

Veni, Vidi...Vici?
Polański & the Académie des César

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.

Case Synopsis

Roman Polański is a recognized movie director, whose life itself may serve as a movie plot. In 1977, he was accused of raping (and other charges) minor Samantha Gailey in the USA. During the trial parties agreed that he would admit to having intercourse with a minor and the other accusations would be forgotten. Director was sent to prison for diagnostic screening and when the trial was to restart, Polański was informed that the judge was planning not to follow the settlement and to sentence him to prison. The same day the director escaped to Europe. During his stay in Europe his career flourished and he was awarded with the most prestigious awards of the film industry (including the Oscar). However, the accusations of several other rapes (always expired) against him have been made. Similarly, in 2019, Valentine Monnier accused Polański of raping her in 1975, just before the premiere of his movie *An Officer and a Spy* in France. This situation reminded the public about the director's past and was followed by boycotts and protests against him. This case takes the perspective of the French Film Academy which around this time is supposed to announce nominations and Polański's movie is also considered.

Case Timelessness and Importance

One needs to choose their friends carefully. It is true not only for individuals but also for organisations. Proper choice gives the reputation and trust but the wrong one can severely harm the organisation's reputation. In this case the stress is on the process of choosing who you want to be associated with. Therefore, this case can be considered timeless and very relevant. The case, by showing the trust issues of one of the parties, also focuses on managing the crisis before it happens. One can observe the complexity of real-life cases, in contrast to the very often simplified versions conveyed to be comprehensible for various stakeholders.

Additionally, the case was still in progress while writing these documents. It proves not only its being up-to-date but also provides an exciting opportunity for the presenter to develop the case as time goes by.

Learning Objectives

The analysis and discussion of the case will allow the case audience to achieve several key learnings. These will be explained in detail and linked to relevant literature in the following section. The learning opportunities that this case represents, basically belong to the subjects of corporate associations, corporate brand identity and image, corporate brand reputation and stakeholder management. The objective of the frameworks and theories exposed is to relate relevant concepts to this specific case, but also understand how these concepts can be applied in similar situations. This case represents a timeless example of associations and reputational contagion, not only for the protagonists of the

case, Roman Polański and the Académie des César, but also for other companies in the same or in a different industry.

Corporate Associations

Considering the 24-hour mass media environment in which we live nowadays and the effect that any action can have, especially in the case of business and brands, it is widely accepted that it is extremely important to thoroughly manage reputation and be careful with whom one is associated with (Roper & Fill, 2012). Corporate associations is a term used for all kinds of information about a given organisation that one holds in memory (Carroll, 2016). It includes attitude, beliefs and feelings towards a company and its attributes. The stakeholders' associations influence the reputation of the organisations in any direction, as in this case negatively. This is connected with a phenomenon called guilt by associations.

Guilt by Associations

The term guilt by associations refers to a phenomenon present when one of the parties is being distrusted due to the connection it has with another party, which bear guilt. It is a mental shortcut which allows people to judge whether or not the organisation shares their values (Carroll, 2016).

In the case of reputation management there are two main ways in which this theory works (Carroll, 2016). The first one includes involuntary associations, as in the case of associations within an industry. This can be exemplified by a leak of oil, which is a situation that affects the whole industry not only the company that created the problem. The second way in which guilt by associations influences image is by voluntary associations, such as corporate donations, sponsorship or business partners. That is exactly what happened in the case of the Académie des César and Roman Polański. The Academy image suffered due to the guilt that stakeholders ascribed to Polański.

Corporate Brand Identity and Image

Corporate brand identity constitutes the essence of a corporate brand (Roper & Fill, 2012). It consists of several elements such as the culture, personality, promises and values. By means of the corporate identity an organization presents itself to the external and internal stakeholders, determining how it wants to be perceived (Roper & Fill, 2012). Apart from that, identity represents a way of differentiation and positioning, the more it is based upon solid and consistent values, the stronger the corporation will be and the more successful it will be when facing challenging situations (Roper & Fill, 2012).

In order to evaluate the strength of a corporate brand identity and the existing relationships among the identity elements and its alignment, the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) (Greyser & Urde, 2019) can be applied. This framework consists of a 3x3 matrix including external, internal and external/internal elements of corporate

brand identity (see **Exhibit 1**). The core of the organisation is situated in the centre of the matrix. When a brand presents a strong identity all the interconnections among the several elements go through the core. The application of the CBIM of the parties in question can be seen in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** (note that the representation shows the extended version of the CBIM, the CBIRM, which includes reputation).

Corporate image, on the other hand, refers to how the company is seen in the stakeholders' minds (Roper & Fill, 2012). That is, the set of interpretations and meanings assigned to values, beliefs and attitudes towards a given organisation. Therefore, there is no single image since each group of stakeholders or even each stakeholder can have a different image of an organisation (Roper & Fill, 2012). In the case of the César Awards, one can state that they have an image of a prestigious film award, and other that the organisation is rotten from the inside. In the case of Roman Polański, for some his image is an elderly genius director being framed, and for others a vicious rapist.

Corporate Brand Reputation in the Light of Associations

Reputation is a multidimensional concept that can be defined as a combination of opinions held by different people about someone or something (Roper & Fill, 2012). In the case presented we have two different main characters, on the one hand, Roman Polański, to whom we will consider a personal brand, and, on the other hand, The Académie des César, which is a corporate brand. Reputation can have an important role creating a competitive advantage, however a wrong association can produce a reputational contagion and severely damage the reputation of the associated brand, institution, individual or organization (Roper & Fill, 2012). Considering this, and the fact that a harmed reputation is much more difficult to recover than building and maintaining it (Roper & Fill, 2012), associations must be carefully evaluated. In our particular case we can appreciate how associations have a harmful impact on the Académie des César. The reputational association of the Academy with Roman Polański has a detrimental effect in the reputation of the first, due to the controversial reputation of the second. In order to understand the reputational contagion in this case it would be useful to apply the Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016 - see **Exhibit 2**) to both main characters. This framework is an extension of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, or CBIM, which helps identifying the essential connections among the constitutive elements of the corporate brand identity and reputation (Urde & Greyser, 2016). The matrix contains 8 key reputational elements, which includes relevance, differentiation and recognisability, among others. The complete application of the CBRIM model to the Académie des César and Roman Polański can be seen in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**, respectively.

Figure 1. Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016) applied to the Académie des César

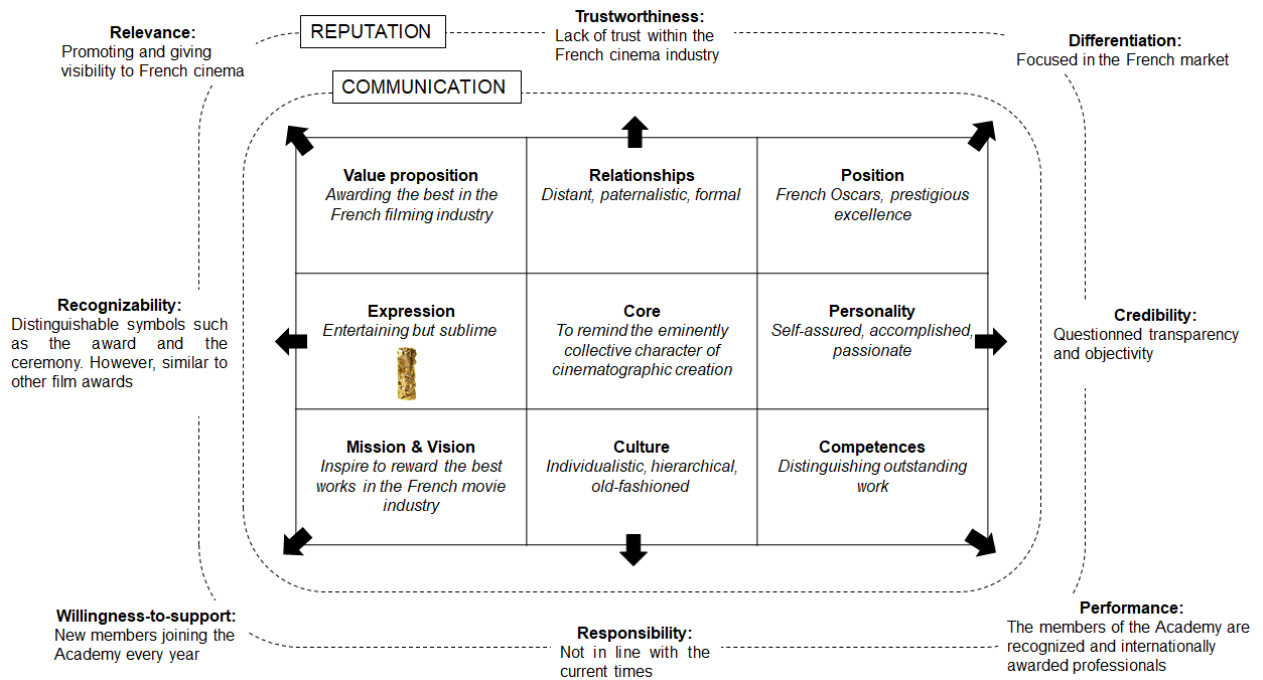
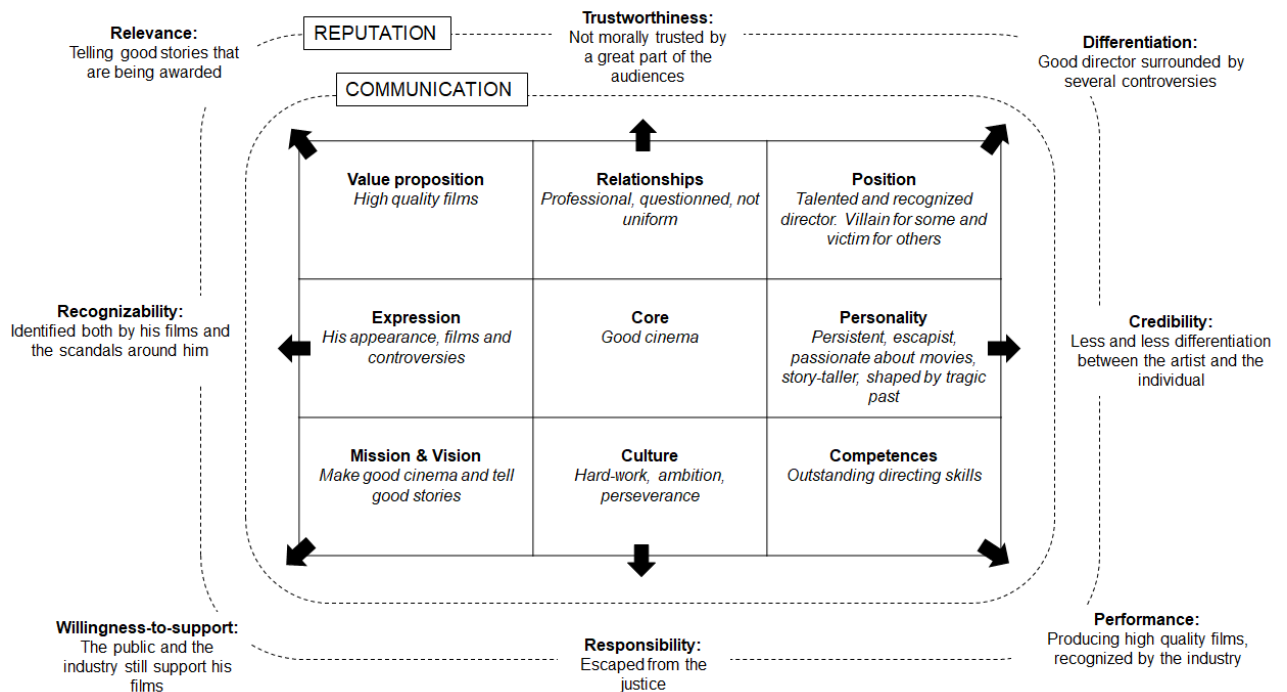


Figure 2. Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016) applied to Roman Polański



When examining the reputation of the Académie des César and Polański, we can appreciate a reputational contagion. This will be explained in the following lines by analyzing **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**.

Roman Polański is a controversial character. His reputation as one of the best film directors is clearly damaged by several sexual accusations against him. Due to the scandals surrounding him, and although his recognized talent as a professional, being associated with him signifies a great risk. As it can be appreciated in **Figure 2**, several reputational elements in the matrix are affected by the controversies, especially recognizability, trustworthiness, responsibility, differentiation and credibility. Due to the raise of social movements, such as the *#MeToo*, and an increased awareness and rejection of sexual abuses towards women, it is difficult to think that the director's reputation can improve in the long term. Moreover, the director's poor management of the scandals (e.g. escaping from the U.S. justice back in the 70s), definitely does not help.

Although being associated with the director represents a high risk in terms of reputation, several institutions in the film industry continued supporting his work, such as the Venice Film Festival, the Oscars (until 2018 (Shoard, 2019)), and the Académie des César (Staszczyszyn, 2013). Considering the Académie des César, the association with the director by nominating him to 12 awards (Académie Des César, 2020), have worsen the already fragile reputation of the Academy. As shown in **Figure 1**, the reputational elements of the institution that are harmed include trustworthiness, responsibility and credibility. The first two have been negatively affected by the last association of the institution with the director, especially considering the societal trends previously mentioned. However, these two elements and credibility were already damaged by previous associations with the director and other factors, such as a lack of transparency and organizational issues. It may be argued that, in the short term, the reputation of the institution will still be affected since, although the Board of Directors of the Academy have resigned, the film finally obtained 3 awards from its twelve original nominations, including the award to the Best Director. However, the resignation of the Board Directors of the Academy represents an opportunity for the new Board to apply internal changes in order to strengthen the essence of the brand and regain the reputation lost.

Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder theory offers a theoretical base for corporations to understand the effect they have on other stakeholders, such as customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, and the impact these groups have on them (Ulmer, 2001). This theory claims that in order for organizations to be successful, they should carefully consider the different interests' groups they are connected with (Freeman, 1984; Freeman and Gilbert, 1987). According to Ulmer (2001), investing and cultivating the relationships between an organization and its stakeholders in a pre-crisis situation can have positive implications when facing this event. Moreover, it is important not only to establish strong relationships with stakeholders while facing complicated circumstances like crisis or issues, but also during their resolution (Ulmer, 2001).

Following the presented train of thought, we consider that stakeholder theory can similarly be linked to reputational associations. Creating strong bonds among the organization and the different stakeholders can reduce the negative responses that certain reputational associations can generate. Considering the reputational association case of

Polański and the Académie des César, it can be observed how the Academy did not really established strong bonds with certain stakeholders, e.g. society, professionals of the industry, and how these groups have negatively impacted the organization in the wake of the association with Polański.

Overview of Key Learnings

The central point in this case consists in understanding how associations can negatively affect brands’ reputation. The key learnings that the discussion of this case may provide to the case audience are described in **Table 1**:

Table 1. Key Learning Objectives

Key Learning Objectives		
Remembering	...the importance of carefully considering the associations one is related to	Here: Association between the Académie des César and Roman Polański
Understanding	...how certain associations negatively impact brands’ reputation and image	Here: The reputational contagion between Roman Polański and the Académie des César
	...the need to balance societal demands and relevant changes in the management of the brand, while protecting the essence of the brand	Here: The failure of the Academy evolving according to the current times or taking a clear position regarding social changes
Applying	...key concepts from corporate brand management to prevent reputational crisis	Here: Guilt by association, stakeholder management theory, CBIRM
Evaluating	...the way reputational contagion was managed and the consequences that produced	Here: The decisions of the Académie des César, CBIRM
Creating	...an action plan to manage associations considering all stakeholders and reputational issues	Here: construct a plan not to harm the Academy reputation considering the consequences of associations in the long run

Discussion Questions

In order for the case participants to acquire the learning objectives specified in the previous sections it is necessary to generate an engaging discussion. Hence, to ensure the smooth flow of discussion in a desirable direction, the instructor of the case is provided with the following main and assisting questions.

Main Questions

1. Considering the presented situation, would you nominate the movie in question? Why? What factors influence your decision?
2. Assuming that the nomination was done how may it impact the prestige of the awards for general audience and nominees?

Assisting Questions

1. What is the relevance of the César Award and to whom? Who are the key stakeholders?
2. Who are the stakeholders that may be against nominating Polański? Why?
3. Is there anything unusual in the structure of the Academy? Why does it matter?
4. How, if at all, do you think nominating Polański for the César award may affect the nominees?
5. What should be the position of the Academy with regards to social movements such as the #MeToo?
6. What is the position of other award academies worldwide regarding Polański? Should this/these position/s influence the decisions of the Académie des César?

The order of the questions can be freely changed and the amount of questions should be decided by the flow of the discussion.

Following the managerial decisions, two additional questions can be asked to close the debate on the case. It will allow the instructors to summarize what's been said during the discussion, and end the case with something for the audience to think about.

1. Should we judge the artist or the art?
2. What is your view on the Academy's decisions?

Teaching Suggestions

The following section aims to give directions on how to present the case in a way that will keep the audience attentive and engaged. The suggested tools to use during the case session intend to initiate an active discussion with the crowd for a lively and interesting debate.

We suggest instructors to provide the audience with the written case before it is presented. As there are many different stakeholders involved, the audience would gain in getting acquainted with the different aspects of the situation, thus making the context in which the case took place more understandable to them.

The presentation of the case will be supported by visual aids such as a PowerPoint-presentation and a white board. The PowerPoint will be used to display the main points of the case, whereas the white board can instead be used to write down the most important elements needed for the discussion with the audience. Later on, during the discussion, the white board will also help to gather everyone's points-of-views and create an all-around picture of the situation of interest. Although videos are usually great to keep the crowd focused, the case of Polański does not include video-material relevant enough that would add value to the case. Also of importance and included in the PowerPoint, the Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016) will be used to show where the César Institution and Polański stand right now, and how the situation created by Polański's nominations can affect the institution.

The session should start with a brief but intriguing presentation of the issue at hand. The case started with the letter of Valentine Monnier accusing Polanski of rape about a week before the premiere of *An Officer and a Spy*. This letter triggered a set of events shortly before and after the premiere of the movie, and led to the case. The instructor should therefore emphasize those events when introducing the case. The goal here is to catch the audience's attention and make them want to know more. What is the situation? How did we get to this point? Here, the PowerPoint can be a powerful tool to circle the main points and keep the crowd focused on what's important. The presentation should continue with an overview of Polański's past life and scandals. The audience needs to understand the background behind the case that makes it so relevant for the course. Only the main events in his life pertinent to the case should be introduced. It should be brief and clear. Going too much into details could lead to losing part of the audience's attention, which is not the goal. After having presented the main events from Polański's life, the focus should shift to the César Institution and its organigram. As the questions focus on the institution itself, it is important to show how it works and what directorial bodies it comprehends. Finally, all of those elements lead to the questions of the case.

Once the case has been presented, a discussion is to take place based on the case questions. Here, the instructors become moderators. It is now the audience's turn to speak. The moderators give voice to different persons, and should from time to time ask follow-up questions, same as during interviews or focus groups. The aim of the discussion is to create a debate around the César Institution and Polański. There are no wrong

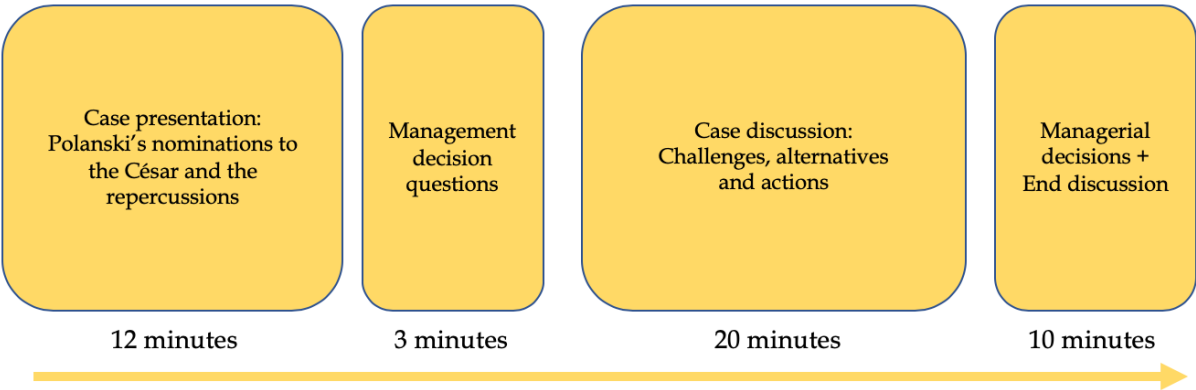
answers and the moderators should instead encourage people to speak their minds. While the discussion takes place, the instructors should also write down the different arguments on the white board. Those can be written on a table in the form of challenges and alternatives/recommendations. It will help to get an overall picture of the case and help to form an opinion on what to do next. The discussion should end with the audience voting between two distinct managerial decisions.

The last step is to present the actual managerial decisions and reaction of different stakeholders from the case. Those managerial decisions should in turn be discussed with the audience, with new questions about the consequences that those choices may have on the institution’s reputation in the future.

Time Plan

The following time plan is an additional support for the instructors to know how much time should be spent on each section. The focus should be on the discussion with the audience, the instructors should therefore leave more time for that part. Based on a 45-minutes time frame, the introduction of the case and its background should take no more than 12 minutes. Next, the management decision questions should be presented to the audience rapidly and should not take more than 2-3 minutes. During the discussion, the questions will remain visible to the crowd. As written above, more time should be allowed for the discussion, as the debate includes everyone. There should therefore be around 20 minutes for the class to discuss. The managerial decisions should take about 5 minutes, followed by the ending discussion about the managerial decisions. **Figure 3** summarizes the timeframe of the case session.

Figure 3. Time plan for the case session



Board Plan

In order to have a structured and effective debate, the discussion will be conducted with the help of a table divided into two sections: challenges and alternatives/recommendations (see **Table 2**). A similar table is widely used for solving live-cases across Universities and case-competitions. The students will therefore be

familiar with the concept, which will allow a more efficient discussion. The first section represents the challenges that the institution is facing before voting for the movies to nominate. The second section represents the alternatives and recommendations that the institution has to remedy the situation. For a well-prepared discussion, the instructors should have a table filled with ideas beforehand. It should, however, not be used to lead the discussion the way the instructors wish it, but rather, to guide the discussion and let the audience discuss different ideas.

In order to support the case audience to construct the table previously mentioned, we suggest the instructors to make the audience identify the most relevant stakeholders in this case. This can be done by using a table as the one shown in **Table 3**, which contains an example of the main stakeholders that may be identified in this case.

Table 2. Possible challenges and alternatives/recommendations

Challenges	Alternatives / Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Polański’s past ● Activist organizations ● Past troubles of the institution ● Institution’s reputation ● Organizational structure of the Academy ● Societal trends (#MeToo) 	<p>Change nothing and nominate the awards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stay consistent and distinguish the man and the artist ● Minimize number of nominations ● Shift the focus on the other stakeholders and proceed with the nominations ● Silence strategy ● Changing the rules of admission for the Academy <p>Decide not to nominate the movie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boycotting Polański’s movie during the vote ● Officially exclude Polański from the competition altogether ● Silence strategy

Table 3. Possible stakeholders

Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members of the Academy ● Nominees ● French Film Industry ● Opinion Makers: media, feminist associations, government, society ● Sponsors/Partners

Epilogue

This case is intended to stress the vital role that associations play in corporate reputation. The presented situation is very challenging taking into consideration that the same thing could have happened over the last 40 years multiple times to many others film awards. At the same time the situation is presented from multiple stakeholders' perspectives which gives the reader a more complete picture of the situation and its complexity. It also presents the power relations between stakeholders' groups.

The character of the case allows it to be used not only for the reputation management but also many other management fields such as communication or association management.

Reflection

As one of the projects we were supposed to consider possible reputational cases and create a real-life case study based on it. First step in the process was reviewing news and all possible sources containing suitable information for the topic. It was followed by the choice of the topic, which was done based on accumulated information and with the help of the project supervisor, professor Mats Urde. The choice of the topic was a challenging activity but after two meetings with professor Urde we decided to prepare a case based on Roman Polański's career and his latest movie, *An Officer and a Spy*, controversies.

The chosen topic was very broad and allowed us to analyse different perspectives of reputational troubles. Therefore, we needed to define our stand and approach to the topic. Therefore, following professor Urde advice we decided to focus on the influence of the reputation of the director (Roman Polański) on the reputation of parties cooperating with him. The stand was presented by employing the example of the French Academy Awards (César). Due to the choice the process of writing the case and managerial decisions was very challenging, because there was new information appearing and the situation was constantly changing during the process. It forced us to change our perspective and reframe the case materials several times. Taking the example of our recorded presentation, which was done the day before the César ceremony took place. The results from the ceremony were interesting enough that we felt they needed to be added in the management decisions and the presentation.

For the purpose of following the iteration process of design, after creating satisfactory materials we decided to test them using our course mates, hoping for getting feedback which would allow us to implement the necessary improvements and repeat the process. It allowed us to find the unclear points and improve the content of the case so it would be understandable for the reader not knowing anything about it prior to reading. This also allowed us to simulate the flow of discussion in order to master the teaching suggestions and measure participants' interest with the case. There was room for slight improvements but overall trail was successful and fruitful.

Another very challenging aspect was the complexity and indirectness of the problem being researched. Due to its characteristics it was hard to find and correctly implement relevant theoretical frameworks. One of the concepts we decided to implement was CBIRM which is broadly used in reputation management, yet there are no examples of using it for a person (personal brand). That made us probably the first to employ this model in such a way which gave rise to doubts and need to proper adjustments. However, the main limitation which hindered the workflow and work quality was the time limit. The project itself consists of case material, teaching notes, presentation and video which had to be done in approximately one month.

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Appendix

Exhibit 1. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016)

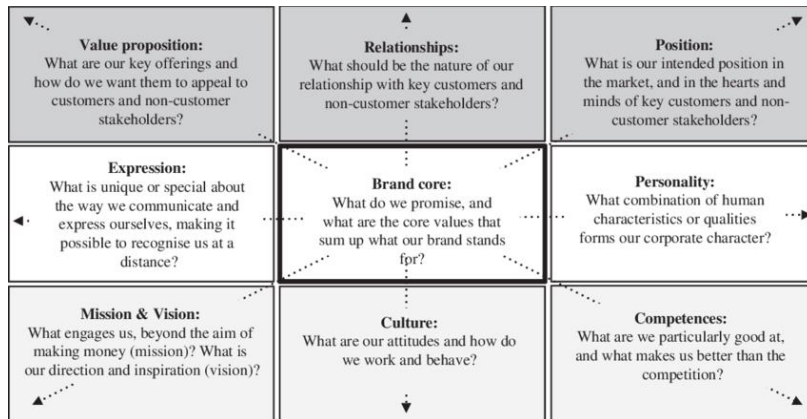


Exhibit 2. Corporate Brand Identity & Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016)

