

intended to replicate past studies, while allowing in-depth discussion of motivations, knowledge and opinions. This can reveal a richer vein of information not always possible through qualitative routes. It would also allow more probing of the attitude-behaviour gap than questionnaires might permit, while the group dynamics of focus groups can stimulate an interplay between respondents which can yield more detailed discussion than independent contributions. An obvious limitation is that the group may not be wholly representative of the population, and replication of the results may not be possible. However, the disadvantages of this form of research are balanced by the need to gather broad-based information within a free flowing discussion. Although a discussion guide existed this was not followed dogmatically, allowing for issues to arise independently, while ensuring all areas of importance were addressed.

### **The findings**

When asked if they were aware of any positive or negative behaviour by companies respondents demonstrated low levels of general awareness. Asked for examples, several cited the Body Shop as displaying environmental awareness, and Sainsbury's and Tesco were known for their 'computers for schools' programmes. Generally participants stated they didn't really know much about corporate activities, although Nestle, Exxon and the Midland bank were all named as offenders. The overall opinion was that other than the media coverage of controversial cases there was little information available on corporate behaviour which caused their own low levels of awareness. Participants were then given details of several high profile cases of 'good and bad' corporate behaviour and asked whether they were aware of these, and how they felt about them. All of the participants were aware of the Exxon Valdez oil spill; a few knew of B&Q's employment policy but not their community work. Only about half of the respondents had knowledge of the Shell Brent Spar incident, or the BA-Virgin activities, despite these having been high profile media stories. A few knew of Levi Strauss's good deeds, and Nestle's baby food scandals, but a list of other high profile cases were unknown. Interestingly, once

participants were informed of Texaco's past policy of not advancing the careers of ethnic minorities, they generally voiced unhappiness, with one participant stating,

“I think if I'd known about this it might stop me buying my petrol from there as I wouldn't like it if this happened to me”.

This suggests the possibility that some consumers may be influenced by negative information relating to corporate behaviour. There was less enthusiasm for the Co-op Bank's ethical investment policy as participants questioned the financial wisdom of their blacklist. One respondent revealed that they were less interested in ethical investing than getting the best financial return, and discriminating against certain companies might jeopardise that aim. There was definite scepticism about corporate involvement with charity. Most felt it was done for commercial gain rather than kindness, with a view to making companies look good and influence consumer purchasing.

The level of interest that the participants held in how companies behaved was mostly limited to, as one person put it, “what they can provide for me”, although if they were to be personally negatively affected by a company's behaviour the respondents would want to know. There was general agreement that companies should put something back into the community given that the community “allows them to be there in the first place” and “especially when some companies make millions”. However, all participants felt that the past behaviour of companies was not an important consideration in their purchasing behaviour. One person stated that they bought Nestle chocolate despite knowing about the baby food scandal, while another stated that although it crossed their mind, they tended not to act on those thoughts. Others stated that since they knew little about the issues, they gave reputation no thought in their purchase behaviour. The overall consensus was that if a company produced a product they liked and had always bought, they would find it difficult to boycott. The most important influences on purchase behaviour were price, cost/value, quality, and brand familiarity. Respondents neither favoured good behaviour nor boycotted poor behaviour by companies.

When asked if the availability of more information would influence their opinions either way, the majority of respondents stated that it would make little difference to their purchasing. One respondent even stated that more information would be unwelcome because “this makes buying difficult”. It was clear from the opinions expressed that they would not buy from even the “most well behaved company if their products cost more than the others”. Finally the groups were asked if companies should publicise their good deeds more widely. This was seen as acceptable as long as companies did not “sell themselves using this information” or become “too repetitive”, but again it was still felt that such publicity would have little impact on purchase behaviour.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the focus group study raises some interesting and perhaps rather disheartening issues for those engaged in promoting their corporate reputation, as well as consumer activists and pressure groups. Awareness of company activity was very low, both in the case of negative and positive reputations. Although the media are covering such stories more often, and business activity has risen in this area, the effect is not filtering through to the average consumer. There was little specific knowledge of either wrongdoing or responsible behaviour in relation to individual firms, rather respondents spoke of general ‘business’ misdemeanours. This could suggest that individual firms have little to fear on a micro level, however, it may also suggest that ‘one bad apple’ taints an industry collectively. If this is so then there is wisdom in industries ensuring that all parties are socially responsible to avoid everyone being contaminated by the actions of those less benevolent players. It is true that these respondents may not be wholly representative of the general population, but they are significant enough to suggest that the image of the sophisticated and discerning consumer may not quite be reality. These findings also hint that the supposed payback from a good reputation may not be as effective as first thought. Earlier in the decade Dragon International suggested that more information would raise awareness of corporate activity and influence consumer

purchasing. However, this group still felt that more information would do little to change their behaviour. This casts doubt on the Dragon International predictions, and the proposed link between corporate reputation and purchase behaviour. The information available is not the issue, which makes us think that perhaps we are not in the 'Caring Nineties' (Collins 1993), and that consumers do not care as much as Abratt and Sacks (1988) or Forte and Lamont (1998) suggest.

Insert Figure Three about here

It is perhaps unfair to suggest that consumers do not care at all, simply that they do not care enough about corporate reputation compared to other priorities such as quality and price. Even though Roberts (1998) believes that the caring consumer exists, he too admits that price and quality often take precedence, and this study echoes those suspicions. There are some consumers who do consider corporate reputation when purchasing, but they are the minority. Participants did believe that companies have a responsibility to society, and that those who behave acceptably may be held in high regard by consumers, but this did not translate into a positive purchase decision, nor a boycott for those who were irresponsible. In contrast, the earlier Dragon International study suggested that consumers were more likely to favour companies, as did Verschoor (1997), Cone and Roper (Simon 1995) and Creyer and Ross (1997). Boycotts over irresponsible behaviour were viewed as unlikely both by this study and Dragon, which suggests that bad behaviour goes relatively unpunished by the consumer. This does not augur well for those striving for corporate integrity. If we consider this within Carrigan's 'Saints and Sinners'<sup>1</sup> framework (1995) the arguments that those firms who are socially responsible (*Saints*) will reap benefits is weak in terms of consumer purchasing (see Figure Three). Moreover, the penalties for those who are not socially responsible (*Sinners*) are equally weak in terms of consumer

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<sup>1</sup> Carrigan suggests that Sinners will neither benefit in the short nor long term due to their reactive and negative approaches to social responsibility; Cynics if they reform their past poor behaviour will potentially reap longer term benefits from their defensive strategy; Pharisees act accommodatively, but short term benefits will fade due to cynical public reaction to their lack of commitment to responsible behaviour. Only Saints are likely to reap benefits short and long term through socially responsibility. For more details see Carrigan (1995).

disapprobation. There seems little motivation in terms of consumer purchasing to warrant a change of behaviour from *Sinners, Cynics or Pharisees*. Clearly if there are costs to following a socially proactive strategy compared to those less socially responsible competitors one could not blame some organisations for doubting the wisdom of such behaviour, at least if the actions were intended to persuade consumers to buy. However, it is important to note that some respondents stated that they did not pay attention to corporate behaviour as it did not affect them *directly*. There was also concern about ethical blacklisting that affected their financial benefits, which leaves open the question would purchasing decisions be affected if the participants had been *personally* positively or negatively affected by the behaviour?

Although the study was relatively small scale, the unanimous verdict that corporate behaviour was not important in purchasing decisions has to be noted and taken seriously. There appears to have been a great deal of openness and honesty in this study, and there was no attitude-behaviour gap as identified by Cone and Roper (Simon 1995) and Roberts (1996); these respondents openly declared little interest in corporate behaviour in relation to their purchasing. Their responses also brings into doubt previous studies which suggest that corporate behaviour does affect purchasing decisions. Perhaps there has been an element of giving socially desirable rather than truthful answers to the questions posed? Clearly one could suggest that our results in this preliminary study are not representative of the population, and should not be directly compared to the results of past studies, but interesting anomalies have been raised and should be addressed.

It is a common problem in consumer behaviour studies to determine whether or not how a consumer thinks directly relates to how they will actually act in a purchase situation. Certainly there are those who feel that the power and incidence of consumer boycotts are increasing (Gelb 1995; Davidson 1995; Cathcart 1999). Recent examples include the boycott of Shell petrol stations across Europe during the Brent Spar incident, and more recently the British boycott of French products in response to the French ban on British beef. However, most commentators acknowledge the difficulties in quantifying the



success of boycotts. Publications such as Boycott Action News might track the number of boycotts in existence, but whether they translate into substantial financial losses is more sketchy. Estimates that Nestle have lost over \$40 million because of the US boycott of their products are debatable, meanwhile the firm remains a daunting force in the global consumer market (Nelson-Horchler 1984). It would be wrong to dismiss the power of consumer boycotts simply because it is difficult to measure their effect in terms of consumer purchasing behaviour. The price in terms of negative media publicity and damaged corporate reputation may in fact be more powerful adversaries than any consumer behaviour.

## **Conclusions**

The study set out to investigate whether or not the current investment in corporate reputation by companies was justified. The emphasis was on the corporate behaviour variable of corporate reputation, as in recent times the business community has been striving to distinguish themselves in this area in the belief, amongst other benefits, that it will positively affect consumer purchasing behaviour. Despite the wisdom within the literature that good behaviour makes business sense, the links between financial performance and corporate behaviour are conflicting. This is compounded by the fact that the link between consumer purchasing behaviour and corporate behaviour is not proven. Previous studies are also called into doubt due to the attitude-behaviour gap which suggests that consumer thoughts and deeds may vary considerably. One might conclude on this basis that the current frenzy of activity by firms towards enhancing their reputation by good corporate behaviour might be misguided. In this study none of the participants used corporate behaviour in their purchasing decisions, and all felt an increase in information on this aspect of corporate activity would probably not influence their decisions.

However, we are not concluding that the development of a good corporate reputation is a pointless activity. There is no doubt that corporate reputation in a holistic sense is a tool

that can provide competitive advantage, and in many cases has been very successful. What we are arguing is that it may not deliver the results that have been suggested in the previous literature, particularly in terms of influencing consumer purchases. Although a great deal of business and academic opinion concludes that corporate behaviour has to be considered because in the long term only the socially responsible firms will survive, these findings cast doubt upon that conclusion. There are groups of socially responsible consumers who care about how companies behave, but these may be a minority. It is not possible to make any concrete conclusions due to the conflicting evidence within the literature and the limitations of this study, but the purpose of the increased interest in corporate behaviour does need to be re-examined in the context that it does not seem as important to consumers as companies believe.

Our advice would be for firms to tread cautiously; have clear objectives for the activities in which you engage and temper your expectations with reality. There are costs and benefits to be weighed up in terms of how much you commit to 'good behaviour' vis a vis the competition. No-one would suggest that bad behaviour is acceptable for there are legal and economic limitations to be considered. Morally and ethically it is desirable that companies pursue good corporate behaviour, but it is not always commercially beneficial, and this is a major challenge and conflict that business faces. Those companies with integrity will pursue a good reputation for their community contribution as much as their product quality or value. Indeed companies such as Cadburys and Rowntree have been doing so for many years with little fuss.

It may be there are other more effective ways in which reputation management can reap benefits with different stakeholders, such as attracting quality employees or bolstering share price values. However, companies may have to accept that it will have little effect upon certain consumers. This does not mean that new generations of consumers will not be interested in corporate reputation as much as product quality, but currently there seems to be more concern for price, quality and branding when consumers buy.

## **Recommendations**

Our study concludes that an interest in corporate reputation may be justified but only appropriate for certain corporate reputation variables. Corporate reputation is a recent competency in the business world and requires more extensive research. Particularly corporate reputation variables require investigation so that companies can use corporate reputation management more effectively based on comprehensive results. At present we cannot be sure if it is wiser to concentrate more on quality than responsible corporate behaviour when trying to attract consumers; do both count equally, or should one be emphasised more than the other? This study has raised the issue of corporate behaviour which impacts personally upon consumers, and suggests that this may affect their purchasing behaviour both negatively or positively. Further research on this subject may produce some useful insights and provide guidance to business on how to best plan corporate behaviour for most impact upon consumers. It may be helpful to investigate individual case studies to discover if funds used to boost positive corporate behaviour are justified and impact upon sales, while research with consumers must ensure that the attitude-behaviour gap does not produce false results.

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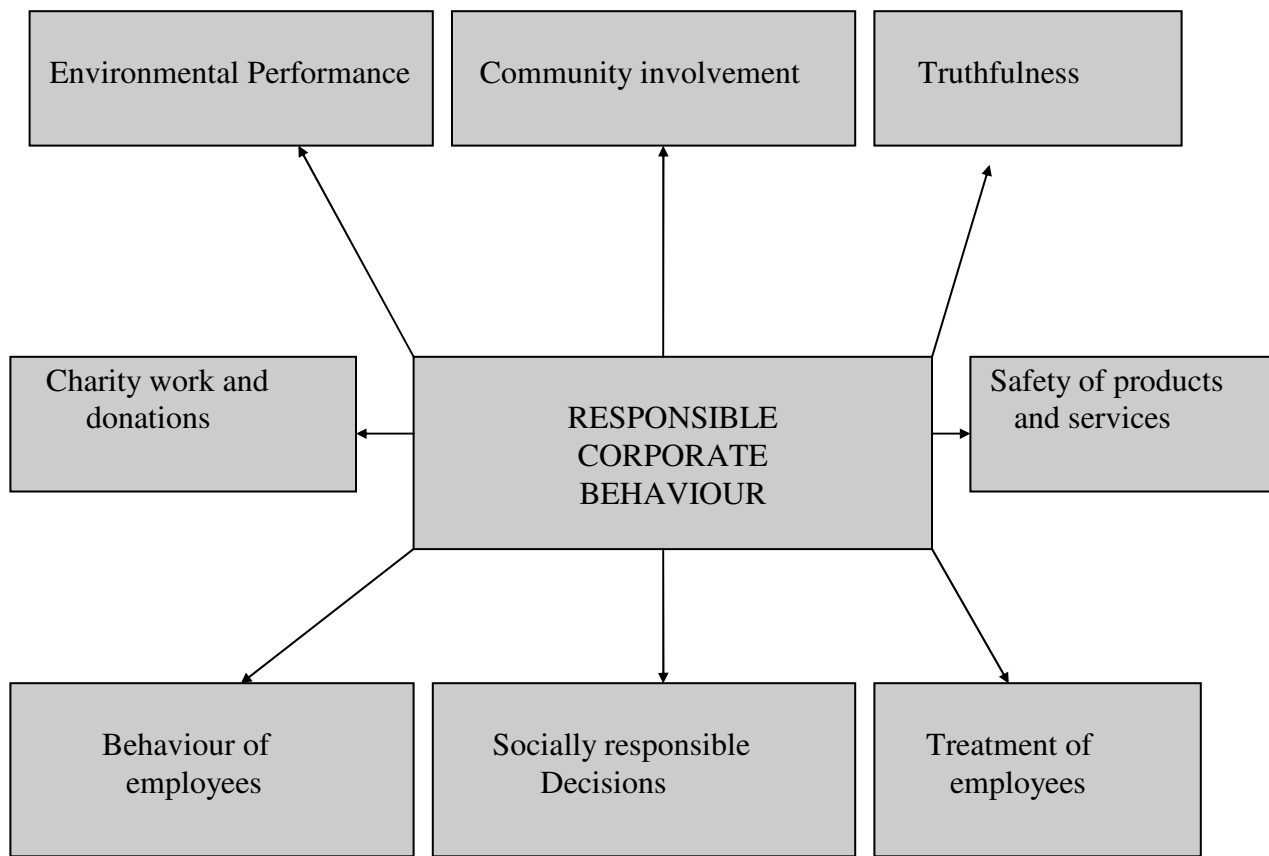


Figure Two: Elements of Responsible Corporate Behaviour