# Nehal Medh's Views on Image Measurement

Corporate image…

Corporate image is the net result of the overall knowledge and impressions that people have about a company. It is a combination of several levels and before one sets out to measure it, one must understand these levels, a combination of which forms corporate image.

Levels of Corporate Image

Socio-cultural
Group
Company
Brand
Product
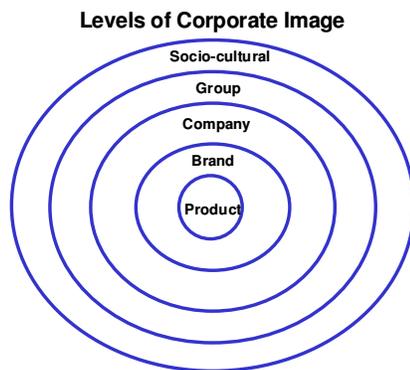
The product that a company manufactures forms the core of corporate image. The brand and its communications form the next critical level of corporate image. The company and how it communicates with its external and internal audiences form the next level of corporate image. If the company belongs to a larger group, then the group communications also influences the overall corporate image. Finally, at the top is corporate culture and how this culture is communicated forms an integral part of the overall image of an organisation.

Measurement of corporate image…

There are various sources from which corporate image evaluation can be formed are:
Media coverage
Advertising
Employees
Products
Hearsay
Experience
Impressions

To elaborate a few: Personal experiences are critical. How the receptionist answers the phone, how many rings it takes for the company to answer the phone, do they put you on hold and forget, does the customer care centre actually care – are executives courteous, all these experiences form an important source of corporate image. Though everybody cannot claim to interact with each and every kind of company, they often have some kind of an image association with companies. Often this image is formed by hearsay – what others have to say about a company (because of their personal experiences). This too can also be an important

source that forms overall corporate image.

An important point to remember is that the media's influence on corporate image on certain publics is much higher than on others. Companies invest in their image building because they want to influence or want the relevant publics think of them in a certain way. These publics could be customers, talent pool, investor community, policy makers, influencer groups, general public, suppliers, etc.
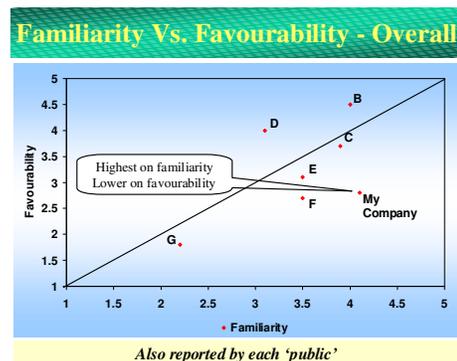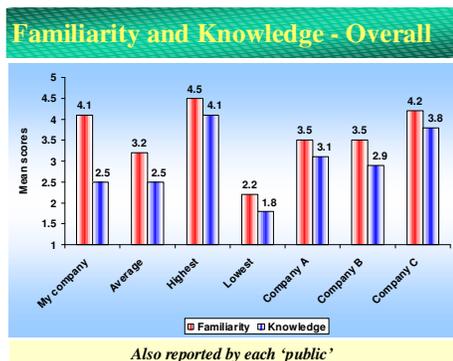
Basic tenets of measurement ….

Measurement of image is never in a vacuum – it is always comparative -- how is my company viewed *as compared* to another? Also, the measurement is specific to each public because the objective would be different for different publics. For example, the purpose of interacting with the investor community would be for them to lend money. Hence the company must understand what the investing public thinks about the company as an investment option – is the company considered financially trustworthy or not? On the other hand for the potential talent-pool the profitability and investment worthiness is of lesser consequence. What interests them more are salary levels, employee policies, growth & development plan for employees, opportunities for foreign travel, etc. Since each public must be addressed with a different agenda the perception management effort is multi-faceted. As communications has to be customised, it must also be measured for each public specifically. Corporate image is relevant and actionable only if measured with respect to each public as opposed to having one single 'mathematical number'.

The first level of assessment is the awareness, familiarity and favourability….

Awareness about a company could be spontaneous or aided. After assessing awareness, comes knowledge – is the publics aware of the business areas, are they aware of the non-business activities (community development effort), are they aware of size, spread and similar structural aspects? Then comes perceived familiarity and nature of familiarity – how do you know about the company?

Familiarity and Knowledge - Overall

Also reported by each 'public'

Familiarity Vs. Favourability - Overall

Also reported by each 'public'

The reason for the measurement of familiarity and favourability is because across segments and time, it has been found that familiarity breeds favourability. There are positive implications of greater familiarity. This familiarity breeding favourability paradigm is even true in the 'highly informed' audiences such as financial analysts.

Second level of assessment - overall reputation index…

Overall corporate image could be measured on the dimensions of quality of products, ability to attract talent, customer service, financial performance, industrial relations, management style, environmental responsibility or technical capabilities. On the whole, it is important to remember that the target audience may not relate to a company on every dimension that the company may think are relevant. The audiences have their own picture of the company and preliminary research provides merely an understanding of the *overall* image of the company. Only on further probing does one get to various other dimensions of this overall reputation because of the need to identify action areas – where is the need to change perceptions – is it amongst people handling skills, internal communications, etc.

Overall corporate image could be measured on the dimensions of quality of products, ability to attract talent, customer service, financial performance, industrial relations, management style, environmental responsibility or technical capabilities. On the whole, it is important to remember that the target audience may not relate to a company on every dimension that the company may think are relevant. The audiences have their own picture of the company and preliminary research provides merely an understanding of the *overall* image of the company. Only on further probing does one get to various other dimensions of this overall reputation because of the need to identify action areas – where is the need to change perceptions – is it amongst people handling skills, internal communications, etc.

Image strength analysis is based on how many people have an opinion of the company (on a particular dimension) vs. how favourable the opinion is.

Image Analysis - My company

	Strength`	
Communication Areas - Democratic management - International perspective	**Well-off Areas** - Quality of products - Marketing skills - Long term vision - Attracts best talent	Hi
Lower Priority Areas - Community welfare - Contributes to government revenues - Social responsibility - Abides by law	**Problem Areas** - Continuous upgradation of products - Profitability - Short term investment	

Character: Lo — Hi
Strength: Lo — Hi

Perceptions of Co.

Image Character

	Image Strength	
H	TALK ABOUT THESE	LEVERAGE
L	KEEP QUIET	TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION
	L	H

Nett Image enables comparison between companies under various dimensions, while strength character allows a look at the company on all dimensions. Nett Image looks at several dimensions such as long term vision, growth plan, pace of growth, marketing skills, etc. and provides benchmark for the company with others. This provides an understanding of the corporate image, how it compares with others in the industry, the parameters on which it is falling short, what is it that needs to be improved upon, etc.

Third level of assessment – corporate personality…

Through research ORG MARG has come to believe that consumers find it much easier to associate to company's as human beings rather than just corporate entities - they are able to describe companies better by relating them to certain human dimensions such as dynamic, arrogant, trustworthy, caring, etc. A similar benchmarking (as done for Nett Image) can be done to understand how a company is perceived and take corrective actions, wherever required.

Why track corporate image?

Corporate image comes from a company's own actions, changes in the environment and competitive action. Corporate image in turn affects customers - in the way they are disposed to the company, shareholders – who believe in the company and similarly other publics.

In a nutshell, managing equity is a 4-step cycle:
a) Evaluate image and equity
b) Identify problems
c) Develop solutions
d) Implement programme
and back to a) again.

(Excerpted from the presentation made by Harsh Sinha, GM HRD & Corporate Communications, SRF Ltd., at PR Pundit's workshop, held in New Delhi on November 2, 2000)