

God Save The British Monarchy's Brand

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

This teaching plan provides guidelines for the best ways to structure a case presentation examining the split of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex (Prince Harry Windsor and Meghan Markle) from the British Royal Family. Building upon existing literature that frames monarchies as corporate brands, the case exemplifies a management challenge posed to the British Royal Family that necessitates a branding approach. This guide aims to assist presenters in clearly and effectively structuring a case presentation that addresses relevant theories and concepts of corporate brand management, facilitating class discussion regarding key management decisions, and achieving the set learning outcomes. The target audience of this case is master degree students in Mats Urde's Corporate Brand Management and Reputation course. These teaching notes encompass a summary of the main points of the case, a review of theories, concepts, and models pertinent to analysis, and guiding discussion questions. Finally, these notes recommend teaching strategies and propose a pacing plan for the case presentation.

Case Synopsis

On the 8th of January 2020 at 6:00pm GMT, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex dropped an unprecedented, bombshell announcement via Instagram. They communicated their plans to “step back” from the Royal Family, working to achieve financial independence and planning to split their time between Canada and the United Kingdom. Shockwaves reverberated among the public – both throughout the United Kingdom and in countries around the world. The media reported that even close members of the British Royal Family did not expect the announcement. Given Queen Elizabeth's steadfast and stable reign, this highly publicized internal conflict posed a threat to public faith in the continuing durability and relevance of the Monarchy. As such, the announcement necessitated quick agreement on and implementation of the Crown's behavioral precedent to address both the threat at hand and set a course of action for future, potential threats of a similar nature. Therefore, a guiding question for managing this transitional period is:

Should the crown leverage this crisis opportunity to publicly break with tradition and adapt (a market-oriented approach) or use it to strengthen their traditional, formal identity (a brand-oriented approach)?

Rationale for Being an Evergreen Case

This case possesses “evergreen” potential due to its applicability across times and industries. The British Monarchy is no stranger to scandal, controversy, and crisis situations. For example, the Megxit case—which involves a foreign celebrity disrupting the traditional, routine practices of the Royal Family—possesses strong parallels to King Edward VIII's pursuit of a relationship with an American socialite,

which eventually resulted in his abdication. No matter the generation or business focus, brands will always need to efficiently manage their spokespeople and plan and prepare for the consequences of internal conflict. Due to the highly publicized nature of both the facts and public reaction to this case, it provides a rich example of a branding crisis that touches on multiple relevant corporate branding aspects. Applicable concepts include corporate brand identity, reputation, place branding, stakeholder management, organizational culture, corporate communication, and issue and crisis management. The framing of this monarchical “Megxit” crisis within the nationwide “Brexit” crisis adds yet another dimension of crisis outcome unpredictability and elevated importance to public stakeholders. In this crisis, intensive media coverage and global visibility necessitated particularly rapid, thoughtful, and well-aligned action on behalf of the Crown. The challenges and successes of the British Royal Family’s maneuvering in this crisis were particularly well-documented, which provides substantial background for group discussion. With the reputation of Britain’s most long-standing institution at stake, this is an extreme case study in preserving valuable public opinion and facilitating a smooth transition forward from a crisis point. Learnings from this case are particularly of importance for heritage brands founded on tradition, history, and consistency. Furthermore, in the absence of the direct financial considerations common to traditional corporations, studying the British Royal Family allows for a hyper-focused approach to managing reputation in the absence of economic considerations.

Learning Objectives

In analyzing this case and discussing the managerial questions, the participants should achieve the multiple learning objectives detailed below. This case is particularly interesting and original because it analyzes the British Monarchy through the lens of a corporate brand. Using a monarchy in a corporate branding case is fairly uncommon, so participants will have to think critically and creatively in applying different frameworks and theories about corporate branding and adapt them to this highly specific case study in order to find solutions to the managerial questions and debate their implications. The analysis of this case will finally bring a holistic view and deep understanding of this subject.

The Monarchy as a Corporate Brand

As the intent of this case focuses on enforcing concepts and provoking constructive discussion related to the study of corporate brand management, it naturally follows that the Monarchy in this context requires conceptualization as a corporate brand. Seminal literature—primarily from Balmer, Greyser, and Urde—supports such a conceptualization, demonstrating applicability of key aspects of corporate brand identity and reputational strategy in a monarchical setting.

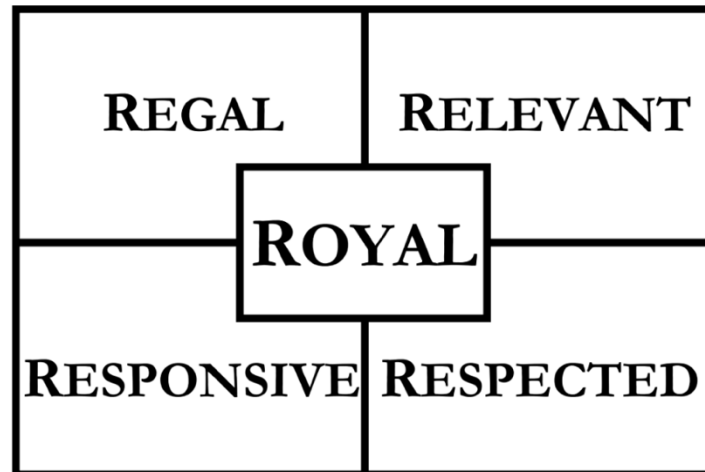
The nickname “The Firm” has long been used to refer to the British Monarchy, directly indicating the parallels between monarchical institutions and corporations. For instance, the Crown—as with any corporation—must answer to a vast array of stakeholders. Its management team assumes the form of Royal Family members and

the courtiers and advisors who support them (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006a, 2006b). Furthermore, the Crown's rich history and symbolism—and the resulting global following cultivated over countless decades—endow the British Monarchy with a brand presence akin to that of an established heritage brand. The Monarchy's widely recognized aesthetic cues make up its trademark, and its visibility allows it to “rent” endorsements to institutions like the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, much in the way that corporations negotiate endorsements. Just as well-known brands offer consumers a sense of stability and identity, the British Monarchy reassures its public stakeholders with its longevity and stoicism and serves as a valuable tool in bolstering individual and group identities among its brand community in the United Kingdom and beyond (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006a, 2006b).

To apply general corporate reputation principles, factors such as degree of consistency over time and management team behavior play roles in public evaluation of reputation. In turn, a positive and far-reaching reputation inevitably contributes to a widespread, devoted public following (Roper & Fill, 2012). The Monarchy—unlike a typical corporation—cannot comprehensively measure efficacy based on financial measures; as such, public opinion (reputation) is arguably the only measure for evaluating the institution's performance. In this context, maintaining a consistent, positive reputation assumes utmost importance in monarchical branding strategy.

Examining the British Monarchy through corporate identity and reputation lenses proves especially valuable in illuminating the interrelationships between the Monarchy as an institution and the highly visible Royal Family at its head. Identity comprises symbolism, communications, and behavior of management (Roper & Fill, 2012), indicating the necessity of considering individual members of the Royal Family in constructing and maintaining the Monarchy's identity over time. Furthermore, the public views reputation on two levels: individual—in which the public applies the reputation of a single actor to the firm as a whole—and corporate, where reputation is judged within an industry-wide context (Roper & Fill, 2012). Thus, in the British Monarchy's case, both its global reputation as Europe's most storied and successful monarchy as well as the actions of the Monarchy's prominent figureheads contribute to perceived reputation. The Firm's corporate brand structure further underscores the importance of Royal Family members as individual units, striving to promote strong—yet highly cohesive and aligned—daughter brands of the Monarchy (Queen Elizabeth II, the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, the Cambridges, and the Sussexes) as tangible faces of the Crown and a means of connecting with and engaging the public.

In assuming a corporate brand management approach to this case, it's possible to think of Meghan Markle as a strong celebrity brand and therefore view her introduction into the Royal Family along the same lines used to evaluate mergers and acquisitions among well-known corporations. Clashing organizational cultures and divergent stakeholder opinions (Roper & Fill, 2012)—along with public uncertainty and scrutiny—contribute to unsuccessful mergers and acquisitions, and this case is no different.



Balmer's application of the Royal Branding Mix model to the British Monarchy (2008) highlights key managerial aspects associated with monarchical brands and ties them to parallel elements in a Corporate Branding Mix model of the same structure. The model comprises five elements, two of which focus on the internal, organizational side of branding the Monarchy (royal and regal), while the remaining three center around the external, stakeholder side of the institution (relevant, responsive, and respected). At the center of the matrix, the royal element deals with the Crown's brand identity, particularly its dimensions of prestige and exclusivity. The regal element denotes the many means by which brand identity is communicated, for example via titles, ceremonies, and behaviors. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge reiterated behavioral precedents for a young, royal family (particularly in their adherence to tradition and familial openness with the press and public) that pleased their global audience. Given the recent precedents, Harry's and Meghan's contrasting decisions exposed them to intense public scrutiny and laid the groundwork for Megxit.

The external-facing model elements carry particular weight with regards to the Megxit case. Relevance implies continued connection to and engagement with Commonwealth citizens, which Harry and Meghan directly challenged in limiting their responsibilities and relocating part-time to North America. Megxit also called the Crown's responsiveness to its stakeholders into question, both with regards to the external public and the internal familial management team. The long-term durability of the British Monarchy depends upon anticipating and responding to change, and this brand identity-sensitive and time-sensitive case demanded a particularly thoughtful monarchical response to reconcile tradition with transformation. Finally, respect for the Crown forms the foundation of its brand image. Queen Elizabeth II's steadfast reign and her sense of responsibility to the public contributed to high levels of respect for the Monarchy as an institution, but Megxit's exposure of the Crown's internal strife illuminated potential misalignments between brand identity and image.

Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix

RELEVANCE

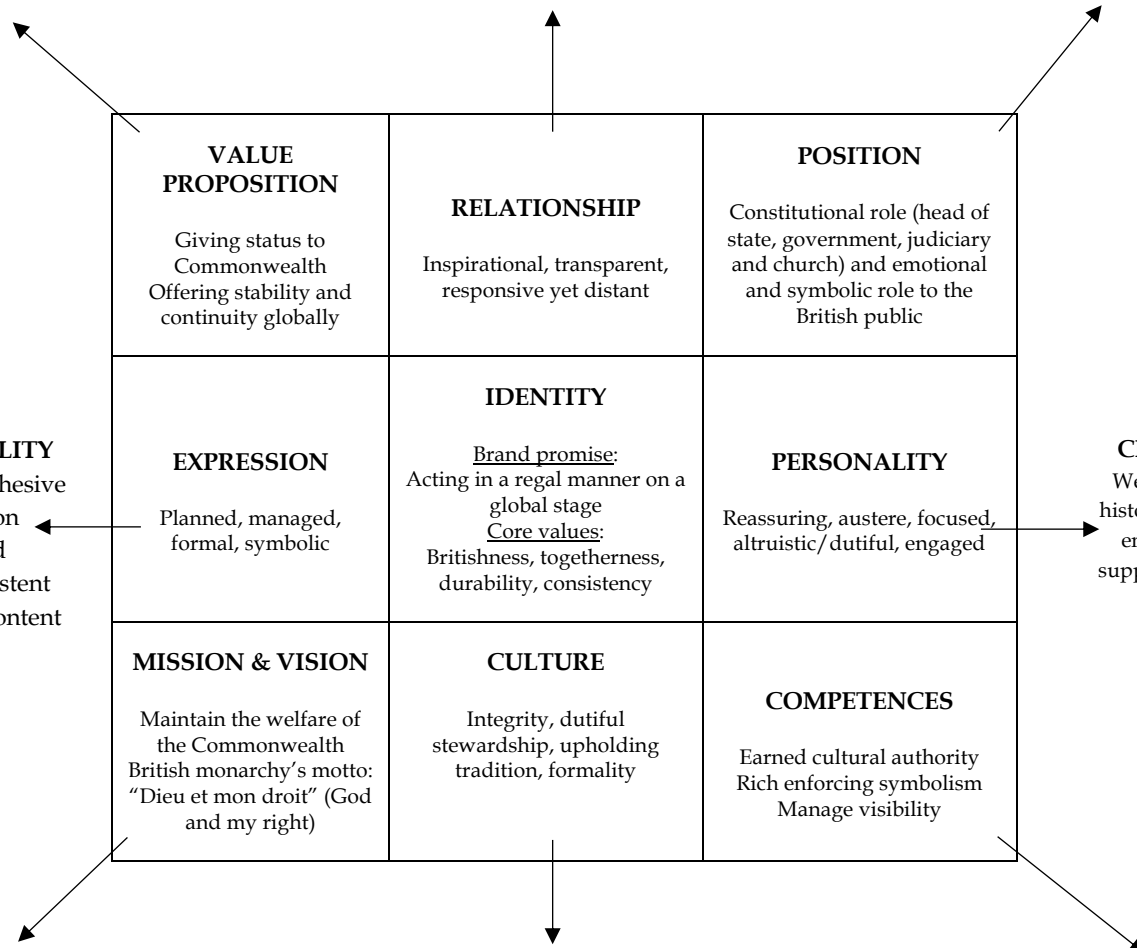
Negotiations between 2 poles: positive (long-term predictability/reliability for stakeholders) vs negative (old-fashioned to the point of being outdated)

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Predictable, reliable, steadfast service

DIFFERENTIATION

It is the most famous monarchy of the world



RECOGNIZABILITY

Clearly official, cohesive communication channels and structured, consistent communication content

CREDIBILITY

Well-documented history and heritage, enduring public support for centuries

WILLIGNESS-TO-SUPPORT

British Monarchy endowed with a higher purpose to serve the public (either God-based or general sense of high purpose/meaning)

RESPONSIBILITY

Expected commitment begins at birth, constant accountability to wide range of global stakeholder

PERFORMANCE

Consistent high quality

The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (CBIRM) provides a useful tool for companies to conceptualize their brands, and is particularly valuable in crisis management situations that require a comprehensive brand understanding (Urde & Greyser, 2016). Not only does the matrix assist with analysis of the internal brand identity, it also facilitates a holistic view of the external, public brand reputation. While all matrix elements work in conjunction with each other to define a brand's identity and reputation, each element in the matrix can be evaluated independently. In a crisis situation, this enables a straightforward pinpointing of misalignments and divergences and allows for a focused, efficient approach to mitigating the branding problem at hand.

The Crown's Megxit crisis touches many identity and reputational elements defined within the matrix. Affecting the brand core and focal point of the matrix, Harry and Meghan's split from the Royal Family threatens the identity of the British Monarchy, challenging its future durability and consistency by calling into question the commitment of key stakeholders: members of the Royal Family. The Queen's grandson William—The Duke of Cambridge—highlighted the unconditional importance of the Crown's durable identity in a statement: "I think I speak for my generation when I say that the example and continuity provided by The Queen is not only very rare among leaders but a great source of pride and reassurance" (Royal.uk, 2015).

Stemming from the threat that Megxit poses to the core identity of the Monarchy, important matrix relationships are touched, particularly the interaction vertical (trustworthiness to responsibility) and the strategy diagonal (willingness-to-support to differentiation). This illuminates the far-reaching nature of Megxit-related threats to the Monarchy's brand. The interaction vertical experiences stressors in both directions. First, Harry's and Meghan's relocation to North America causes public uncertainty related to Royal Family members' accessibility, putting the Crown's responsive relationship with the public on precarious footing. Since the Monarchy is built on a foundation of steadfast service, Megxit shows doubt among the public with regards to the long-term reliability and trustworthiness of the Monarchy as an institution. Second, Harry's and Meghan's split conflicts with the Monarchy's long-standing culture of dutiful stewardship. In relieving some members of the Royal Family of their monarchical commitments, the future of the Crown spokespeople's extent of responsibility is unclear to the public. Examining the strategy diagonal, the Crown's mission and vision rests on both the Monarch's divine right to rule and the Monarchy's resulting devotion to the public welfare. From this, the public's willingness-to-support arises from a mutual understanding of this commitment and an expectation that the Crown and Royal Family will act in its best interests. The Monarch traditionally deploys resources including efforts of the rest of the Royal Family to augment public welfare, so Harry's and Meghan's departure poses questions as to how the Monarchy will enact its mission and vision—and therefore solidify the public's willingness to support—with fewer human resources.

The British Crown is perceived as the most famous monarchy in the world. According to Balmer (2008), for many people the term "monarchy" itself denotes the British Monarchy specifically. Certainly, the Crown's strong normative position as an emotional and symbolic resource—supported by its rich and respected heritage—

differentiates the institution from the other monarchies and promotes the British Crown's global popularity. The Megxit crisis calls into question not just the identity of the British Monarchy, then, but the identities of all monarchies as institutions by way of the British Crown's halo effect on global monarchies.

To sum up, it is noticeable that the Crown stayed true to itself in relations to the competition diagonal and the communication horizontal. They kept a very formal and template style approach in communicating the crisis and stayed very consistent in the way they dealt with this departure showing absolutely no flexibility nor exception. However, this crisis affects them to the core and the strategy diagonal as well as the interaction diagonal got badly damaged. This can lead to a serious dilemma for the brand:

Should the Crown leverage this crisis opportunity to publicly break with tradition and adapt (a market-oriented approach) or use it to strengthen their traditional, formal identity (a brand-oriented approach)?

Place Branding

According to the literature, new types of branding such as “place branding” have arisen from an expansion of the scope of corporate branding. Place branding involves the marketing of places such as cities, regions, or even countries using the same methods that corporations use to market brands. It allows places to compete for tourists, investments, visitors, and cultural events, and enables them to gain a competitive advantage (Roper & Fill, 2012). In the literature, place branding is mistakenly treated as a new phenomenon, but in reality, the concept of leveraging cultural institutions (such as the British Monarchy) in order to communicate the values of a place has existed for centuries.

By analyzing the British Crown through a corporate branding lens, it is clear that the Monarchy is a critical element of Britain's place branding. Indeed, one of the key functions of the Crown is to act as an ambassador of the nation. In other words, the Monarchy is responsible for reflecting the character of the United Kingdom and differentiating it from other sovereign states. Furthermore, the Crown provides a certain status and prestige to both the country as a whole and to the adjacent institutions, products, and services that it endorses (Balmer, 2008). Therefore, from a managerial perspective, the institutional strength of the Monarchy provides Britain with a competitive advantage (here, a stronger perceived brand) over other states (Balmer, 2008).

The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (NBI) determines and ranks consumers' perceptions of different countries. Anholt used a variety of measures in order to build the index: people, governance, exports, tourism, culture and heritage, investment, and immigration (Roper & Fill, 2012). Despite the recent political, social, and economic uncertainty stemming from Brexit, the United Kingdom has surprisingly maintained a stable position within the index, ranking among the top five countries for the past four years (Ipsos, 2018). Given the British Monarchy's established connection to place branding, it clearly contributes to the United Kingdom's positive perception ranking in the index. As the Royal Family is a direct

link to the Crown, it exercises significant influence on perception and reputation from its spokesperson role. In this context, any crisis involving members of the Royal Family possesses the potential to tarnish not simply the brand of the Crown, but also the brand of the United Kingdom.

Stakeholder Management

Freeman’s (2010) stakeholder theory provides a theoretical foundation for organizations to understand how their actions can impact several parties including shareholders, employees, suppliers, consumers, governments, and more. All parties possess their own unique interests and concerns with regards to an organization and its practices. Freeman’s theory posits that the relationships between a business and all its stakeholders are interconnected, such that addressing some stakeholder groups adequately while failing to address other stakeholder groups can have negative impacts on the organization and its reputation. Therefore, it is imperative to consider all stakeholders’ objectives when setting organizational strategy in order to create value for stakeholders in addition to shareholders (Ulmer, 2001). In sensitive and complex crisis situations, managing stakeholder relationships can prove instrumental to reaching a quick, seamless, and amiable resolution (Acquier, Gand & Szpirglas, 2008). It is of the utmost importance to cultivate strong stakeholder relationships prior to times of crisis so that when a crisis hits, the organization can draw on and maintain support from multiple angles, therefore reducing damage to the organization (Ulmer, 2001).

Within the British Monarchy, all stakeholders are identified as follows:

The company	The Monarchy / the Firm
CEO	Queen Elizabeth II
Executive board	The Royal Household of the United Kingdom
Spokespeople for the brand	The Royal Family
Employees	Parliament / ministers
Customers	Citizens of the Commonwealth (15 realms in addition to the UK)
Remaining stakeholders	Other governments, nations, the media, and foreign citizens

In order to analyze this case, participants must understand the hierarchical relationships both among and within key stakeholder groups (in other words, the brand structure of the Monarchy as a corporation). At the head of the “Firm,” the role of Queen Elizabeth II as leader of the Commonwealth parallels that of a CEO. The Royal Family members’ roles entail supporting The Queen in her regal duties, including appearing on her behalf at various events and participating with charitable causes. Because of this, family members can be conceptualized as the Crown’s key spokespeople. Additionally, the Royal Household of the UK can be conceptualized as

the executive board of the Monarchy. It is a collective department which supports all members of the British Royal Family and makes decisions in the name of the Crown. Upper management's (Royal Household) ability to manage team members (Royal Family) relies upon their ability to understand individual's perspectives and feelings regarding the Firm and adjust their messaging and behavior accordingly. Harry's and Meghan's growing discontent with their royal roles was no secret; especially after their highly publicized ITV interview (see timeline), it was clear that the couple felt a lack of support in their royal and personal endeavors. A proactive stakeholder management approach to address Harry's and Meghan's growing concerns could have placed the Monarchy in a more suitable position to control or even eliminate the crisis entirely.

Organizational Culture

The British Monarchy's organizational culture can be classified as communal, exhibiting both high sociability among team members and high solidarity in pursuit of the common business goal (Roper & Fill, 2012). By virtue of family relationships, members of the Royal Family naturally possess strong social ties to each other, such that work life as a part of the Firm is intertwined with family life. The monarchical motto and the faith upon which it's based further unite all Royal Family members under a shared vision. Within its communal cultural status, the Crown tends more towards solidarity than sociability, as seen in its culture of formality and dutiful responsibility (which in turn inform its strategic focus). Throughout the British Monarchy's history, these levels of sociability and solidarity have remained relatively constant, setting a rigid precedent for the Firm's interactions. Thus, the Crown currently possesses an organizational culture that is overpowering and far-reaching in its strength, making the Crown virtually impermeable to unindoctrinated, alternatively-thinking newcomers.

Given the Crown's well-known penchant for stiff adherence to tradition, Meghan Markle's arrival introduced conflict into citizens' and the media's perceived brand image of the Monarchy and its members. As a divorced, biracial, American actress, Meghan represented a stark departure from centuries-old, widely-held public expectations of how a British royal should look and behave. The media unleashed an unprecedented level of harassment on Meghan, making her feel unwelcome and alienated from her new role as a senior member of the Royal Family in spite of public displays of warmth from senior family members like Queen Elizabeth. Davies' corporate reputation chain (2003) sheds light on the importance of employee satisfaction and retention to overall brand reputation. If an employee of an organization feels dissatisfied (for example, Meghan feeling unsupported by the Monarchy's organizational culture), then they will leave the organization. An organization's inability to retain its employees in turn has a negative effect on its reputation.

Corporate Communication

Corporate communication has two main responsibilities: to influence the way stakeholders perceive an organization, and to inform and guide corporate strategy

(Roper & Fill, 2012). Corporate communication can be helpful during strategic events, during periods of strategic development, and in order to maintain strategic positions and stakeholder relationships (Roper & Fill, 2012). The Megxit crisis presents an especially compelling opportunity to evaluate the Crown's use of corporate communication with regard to strategic maintenance and strategic events.

Strategic Maintenance

The Firm failed to properly leverage corporate communication with the aim of strategic maintenance as they did not adequately monitor the surrounding environment. In ignoring Meghan's and Harry's growing discontent with their roles, the Crown neglected to assess and realign the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the couple—key stakeholders in this situation—which resulted in their eventual dramatic split from the Monarchy. This can be seen as a failure within internal corporate communication. Through facilitating more flexible two-way communication between stakeholders and the Crown, the breadth and urgency of Harry's and Meghan's attitudes and intentions would have been promptly and easily recognized, empowering the Crown to deal with the issue swiftly and internally rather than allowing a public crisis situation to develop.

Strategic Events

Given that the Crown lacked internally-targeted corporate communications focused on maintenance, a focus on external corporate communication surrounding a strategic event—the Megxit crisis—could help to stabilize the crisis.

van Riel and Fombrun's corporate communication mix (2007) explains the balance between three types of corporate communication—management, marketing, and organizational—and details how each can be used, either internally, externally or both, with regards to a specific event. In the case of Megxit, management communications from both the Monarchy (the Firm) and The Queen (the CEO) assumed heightened importance.

In examining the roles and tasks of corporate communication in this case, the main aims of the Firm and its members were centered around creating transitional outcomes (like informing the public of Harry's and Meghan's new roles and demonstrating The Queen's familial relationship to the couple) rather than functional outcomes (such as repositioning the Crown) (Roper & Fill, 2012). The official website of the Royal Family was used to communicate updates in a formal and consistent manner, aligned with the communication horizontal of the Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix, which emphasizes structure, consistency and reassuring austerity. On the official royal.uk website, four announcements were made over a period of two weeks in order to inform the public and the media. The Royal Family shared most statements to its official Twitter account in order to quickly disseminate the information and demonstrate its transparency to stakeholders. The release of separate statements from Buckingham Palace (the Monarchy) and from Queen Elizabeth herself marked a notable strategic decision in communicating with the public. While Queen Elizabeth released more personal and emotional statements framing Harry, Meghan, and Archie

as beloved family members, Buckingham Palace issued drier, fact-based statements addressing Harry's and Meghan's official roles and responsibilities.

The diverging nature of the Crown's official statements relates directly to both the functional and transitional levels of corporate communication model, specifically to the tasks of informing and relating. The statements from Buckingham Palace served the purpose of informing all stakeholders with regards to the crisis. This type of communication is linear, where the organization assumes an active role and stakeholders passively receive information (Roper & Fill, 2012). The statements from Queen Elizabeth aimed to create stronger bonds with stakeholders through showcasing her humanity and familial ties; as such, they fulfill the communication task of relating to stakeholders (Roper & Fill, 2012). Furthermore, the statements by The Queen—the symbolic leader of the Monarchy and its human personification—augment credibility and transparency through linking the corporate responsibility of the monarchy with the personal responsibility of Queen Elizabeth herself. This underscores the stewardship and engagement aspects of the Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde & Greyser, 2016).

According to Roper and Fill (2012), style, timing, and tone are essential to assessing the effectiveness of corporate communications. In the case of Megxit, it is evident that the Crown's style of communication aligns with the public information model, as communication flows in one direction (from the Monarchy to the public, but not vice versa) and the purpose is disseminating truthful information through their official website and other media channels such as Twitter. With regards to timing, communications were frequent, with all statements—including a final decision on Harry's and Meghan's continuing roles—were published within two weeks of the initial announcement. Considering tone, Buckingham Palace adopted a high level of formality, while The Queen opted for a slightly less professional and more personal tone. This dual strategy proved particularly effective in addressing Harry and Meghan in both of their roles: as professional spokespeople of the Crown, and as close family members.

Issue and Crisis Management

In explaining the difference between issue and crisis management, Roper and Fill (2012) posit that mismanaged issues can evolve into crises situations. In other words, issues do not necessarily result in a crisis if managed properly. The authors point out that most issues remain latent and docile; however, issues that receive major media attention can rapidly move from latent status into full-blown crisis status.

The unpredictable nature of Harry's and Meghan's announcement is critical to consider in evaluating this case. While the media speculated about the extent to which The Queen and other stakeholders anticipated the Sussexes' decision prior to their January 8th announcement, it remains clear that at the very least, the timing of the announcement (if not the content, as well) came as a surprise to the Crown and Royal Family. The Megxit case showcases how an internal issue—replete with warning signs—escalated as a result of the Monarchy's lack of action in addressing Meghan's and Harry's dissatisfaction. What at that point was a serious issue immediately assumed crisis status due to the global media attention and public interest the

Sussexes' announcement received. The intense public scrutiny of the crisis required the Firm to reach a managerial solution quickly in order to maintain its reputation as powerful and exemplary; if the issue had remained internal to the Monarchy, it would not have assumed so much time sensitivity. In any corporate crisis situation, rapid decision-making in the face of external pressure can cause some important factors to be overlooked. This was an even greater concern in the Megxit crisis given the British Monarchy's long-standing renown for its thoughtful and structured approach to decision-making. As such, the crisis placed the Monarchy in an especially challenging situation for which it was not well-equipped to deal with.

According to Greyser (2009), most crises are inextricably linked to the essence of the brand, meaning that the crisis threatens the brand's meaning and ability to succeed. In evaluating the Megxit case, the Monarchy's brand essence—rooted in its durability, togetherness, and consistency—was clearly called into question with Harry's and Meghan's decision to split from the Royal Family. When looking at the Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix, this inconsistency between the state of the crisis and the Monarchy's brand core illuminated misalignments in the interaction vertical, particularly with regards to Royal Family members' predictability, reliability, durability, and duty. These misalignments hint at threats to overall reputation.

Overview of Key Learnings

This case study of the Megxit crisis helps participants understand corporate identity and brand reputation in times of a crisis or unexpected situation. The following table illustrates the key learning objectives based on this particular case.

Remembering	... how a crisis affects a corporate brand with a heritage	Here: CBIRM for the British Crown
Understanding	... how monarchies can be seen as a brand	Here: Royal branding mix, stakeholder management, brand identity
Applying	... key corporate brand theories and models to solve the crisis and come up with managerial decisions	Here: stakeholder management, corporate communication, issue and crisis management
Evaluating	... key concepts of corporate branding in order to have a full understanding of the case background	Here: CBIRM, place branding, organizational culture
Creating	... an action plan for being brand- or market-oriented	Here: Monarchy should keep their traditions and stay consistent with their history or should adapt to modern times

Discussion Questions

Main Question

- Should the Crown leverage this crisis opportunity to publicly break with tradition and adapt (a market-oriented approach) or use it to strengthen their traditional, formal identity (a brand-oriented approach)?

Assisting Questions

- How can monarchies be perceived as a brand? What are the typical corporate branding elements that are related to the Crown?
- Who are the stakeholders involved, and which group(s) are most important?
- How could the crisis have been prevented?
- How active of a role should the Crown assume in denouncing unfair or inaccurate press communications about the Monarchy and its Royal Family?
- How does Megxit affect the corporate reputation of the British Monarchy?
- Who should be responsible for communications, and why?
- How can the Monarchy ensure that it maintains credibility? Stability?
- How may the crisis affect the place branding of the United Kingdom?
- What type of organizational culture does the Firm have (linked to model)?

Depending on the audience’s debate outcome, here are some guiding questions according to brand-oriented and market-oriented decisions:

Maintain brand orientation	Adopt market orientation
Which elements of tradition should the Monarchy keep?	Which elements should the Monarchy adapt and/or modernize?
How can the Monarchy remain consistent to their identity with regards to the decisions made about Harry and Meghan’s requested role?	How can the Monarchy “rebrand” Harry’s and Meghan’s new role in a way that is consistent with its core values, mission, vision, and identity?
After years of perpetuating a highly consistent, “typical” Royal Family model across daughter brands (Elizabeth and Philip, Charles and Diana, William and Kate), can the Monarchy adapt to include more divergent daughter brands like Harry and Meghan?	

Teaching Suggestions

This section lays out additional teaching suggestions for case presenters to enhance the teaching process. The primary aim of these teaching suggestions is to provide guidelines on interactive teaching methods, media usage, and other advice to structure the discussion and frame decisions made by the participants.

Pre-Presentation and Introduction Phase

It is important to divide tasks and responsibilities among presenters beforehand as this allows for greater efficiency and structure during the presentation. When presenting, a particularly effective arrangement includes two moderators to present the information and one team member to write down ideas and discussion topics on a whiteboard as the case and discussion progress. Of course, an individual presenter can handle all the responsibilities of this case presentation, but this may require flexibility and minor modifications.

To prepare participants to solve the case, case background information will be provided by email one day before the presentation and physical copies of the case will be handed out at the beginning of the presentation itself. Additionally, participants should be asked to prepare name tags to facilitate personal communication throughout the case day.

Media and other forms of visual presentations (e.g. PowerPoints, flip charts, whiteboards) are highly suggested as they allow for greater audience engagement with the topic and add another learning component to the spoken words of the presenter(s). Apart from the visuals, presenters should use speaker notes to guide them throughout the case solving and ensure the class discussion maintains a productive course. The whiteboard is an effective tool for compiling key discussion points and creating a clear overview of all the ideas discussed. The board plan section at the end of this section will elaborate on how to use the whiteboard.

Discussion Phase

Before the discussion officially starts, all participants should be asked whether they have any questions prior to the case solving. Afterwards, it is suggested to explain the role of the participants in solving the case in order for a more realistic situation. Within a traditional business case, the role of participants would be the board executives of a company. In this case, the role is defined as The Queen's trusted private secretary, a member of the Royal Household. The Royal Household is a collective department that supports the British Royal Family in the name of the Crown.

Presenters should maintain a neutral position at all times in order to avoid influencing the discussions and decisions among participants. The main role of the presenters is merely to present and guide the discussion. It is important to find negotiate a balance between the active and passive participants and ensure that passive participants are involved in answering the main discussion question.

To keep the participants focused on their primary objective of answering the main discussion question, the question should be written out on a visual screen or flipchart without any distractions. A key suggestion for organizing the outputs of group discussion is to divide all discussed ideas into three sections: challenges, alternatives and actions. This will be further elaborated in the board plan section.

Concluding Phase

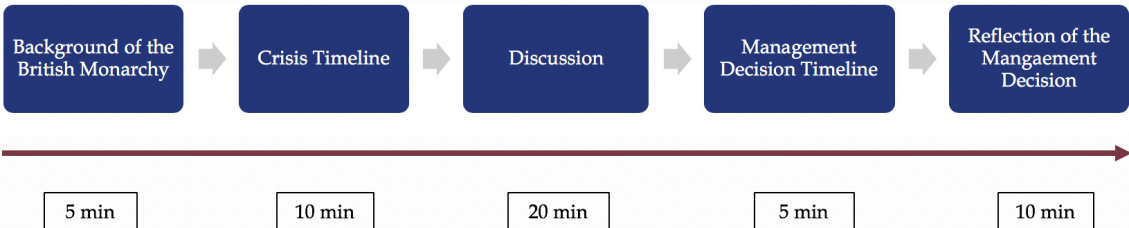
When the discussion phase has ended, a volunteer should summarize the case and the key discussion points. The presenters then have the opportunity to ask all participants to answer the key question: should the Crown leverage this crisis opportunity to publicly break with tradition and adapt to modern times (a market-oriented approach) or use it to strengthen their traditional, formal identity (a brand-oriented approach)? To vote for the final management decision, different voting tools can be used, such as colored ballot cards, digital tools like Kahoot, or interactive presentation software such as Mentimeter.

After the vote, the speakers should present the actual management decision made by the Monarchy and ask participants to evaluate the decisions.

Time Plan

A time plan gives presenters a clear overview of the amount of time needed to present each part of the case presentation. The proposed time plan for this case is presented below and specifies timing for background overview, the crisis timeline, group discussion, the management decision timeline, and reflection on the management decision. The total amount of given time is 45 minutes. This includes class discussions during the case but excludes individual team deliberations.

Considering that the Megxit crisis received major media coverage, it is assumed that most participants will be aware of some of the background information. Nevertheless, the presentation will begin with background information on the Crown and Queen Elizabeth to ensure all participants possess an equal basic understanding. A discussion of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix follows, with the crisis timeline after that. Participants will have time to discuss the case, guided by the main question and assisting questions outlined in this teaching plan. The case concludes with the presentation of the actual managerial decisions and a participant reflect on the chosen solutions.



Board Plan

The board plan includes three distinct steps. First, due to the relatively atypical nature of the chosen case – conceptualizing the Monarchy as a corporate brand – it is recommended that the audience identifies parallel elements between corporate branding and the Crown (detailed in Table 1) in order to start the analysis on a strong and equal foundation. Second, defining the different stakeholders around this case is an important step for holistic understanding and analysis. A possible list is displayed in Table 2. Finally, it is strongly advised that presenters facilitate participants’ creation of a table containing the three categories – challenges, alternatives, and recommendations – suggested to guide resolution of this crisis management case (possible answers provided in Table 3).

Table 1: Corporate brand elements

How is the Crown perceived as a brand? What are the typical corporate branding elements that are related to the Crown?	
Identity and organizational culture	Aesthetic cues
Answer to vast array of stakeholders	Brand community
Rich history and symbolism	Corporate reputation principles: degree of consistency over time & management team behavior
Global presence	Success measures based on public opinion; reputation (rather than financial performance)
Heritage brand	Daughter brand

Table 2: Who are the stakeholders involved?

Corporate brands	Monarchies
The company	The Monarchy / the Firm
CEO	Queen Elizabeth II
Executive board	The Royal Household of the United Kingdom
Spokespeople for the brand	The Royal Family
Employees	Parliament / Ministers

Customers	Citizens of the Commonwealth (15 realms in addition to the UK)
Remaining stakeholders	Other governments, nations, the media, and foreign citizens

Table 3: Possible answers for challenges, alternatives and actions

Challenges	Alternatives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder dissonance comes from inside, exacerbated by outside media Crisis affects core values (Britishness, durability, togetherness, consistency) Monarchy’s particularly rigid and traditional personality and culture Crisis has bigger implications; affects the entire monarchy Widespread, global reach of crisis United Kingdom’s reputation is affected Crisis was unexpected Represents first voluntary departure from the Royal Family Uncertainty regarding future path and relevance of British Monarchy Combines institutional and familial matters (business and personal affairs) 	<p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick, spontaneous communication vs. delayed, planned communication Formal vs. informal vs. a mix of both Communication from one source vs. multiple sources <p><u>Organization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change vs. maintain current organizational culture of Monarchy <p><u>Brand Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market-oriented vs. brand-oriented Reposition Crown vs. maintain status quo 	<p><u>Transparency</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize press conferences, official statements, social media, and owned webpages Note and directly respond to public concerns <p><u>Clear Action Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize Harry’s and Meghan’s roles Reiterate the Crown’s values and purpose, note any shifts Make a procedure for possible future departures

Epilogue

This particular case encourages participants to think creatively and critically about how a crisis situation should be managed and how brand reputation can be affected by unexpected or negative events. The central question in this case—whether the brand should use a brand-oriented or market-oriented approach to solve the crisis—allows for many fruitful points of discussion. When thinking about this case, a key element that emerges deals with the reputational side of brand management, which is

connected to the strong heritage and identity of the Monarchy. As this crisis emerged very recently (January 2020), the managerial decision is fairly recent; while plans for Harry's and Meghan's transition have been made public, nothing has actually been implemented yet and the public has yet to see how the decision will play out in the long term. It is in participants' interest to stay informed on this case and evolving developments to fully understand the implications.

All in all, the events, decisions made and results of this specific case can be used in a multitude of corporate brand and reputation management contexts as they incorporate universal and evergreen concepts like stakeholder management, human resource management or communication management. Rooting this case in conceptualization of a non-traditional business entity as a corporate brand adds value in encouraging participants to think creatively and innovatively in applying course learnings.

Reflection

The process of creating a case from scratch is multi-faceted and requires a creative approach in order to explain a dynamic business situation from multiple angles. Especially of importance in crafting a case is the aim to deliver the business management story in such a way that it serves as a learning challenge for fellow students, presenting the opportunity to apply knowledge from the course and leverage critical thinking and teamwork skills to reach potential solutions.

In deciding our case's focus, we strove to find a case that would inspire our classmates to think outside of the box when applying new theories and concepts. Additionally, we reflected upon cases we'd enjoyed in previous courses as a team. We determined that the most successful case presentations—or those with the most stimulating, in-depth class discussions—were ones in which many students shared a prior knowledge of the issue presented (typically resulting from extensive news coverage accessible by and well-known to many students). Therefore, we aimed to engage our classmates by incorporating a hot-button issue that all discussion participants would have at least a basic level of familiarity with, which led us to the British Royal Family's incredibly recent Megxit crisis. Finally, we thought a case with an emotional, human connection would particularly resonate with our classmates. The Megxit case spans two poles of emotion. On one hand, case participants will likely possess a reverent, nostalgic admiration for the long-standing tradition of the Crown and the Queen's commitment to continuing that legacy. On the other hand, participants—especially those familiar with the media's coverage of Harry and Meghan—can empathize with the stressors placed on the couple as a result of their royal affiliation. Thus, case discussion will be underscored by sympathy and understanding for both “sides” represented in this case.

Upon deciding to investigate Megxit and the British Monarchy through a corporate crisis management lens, we began with a literature review based on course lectures and assigned texts that spanned theories and concepts related to corporate branding and reputation. Mats Urde provided particularly helpful guidance and shared relevant articles encompassing his own research and that of his colleagues,

Balmer and Greyser. We undertook additional research to familiarize ourselves with the facts surrounding Megxit and the complicated histories—of both the Monarchy and Harry’s and Meghan’s hyper-public relationship—in which the crisis unfolded. Armed with a substantial body of knowledge spanning generations of Monarchy history and multiple types of literature and documents (academic journal articles, news articles, press releases, and social media posts, to name a few), we embarked on a journey to weave the elements together.

Of course, one of the major challenges of examining the Monarchy in a business management context arose from its status as a non-traditional corporate entity. To this end, the literature by Urde, Balmer, and Greyser was immensely helpful in providing frameworks for us to conceptualize the Monarchy as a corporate brand, but the case still required substantial creative thinking on our parts to make the management connections come to life and apply clearly to realistic business situations.

Furthermore, the case represented a significant ideological shift from our typical student activities—rooted in learning from lecturers and answering their questions—to typical lecturer responsibilities encompassing teaching to our classmates and guiding their learning through asking pertinent and helpful questions. As with any new method of thinking, this challenged us to explore principles of effective storytelling and add something here. All group members agreed that the structure of this assignment pushed us to understand our case material at a deeper level and were excited for the task of working on deliverables that were substantially different from typical student assignments.

While our case required the assessment of many opinionated news articles, surprisingly, we did not find it difficult to separate fact from opinion when writing our case. Throughout their relationship, Harry and Meghan exercised openness with the press and were clear in communicating their personal feelings and motives. Regular press releases, which by nature are relatively fact-based, certainly helped in crafting a case that was true to reflecting the realities of the situation (at least, to the extent that a member of the public can feasibly deduce).

Overall, this assignment presented a thought-provoking challenge with regards to implementing learnings from the Corporate Brand Management and Reputation course. The creativity that this assignment inspired will be critical as we progress in our brand management careers. Not only has this case been instrumental for our own learning; we believe that future audiences of this case will find its rich discussion points to be engaging and applicable to corporate brand management across industries.

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