

## **A reputational mass-crash for the Tour de France?**

---

### **TEACHING NOTES**

---

---

The authors prepared this case solely as a basis for class discussion and not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. Although based on real events and despite occasional references to actual companies, this case is fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or entities is coincidental.

## Teaching Plan

The teaching notes for the case of Tour de France serve as a suggested guideline on how to introduce the given case to a class audience. It has been created to support the instructor's preparation regarding the structure of the audience discussion, collecting concerns, thoughts, and ideas, organizing the output in a useful manner and reaching the learning objectives. To simplify the readability of this guide, we take the exemplary setting of a professor introducing the case to a university class. Nevertheless, the case is suitable for any other context as well.

The teaching notes enclose a brief summary of the case, sets learning objectives connecting theoretical models of brand management and reputation to the example of the Tour de France case, offers a main and supplementary managerial questions, and suggests a teaching structure including time and teaching plan.

## Case synopsis

On August 24, 2012, USADA officially charged the seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong of doping. Additionally, USADA accused one of the Tour's key stakeholders UCI, responsible for the testing of doping, of covering up suspicious samples from Armstrong, accepting financial donations from him and assisting Armstrong in avoiding detection in doping tests. The crisis was caused by an then internal key stakeholder of Tour de France, meaning that the Tour de France organisation ASO did not have a direct impact on the crisis. However, there was no doubt that Tour de France organisers ASO were facing its biggest crisis in the history of the Tour. The consequences of the crisis began to uncover with Rabobank, a major Dutch bank group who have sponsored the Tour for over 28 years, ending its sponsorship. Considering the future of Tour de France being at stake, one ought to consider how ASO should react and manage this situation.

## Learning Objectives

By discussing the complex situation Tour de France find itself in after UCI revealed the big doping incident of Lance Armstrong, the case audience should achieve certain key learnings. The case of the Tour de France allows coverage and connection to several theory fields of the brand and reputation management. Thus, the most relevant learning objectives of this case are defined following, while the methodology for a suggested discussion is presented later in the paper.

To ensure a proper in-depth discussion, the instructor needs to make sure the audience is fairly well informed about the case and its different players. Therefore, a

model displaying the connection of all key stakeholders is provided. It builds the basis for the later assigned different roles the audience will take.

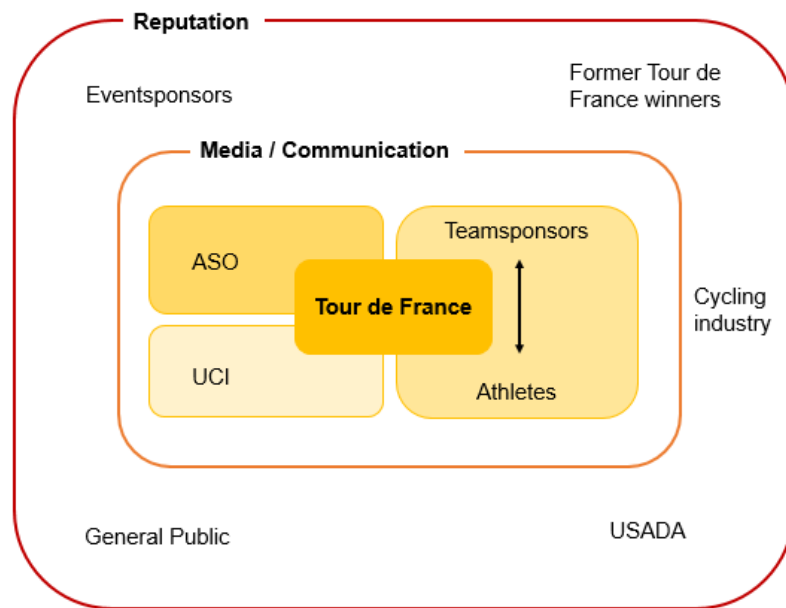


Fig. 1: Model Tour de France key stakeholder network

## Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix - CBIRM

In common brand management literature, several models show the construct of elements composing a corporate brand of an organisation (Kapferer, 2012; Roper & Fill, 2012). One of them is Urde & Greyser's (2016) Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (CBIRM). Moreover, the essential reason for applying the CBIRM model is to allow an open class discussion and being able to identify the affected key element of the crisis. Arguably, their matrix well fits the Tour de France case, as it offers the opportunity to identify all components of the brand Tour de France and at the same time pays attention to respective reputation directions. Even though ASO does not state Tour de France's core values externally, existing literature indicates the Tour de France brand is built upon the brand core of endurance, fair play and competitiveness (Leveau, n.d.; Dauncey & Hare, 2005; Schneider, 2007).

Even though an athlete caused this crisis – a stakeholder, who is essential for the organisation, it did not harm all brand elements. Certainly, the position, expression, personality, or competences remained the same after discovering Armstrong's seven in-a-row doped Tour de France wins. Nevertheless, the element relationships and culture got a real shock and ASO had to think about dealing with it. The internal challenge of culture can be seen complex. On the one hand, doping has been illegal since 1967, on the other hand ever since the foundation of the world's biggest cycling race, there have been doping incidents, even after changing the regulations. However, also in terms of reputation the Tour had to question itself how do they work and behave and how committed and accountable are they towards their self-set rules of

prohibiting doping? Additionally, they had to deal with the threat of losing trustworthiness. While UCI's originally would have been responsible for testing (and discovering) doping during the Tour, USADA revealed Lance Armstrong's doping history and accused UCI to have been covering for his manipulations for several years. Hence, not only the trustworthiness of the Tour itself but also their relying on UCI was questionable and problematic. Furthermore, UCI's behaviour violated one of Tour de France's core values (fair play).

Overall the brand and reputation crisis of the Tour de France touched primarily upon the interaction vertical of the CBIRM and required corresponding action and behaviour of the ASO to avoid further damage of other brand identity and reputation elements. Nonetheless, besides UCI stripping Armstrong of all his Tour de France titles and imposing a lifetime ban for cycling sport, ASO did not take much action. Referring to UCI rules, they demanded Armstrong to pay the won prize money back. Moreover, ASO decided that any taken action will be fulfilled silently, consequently no further (communication) activities are known - presumably a strategic decision that needs to be seen critically.

### Corporate reputation criteria by Roper & Fill

Above particular reputation elements have already been mentioned and discussed by applying the CBIRM. Despite further scholars have dealt with corporate reputation. Roper & Fill (2012), for instance, consider ten criteria that influence corporate reputation around credibility, responsibility, reliability and trustworthiness. Examining the Tour de France case on those criteria, ASO had to tackle multiple threats: Revealing that the main actors of the Tour play against the rules and regulations of the competition, decreased the product/service quality of the competition. Hence, the satisfaction of the broad range of customers dropped and consequently for instance (potential) sponsors or media partners ceased. However, while Le Tour could keep their profitability and market position as the world's biggest cycling race, in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility and vision action was necessary. Doubtless, they had to ensure that a comprehensive reputation will be reinstalled as soon as possible.

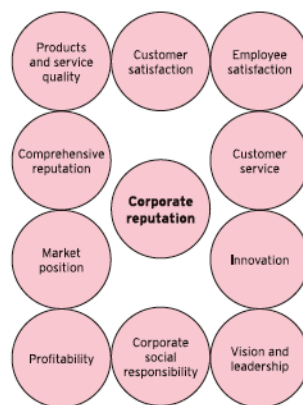


Fig. 2: Criteria that influence corporate reputation (Roper & Fill, 2012, p. 42)

## Corporate brand reputation and brand crisis management

In his article “Corporate brand reputation and brand crisis management”, Greyser (2009, p.590) also remarks that “perceived authenticity and a positive reputation go hand in hand”. He sees authenticity as the key to build, sustain, and defend the reputation. Thereby are the most serious crisis situations these where the reputational damage affects the essence of the brand. Furthermore, he emphasises the foundation of compelling communication: substance. Greyser (2009) proposes four contexts of substantial communication activities: talking, being, staying authentic, and defending authenticity as a form of corporate behaviour. Throughout the time Tour de France surely was not comprehensively behaving authentic, considering that they never managed to enforce their rules and regulations nor behaving according to their brand core of the fair play.

## Corporate Communication

An organisation’s corporate communication fortifies its identity internally as well as externally. When a crisis occurs within an organisation, the reputation often gets damaged. Roper and Fill (2012) allocate an important role to corporate communication in the development of positive corporate reputation. However, it plays an even more crucial role when defending an organisation’s reputation during crises. The form, tone, timing and style of the communication is thereby decisive in each stage of the crisis: pre-impact, impact, and readjustment phase.

Roles and tasks that corporate communication fulfils can be considered and examined at two different levels: Level 1 - Functional outcomes and Level 2 - Transitional outcomes with each level aiming four distinct directions (Roper & Fill, 2012, p.219). As previously described, even though ASO kept the communication to a minimum, this model can partially be applied. Lacking information about the internal communication activities, we can only consider the external information (lifetime cycling ban and title strip of (both initiated by UCI and only coincided with ASO), payback of prize money). Therefore, in this case the relevant dimensions are “communication” on the functional outcomes, as well as “informing”, which describes the formal and informal information supply, on the transitional level. Overall, it remains open for discussions whether ASO’s way of communication and managing the was the best.

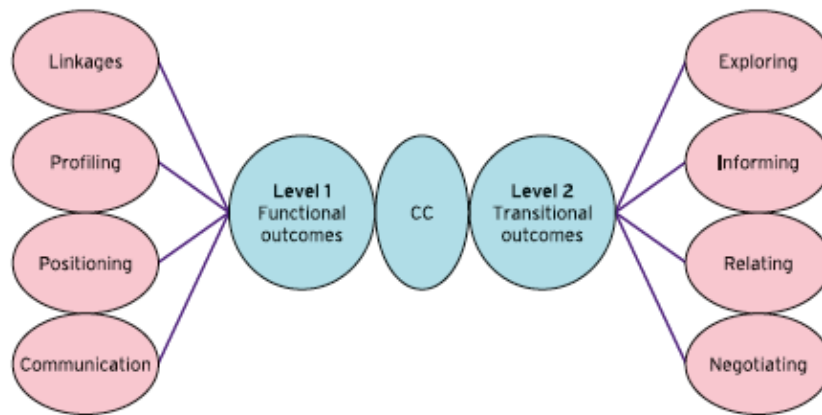


Fig. 3: Functional and transitional levels of corporate communication.  
(Roper & Fill, 2012, p. 219)

## Overview of key learnings

The spotlight of the Tour de France case lies in understanding how the incident of an individual athlete-hero can damage the brand identity and reputation of a whole organisation. The key learnings of this case can be consolidated in an action plan to tackle Tour de France’s reputational crisis by examining the affected brand and reputation elements and developing a communication plan.

The table illustrates an overview of all key learning objectives of the case.

Key learning objectives		
Key verbs	Generally	In this case
<b>Remembering</b>	... that internal and external stakeholders are influencers of an organisations reputation.	Lance Armstrong (athlete) being the falling hero of the Tour de France for winning 7 times in a row
<b>Understanding</b>	... the impact of the hero incident on a whole industry.	USADA reveals L. Armstrong’s doping manipulations and accuses UCI of being part of it
<b>Applying</b>	... which parts of the brand identity + the reputation of which stakeholders are damaged + which criteria would mainly influence the reputation.	The interaction vertical in CBIRM Reputation criteria: product/service quality, customer satisfaction, Vision, CSR, comprehensive reputation
<b>Analysing</b>	... the case to come up with appropriate managerial decisions.	Find out who is responsible in order to take appropriate actions. Regardless who is responsible, the whole industry is affected.
<b>Evaluating</b>	... the complexity of the crisis situation and the consequences on the reputation.	- Urde & Greyser: CBIRM - Greyser: Crisis Management article - Roper & Fill: corporate reputation + communication
<b>Creating</b>	... an action plan to manage the crisis incl. restoring reputation, avoiding similar incidents in the future and keep stakeholders.	Trustworthiness, authenticity, fair play, internal culture, communication

Tab. 1: Key learning objectives

## Discussion questions

An engaging case discussion is essential to accomplish the presented learning objectives in this case. It is, therefore, crucial for the instructor to prepare case questions to start with and keep the discussion going. Hence, the following questions are highly recommended to be used by the instructor in the discussion.

Main Question:

*How should the organisers of the Tour de France respond to the crisis?*

From experience with presenting the case to a test group and internally discussing it amongst our group, the discussion of the case tends to go into one of two directions 1) Tour de France takes responsibility or 2) Tour de France do not take responsibility. If the class discussion predominantly moves towards one direction, it is recommended to use the assisting questions for the specific direction to guide the discussion. In addition, if the instructor wants to broaden the discussion of the case. It may be of interest to introduce the “alternative direction” to the class, as it often triggers a new discussion and additional insights while enhancing the overall learning experience.

Two directions:

- 1) Tour de France takes responsibility
- 2) Tour de France do not take responsibility

General assisting questions:

In which way has the brand image of Tour de France been damaged from a general public point view?

Relate to bodybuilding: a similar threat? Are there any parallels? (Everyone knows that is)

1: Tour de France takes responsibility - assisting questions

- What are the consequences of the Lance Armstrong incident in regards to Tour de France’s brand reputation?
- Should they keep engaging with UCI?
- Should they implement their own doping control department?
- How can Tour de France do to remain attractive for their partners and sponsors?
- How should the corporate communication look like?
- How can they impact their own reputation?
- How can they impact the industry’s reputation?
- How could they prevent the crisis from happening again?

## 2) Tour de France do not take responsibility - assisting questions

- Which role and action should ASO take even if they are not responsible?
- How should they position themselves in general in relation to the crisis?
- How should they proceed with the partnership with UCI?
- How should they try to impact the damaged industry's reputation?
- Should ASO implement their own doping tests?

## Teaching suggestions

The aim of this section is to provide the instructor with a form of a guideline on how the case can be presented. This section will provide a number of teaching suggestions such as advice, tools, models & theories, structure and time plan based on in-class practice during the course. It is recommended to present the case via powerpoint which enables the instructor to use the included slides. Furthermore, using a whiteboard for noting and summarizing key issues during the class discussion is also recommended. The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2014) could be used as a theoretical framework to analyse the effect of the Armstrong scandal on the reputation of the Tour de France. In addition, the class can be divided into three or more groups in order to allow more in-depth discussion within the groups, which may facilitate in more nuanced and thought through discussion topics on the case, hence, increases quality.

The written case, can be distributed to each group to enable an easier discussion without the need to review the presentation slides. However, this can be skipped if the case has already been distributed earlier as homework. A proposed structure of how to conduct the case can be seen in the following section below.

### *Structure*

1. Instructor presents the Tour de France case for the class via Powerpoint slides
  - Presenting the history & background of the Tour de France
  - Presents the Incident of the case i.e. "The Lance Armstrong Doping Scandal"
  - Presents the main case question while using additional questions as guidelines to direct the class discussion
2. The Instructor divides the class into three groups who plays the role of "consultant agencies" tasked with solving the issue
  - The written case will be handed out to the groups. However, in case the written case has already been handed out as a homework then this step can be skipped.
3. Class discussion and summarisation on a whiteboard under categories such as
  - Issues / Alternatives / Actions
  - Or alternatively - Problems / Consequences / Actions



- A brief discussion of the main points noted and acknowledging the different contributions
4. Present the managerial decisions of the Tour de France
    - What was the decision made
    - What was the consequences of the decision
    - Should there have been made a different decisions and course of action?
  5. Analyse the impact of the Incident on the reputation of the Tour de France
    - Use the CBIRM model to analyse and pinpoint the problem areas
    - Ask class for feedback and their thoughts on the analyses - do they agree or do they have different opinions?
  6. Conclusion
    - Closing thoughts and final questions

## Time Plan

In order to give a better overview and structure on how to proceed with the presentation as well as the time spent on each section. We have constructed a time plan to give the instructor a better sense of how to proceed with the presentation. The presentation is for 1 hour and 40 minutes, which can either be shortened or extended. The time frame would consist of:

- Presentation of the Tour de France case (15% = 15min)
- Divide the class into three “agency groups” and discuss amongst groups (10% = 10min)
- Case Discussion: Challenges, Alternatives & Actions (40% = 40min)
- Present Tour de France managerial decisions and what happened (15% = 15min)
- Using CBIRM to analyse Tour de France (15% = 15min)
- Closing thoughts and additional questions (5% = 5min)

If the instructor only had 1 hour to present the case, it is recommended to not divide the class into agency groups in order to allow enough time for in class discussion for the case, as it is the most important. Additionally, removing the additional questions section while shortening the presentation of the case itself is a viable option. If time is of the essence, then it may even be possible to shorten the CBIRM analysis or even remove it. This is to allow further ample time for in class discussion surrounding the case which is the main focus of the case.

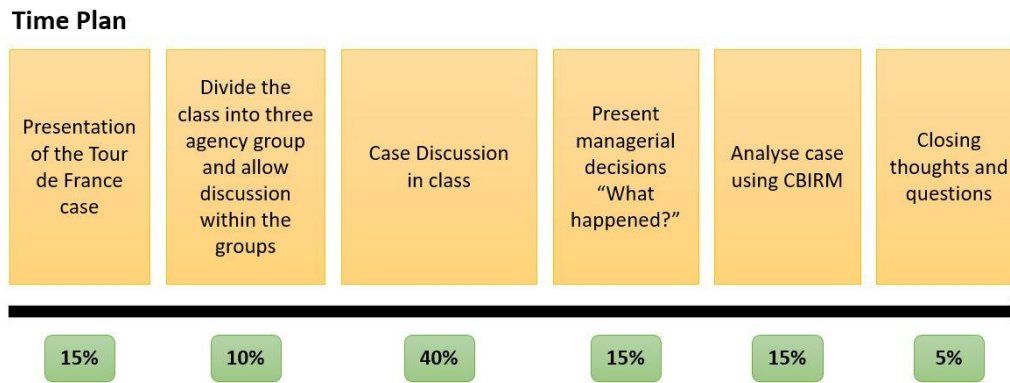


Fig. 4: Time Plan

## Board Plan

The instructor is provided with a board plan, which suggests a frame to structure the main points brought up during the class discussion. From our own experience in case class discussions, it is helpful for both the teacher, to guide the ongoing conversations, as well as for the students to visualise the mentioned arguments and build upon what has been said before.

As a result, we propose to use a simple table structure on the whiteboard to cluster the remarked point into "Issues", "Alternatives" and "Actions".

Issues	Alternatives	Actions
• Fall of an iconic hero	• Should ASO take responsibility or not?	• Partial assume responsibility
• UCI involvement in Armstrong case	• Communicate or stay silent?	• Communicate clear ASO's role in the crisis (+ UCI's role)
• Who is responsible?	• Do own investigations?	• Demand changes in the UCI
• Affects the whole pro-cycling industry	• Penalise all doped riders	• Turning a new leaf
• Can UCI be trusted?	• Removal of all doped riders from records	• Apologise to general public
• ASOs action will have repercussion for the whole industry	• Make a documentary about changes process (show public how you "improved")	• ASO implement their "own" doping test (via third party involvement)
• Drop out of sponsors	• Find new doping-testing organisation	• Penalize riders: make them pay back the prize money
• Reputation damage	• Demand UCI to make changes	• Enforce core values (+ teach stakeholders about the core values)
• How should they communicate?	• Align riders with core values of TDF	• Strengthen own role in the event
• How should they attract future sponsors?	• Stricter requirements for riders	
• How should they position themselves in general in relation to the crisis?		
• Trustworthiness of (former) Tour de France riders		
• Credibility of Tour de France's own rules/regulations		
• How to involve media?		
• How to deal with doped riders?		
• Is Armstrong the scape goat?		

Tab. 2: Board Plan with possible outcomes

The column “Issues” summarizes all comments class mentioned in regards of key challenges the organisers of the Tour de France are facing. The section “Alternatives” includes the audience's’ ideas about possible options ASO has and “Actions” lastly describes the managerial decisions class has agreed upon the organisers should make. Fig. 3 presents possible answers which were generated from the test group, as well as the discussions in our own group, but will be updated with class’ input later. It serves the instructor as a suggested guideline to keep the class conversation alive.

## Reflection

The course Corporate Brand Management and Reputation is taught at the master's program at Lund University School of Economics and Management. As a part of this course, a group of three students, had to chose a real management problem to rewrite into a “Management Decision Case”, which would later be presented in class.

After the first group meeting and a lot of discussions, three different management cases were chosen to be presented at the first supervision with the professor of the course, Mats Urde. During the supervision, we came to the conclusion that we wanted a case that was unique, of significant interest, and enabled a good learning opportunity for us. Therefore, the case of Tour de France - Lance Armstrong doping scandal was chosen. In contrary to already existing cases, we focused on the challenges ASO, as the Tour de France organisers, had to deal with.

To prepare the case, several group meetings were essential to arrive at an appropriate structure of the case, that also enables a good in class discussion. One of the main challenges, we faced was to step into the perspective of the Tour de France and to identify the roles of their key stakeholders. This judgement was hard to make, as we always had to have the learning objectives and the teacher’s perspective in mind. Therefore, we consulted Professor Urde for further discussions about the real “phenomenon” of the case, and finally decided to be very distinctive and taking the Tour de France organisers’ perspective on the scandal and assess their key stakeholder network in depth. In this process, it helped us to draw the correlations of the Tour de France network on the whiteboard. As a consequence, we will also provide class with our final model (Fig.1 - Model of Tour de France key stakeholder network).

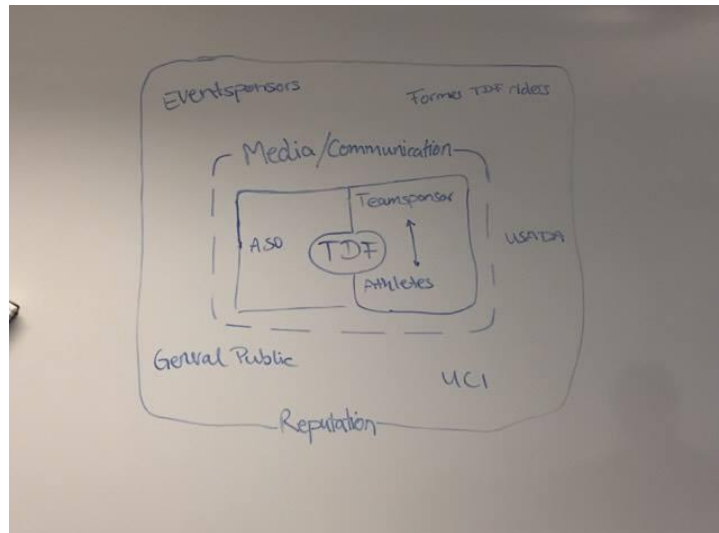


Fig. 5: Preliminary result Tour de France key stakeholder network

To prepare the presentation and the class discussion, different teaching techniques were applied, and different questions and directions were created. Furthermore, video material was chosen, and Powerpoint visuals were created to allow an on-point explanation of the case and ensure the connections are understood correctly. One test run was conducted with another group to test our management question, assisting questions and see how they react to the presented material. The feedback we got from the test run was applied, and some parts of the presentation and the written case was reviewed and revised. For example, our original managerial question was “How should the organisers of the Tour de France react and manage this situation?”, however, it was not clear enough what we meant with “this situation”. Therefore, we adapted the question after the test run slightly to “How should the organisers of the Tour de France respond to the crisis?”.

One day before the presentation, we decided to go through the case presentation one more time to reassure the quality and feel confident for the final presentation in class.

## References

Dauncey, H. & Hare, G. (2003). *The Tour de France 1903-2003. A century of sporting structure, meanings and values.* London: Frank Cass

Greyser, S.A. (2009). Corporate brand reputation and brand crisis management. *Management Decision*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 590-602

Kapferer, J.-N. (2012). *The New Strategic Brand Management. Advanced insights and strategic thinking.* London: Kogan Page Limited

Leveau, M. (n.d.). 90th Tour de France - July 5-27, 2003. La Caravane du Tour de France, web blog post, available at:  
<http://autobus.cyclingnews.com/road/2003/Tour03/?id=features/caravane>,  
[Accessed 20 February 2017]

Roper, S. & Fill, C. (2012). *Corporate Reputation. Brand and Communication.* Essex: Pearson Education Limited

Schneider, A.J. (2006). Cultural Nuances: Doping, Cycling and the Tour de France. *Sport in Society*, vol.9, no.2, pp. 212-226

Urde, M. & Greyser, S.A. (2006). The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix - The case of the Nobel Prize. *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 89-117