

Crown and Crisis: The Norwegian Royal House Under Pressure

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 note is designed to support presenters or presenters who use the Norwegian Royal House case in an educational setting. It includes reflections and recommendations to consider when planning and leading a case discussion. The teaching plan serves as a guidance tool for introducing the case to students and suggests what to consider and include when presenting it. The teaching plan's aim is to assist the instructor in structuring a clear and engaging session while also identifying and problematizing the case's complexity. Additionally, proposed learning objectives are included to guide instruction and help students understand the case's main perspectives. Ultimately, the document provides a suggested board plan, offering an example of how to approach the case in practice and pointing towards potential key takeaways.

Case Synopsis

The Norwegian Royal House is facing a severe legitimacy crisis in February 2026. Public support for the monarchy has dropped from 70% to 60%, while trust in Crown Princess Mette-Marit has declined dramatically. The immediate triggers are two overlapping controversies. First, Marius Borg Høiby, son of the Crown Princess, is on trial facing 38 criminal charges, including assault and drug-related offences. Although he holds no formal royal role and is legally separated from the institution, the public and media increasingly associate his actions with the Royal House, intensifying scrutiny of the family. Second, the newly released 'Epstein files' reveal extensive past contact between Mette-Marit and the late convicted Jeffrey Epstein, raising questions about her judgment and suitability as Norway's future queen. Since the monarchy's authority relies on public trust and continued taxpayer funding, reputational damage directly threatens its long-term legitimacy and, essentially, existence within a modern democracy.

As a communication and branding consultant to the Head of Communications at the Norwegian Royal House, how would you reason in this situation, and *what actions would you recommend in the short, medium, and long term?*

Learning Objectives

The case touches on several topics within corporate brand management and reputation, including brand identity, corporate communication, and crisis management. When presenting the case, it is important that the instructor eventually steers the discussion towards the underlying theories and models that link to these topics. Working with and applying such theories and models is a central part of the learning process. The key learning objective is therefore to ensure that the participants are provided with sufficient tools to apply the same models in comparable cases. In the

following section, several academic concepts relevant to the Norwegian Royal House case are presented.

Heritage Brands

Brand heritage, according to Urde, Greyser, and Balmer's (2007) *Heritage Quotient (HQ)* framework, is a particular aspect of a brand's identity that may be identified in its past performance, longevity, core values, utilization of symbols, and organizational viewpoint, as its history is crucial. A heritage brand is a brand that actively leverages its history as an asset to build its identity and value proposition (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007). **Figure 1** illustrates the application of the framework to the case of the Norwegian Royal House.

As a heritage or historic brand, the Norwegian Royal House obtains its legitimacy from tradition and continuity rather than from democratic elections. The Norwegian Royal House's heritage is a primary source of constitutional and ceremonial figures, fostering heritage and serving as a symbol of unity in Norway. A heritage brand has five key elements that define it (i.e., Track Record, Longevity, Core Values, Use of Symbols, and History Important to Identity). In this case, these elements are being tested by the Mette-Marit situation and her son, Marius Borg Høiby's trial.

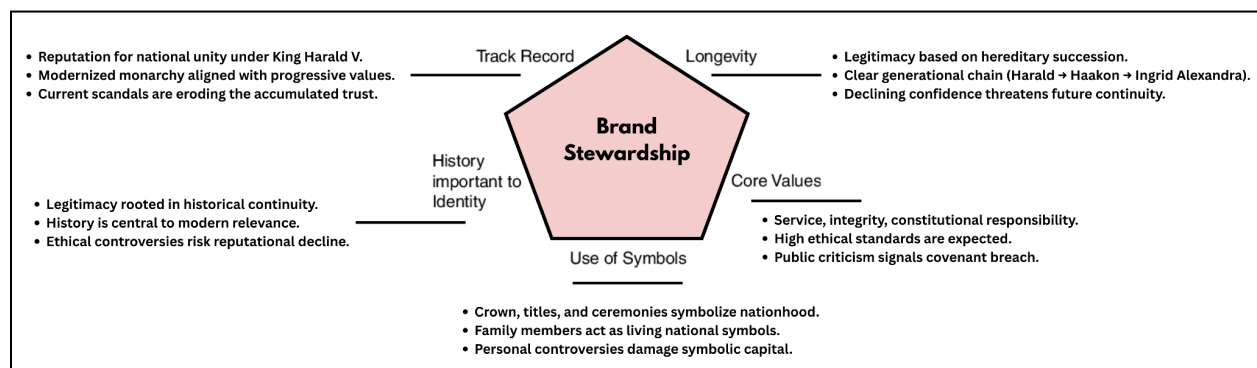


Figure 1. Brand Stewardship (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007).

Track Record highlights "demonstrated performance" (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007) and the promise of delivery over time. King Harald V has built a strong track record as a "father of the nation" who modernised the house to support modern views. However, the Crown Princess's current track record regarding her 'poor judgment' in her links to Jeffrey Epstein and her son Marius Borg Høiby's 38 criminal counts is undermining the brand's "accumulated credibility and trust" (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007).

Longevity is central to the monarchy, as its legitimacy relies on heritage and continuity rather than on elections. As only 28.9% of Norwegians currently think

Mette-Marit is qualified to be the future Queen, this problem is even more critical as it compromises the extended chain of succession.

Core Values highlights that heritage brands rely on "long-held, articulated core values" (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007). For a monarchy, these include dedication to service and high ethical conduct. The Prime Minister's public statement that the Crown Princess failed to meet the expected high ethical standards directly undermines the brand's core values.

Use of Symbols includes monarchies, which are prime illustrations of institutions that use symbols, such as the Crown or the Royal Guard, to convey meaning. In this case, the symbols are being tarnished; for instance, social media critics are arguing about Mette-Marit's qualifications to become Queen of Norway.

History is Important to Identity; in this case, the Royal House believes its right to exist in a modern democracy is tied to its historical reputation. For heritage brands, an institution's decline and demise may result from activities that are contrary to its values and traditions.

Furthermore, **brand Stewardship** is vital to managing a heritage brand, as it requires the management mindset needed to nurture and protect it. A steward needs to realize that the brand is more substantial than they are, and that they are merely a link in the chain. As Head of Communications, Guri Varpe is currently the brand steward facing a "formidable crisis of confidence." Two key stewardship principles become her core challenge, namely safeguarding trust and adaptability.

Safeguarding Trust is the foundation of a heritage brand's trust. Trust in Mette-Marit has dropped from 7.4 to 3.7 on a ten-point scale in just one month. Varpe has to determine whether the traditional 'playbook of silence' has come to resemble a confession of guilt rather than the dignified distance usually expected of a steward.

Adaptability in stewardship does not indicate inaction; it requires remaining relevant over time. As King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden noted, a monarch in a modern society means "[adapting] the role by meeting the demands of a changing world" (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007).

Monarchies as Corporate Brands

The Norwegian Royal House functions as a corporate brand given its use of visual symbols, longevity, and the need to meet the demands of its many stakeholders. As a corporate brand, the Norwegian monarchs are its face. When the personified representation of the brand dies, the brand does not die; the institution transcends individual monarchs. In other words, there is a distinction between person and institution (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2006). However, a heritage brand whose strength derives from longevity and defining the national identity may still be threatened by reputational trouble.

The 5 R's framework developed by Urde, Greyser, & Balmer (2006) can be used to help analyse the current crisis the Norwegian Royal House is facing. This framework highlights how the institution's heritage and personal actions impact the Crown's brand equity and legitimacy.

Royal is defined as being 'set apart' by constitutional right and heritage (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2006). Despite being born a commoner, Mette-Marit's marriage to Prince Haakon provided her with the constitutional right and status as the heir to the throne. Although her legislative status as Princess is supported by the constitution, the public has begun questioning her right to succession due to the release of the Epstein files.

Regal behavior is at the heart of the great expectations set for monarchs (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2006). The Norwegian Royal House has defined the term regal as a down-to-earth, simple lifestyle with a focus on national unity in a royal manner. As the Prime Minister stated, Mette-Marit demonstrated poor judgment and failed to meet high ethical expectations. This is a direct accusation that she has failed to remain regal. Despite not being a legal family member of the Royal House, her son Marius's 38 criminal charges are viewed as profoundly un-regal behavior by someone seen as part of the 'Royal family'.

Relevant to its stakeholders means maintaining affinity with a variety of stakeholders in the modern setting (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2006). As the Norwegian Royal House relies on public funding, this mandate requires it to maintain a high level of transparency and ethical conduct to remain relevant to its funders. The accusations against Marius and the revelation of Mette-Marit's ties to Epstein revealed a breach of the expected transparency and ethical conduct.

Responsive signifies that the Royals should be adaptive to political, ethical, and media changes (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2006). To apply this in the modern world, there must be a balance between the traditional silence and transparency. The Norwegian Royal House is currently failing to adapt by maintaining its 'playbook of silence.' As the public demanded a statement, Prince Haakon publicly stated that "he can not allow her to make a statement," which further emphasises their inability to adapt their responsiveness.

Respect functions as the primary indicator of a monarchy and its performance. Respect is the earning of the public's approval through duty and consistent performance (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2006). Currently, the respect for the monarchy has decreased from 70% to 60%. Mette-Marit's personal trust rating has collapsed, and a majority of the Norwegian population sees her unfit to become their next Queen.

Corporate Brand Identity

The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (CBIRM) is an extensive managerial framework that integrates an organization's internal identity with its external reputation. As a tool, it helps align, define, and develop corporate brands by

providing an overview of essential elements that create an organization's characteristics. Additionally, it captures the stakeholders' perceptions of the elements (Urde & Greyser, 2016). As monarchies function as corporate brands, this applies to the CBIRM and allows analysis of how the incident's reputation has affected the Royal brand. Firstly, analyzing the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) framework developed by Urde (2013) would allow us to take an inside-out perspective and explore whether the two frameworks align or not.

The CBIM consists of nine interrelated elements organized into a three-by-three grid, categorized by internal, external, and the bridging point (internal/external). At the very heart of the CBIM is the brand core, a hub that influences and reflects the other parts of the CBIM. The brand core consists of the brand promise and other supporting core values. This functions as the northern light for organizations during brand-building (Urde, 2013). **Figure 2** visualizes the application of the CBIM to the case.

External / Internal / Internal	External	Value Proposition Non-political point for national unity, social cohesion, and stability	Relationship Trust and respect with a strong bond to the people, and a rolemodel for the people	Position The prestigious and unifying symbol of Norway
	External / Internal	Expression Traditional royal symbolism through a modern and inclusive tone to express their identity as the people's monarchy	Brand Core "Alt for Norge" (Everything for Norway), tradition, high ethical standards, and national representation	Personality Royal but balancing this status by being approachable and human characters by being authentic, humble, ethical, transparent, and inclusive
	Internal	Mission & Vision The mission is to represent Norway and its citizens as a symbol of unity. The vision is to be a modern and adaptable to societal changes	Culture Heritage-based institution that is deeply rooted in tradition while embracing modernization	Competence Stewardship of national heritage through representation of Norway domestically and internationally

Figure 2. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013).

In a coherent brand, all nine elements align (Urde, 2013). In this case, the brand is under public pressure due to a collapsing brand core stemming from the breach of the Royal House's fundamental promise. To better understand the CBIM through the addition of a CBIRM, it is necessary to further examine how the situation affected the institution's reputation. The CBIRM expands the CBIM by adding an external layer of reputational elements (Urde & Greyser, 2016). These elements address how the

stakeholders perceive the brand. There must be a match between an organization's identity and reputation for it to maintain its 'license to operate.'

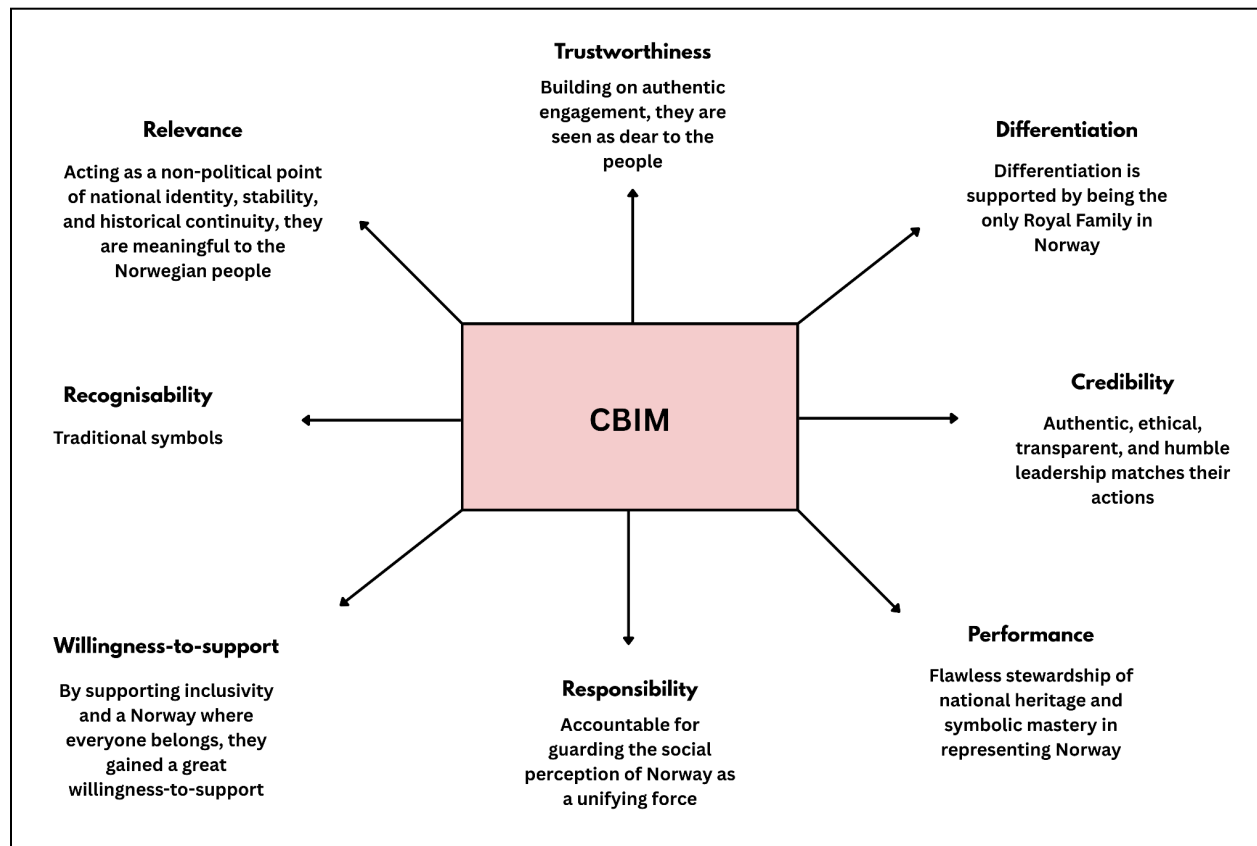


Figure 3. Corporate Brand Identity & Reputational Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016).

Applying both the CBIM and CBIRM, we can easily compare which elements have been affected by the incidents. In the reputation element of trustworthiness, there is a complete failure as it no longer aligns with its promise, 'Alt for Norge' (Everything for Norway). Undermining the promise consequently resulted in the monarchy no longer being viewed as a safe and exemplary representative family, but rather as one whose actions imply that it is above the law and can do as it sees fit, in that way failing to align with its desired relationship.

Furthermore, responsibility is no longer aligned due to the breach of being accountable for being the guardian of national values. By breaching this role, the perception of the public has shifted towards seeing an institution with a failure of trust. The institution is no longer seen as an unifying force but as an institution that has failed at its primary duty in protecting the moral standards it is supposed to symbolize.

Additionally, the reputational element of credibility is facing significant backlash, as the actions of the Royal House's representatives do not align with its values of transparency and ethics. The institution's personality has been exposed as a facade.

Lastly, willingness-to-support is plummeting as support for the monarchy is at a record-low of 60%. Previously fuelled by high support, there is now a shift towards public questioning of the institution's future. The erosion of trust in the institution reveals that its mission has been overshadowed by the personal conduct of its representatives. For the first time in decades, the willingness-to-support is being challenged.

Corporate Communication

Corporate communication, which is the set of activities that aligns internal and external communications, aims at upholding a favourable relationship with key stakeholders (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, cited in Roper & Fill, 2012). In essence, the core responsibility of corporate communication is to shape the stakeholders' perceptions of the organization. Hence, corporate communication is strongly interlinked with reputation and may also guide corporate strategy (Roper & Fill, 2012).

According to Roper & Fill (2012), there are three core dimensions of corporate communication. In *management communications*, managers convey the organization's vision and values internally and externally, aligning employees while shaping stakeholder perceptions. *Marketing communications* is an audience-centered activity that uses messages to shape key audiences' perceptions of the brand. Such activities balance factual information with emotional cues in order to protect and position the overall brand. *Organizational communications* is the process by which the organization engages with corporate audiences through activities such as public relations, media relations, and public affairs. These communications centre exclusively around corporate issues, focusing on building acceptance, legitimacy, and long-term relationships. This exemplifies how effective corporate communication both builds trust and enables organizations to respond strategically to issues or crises.

Issues Management

In issues management, it is important to continuously monitor the environment for potential issues. A pivotal part of such a scanning is to analyze the different stakeholders that are involved in the organization. Based on stance and relevance, there are four categories of stakeholders (Nutt & Blackoff, 1992, cited in Roper & Fill, 2012). *Problematic stakeholders* oppose the organization on the issue, but have little power or influence, thereby representing little threat. *Antagonistic stakeholders* oppose the organization on the issue and are also important due to their influence. *Low-priority stakeholders* support the organization on the issue, whilst having little power and influence. *Supporter stakeholders* are important to the organization, since they both have

power and influence and support the organization on the issue. The relevant stakeholders of the Norwegian Royal House are categorized as follows in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Stakeholder categorization.

National and International Media	Antagonistic Stakeholder
Critical Political Actors	Antagonistic Stakeholder
Critical Members of the Norwegian Public	Antagonistic Stakeholder
Marius Borg Høiby	Antagonistic Stakeholder
The Norwegian Government	Supporter Stakeholder
Loyal Members of the Norwegian Public	Supporter Stakeholders
Charities and Partner Organizations	Low-Priority Stakeholder

Having assessed the stakeholders and their potential influence on the issue(s) at hand, it is possible to prepare effective response strategies. According to Roper and Fill (2012), there are four key strategies in this regard. A *silence strategy* is used when an issue is perceived as low threat or when the organization is uncertain how to respond, allowing it to buy time and limit escalation. An *accommodation strategy* involves adapting internally to significant external pressures and communicating these changes widely to align the organization with its environment. When an issue's impact is unclear, a *reasoning strategy* is suitable, in which the organization engages in dialogue with key stakeholders to better understand the situation and develop a reasoned response. The *advocacy strategy* aims to protect organizational objectives by reframing the issue and influencing public opinion.

These strategies can be used on their own or in combination. In the Norwegian Royal House case, several strategies are visible. Not commenting further during the trial, refraining from attending court, and continuing official duties as normal are all examples of a silence strategy employed by the Crown Prince and Crown Princess. An accommodation strategy is largely visible in how the Royal House officially responds to the Epstein issue: Mette-Marit issues a direct apology and accepts responsibility for poor judgment. Moreover, subtle elements of an advocacy strategy are evident when Crown Prince Haakon points out that Marius Borg Høiby is not a member of the Royal House, which essentially reframes the issue from a royal scandal to a private citizen facing legal proceedings.

Crisis Management

Crises are separated into three core phases: pre-impact, impact, and readjustment (Roper & Fill, 2012). The *pre-impact phase*, involving scanning and preparation, is where the organization identifies potential risks and attempts to anticipate escalation. The Norwegian Royal House, or at least certain members of it, were aware of both Mette-Marit's previous connections with Jeffrey Epstein and Marius Borg Høiby's problematic behaviour prior to the crisis. However, it is unclear to what extent the warning signs were identified or managed before the controversies intensified. The *impact phase* begins when the crisis becomes public and threatens organizational legitimacy. This phase is marked by the Royal House's dramatic decline in public trust, political criticism, and sustained media scrutiny. The *readjustment phase* concerns long-term recovery and realignment after the impact phase. Due to the ongoing nature of the case, this phase has not yet occurred. Court proceedings, continued media attention, and persistent scrutiny indicate that the Royal House is still operating within the impact phase. In the crisis management case of the Spanish monarchy, a central part of the readjustment phase was to implement structural reforms aimed at restoring trust and reinforcing institutional legitimacy, including financial transparency, stricter moral standards, and a clear break from individuals linked to prior scandals.

When organizations are hit with crises, reputational damage is often the outcome. The likelihood of recovering from a crisis depends on the organization's reputational capital. Similarly, the rate of readjustment after a crisis is partly dependent upon the stakeholder-held image of the organization prior to the crisis. If the organization had a strong reputation, its communication would be received favourably and with trust. Subsequently, if the image is poor, the corporate communication is likely to be ineffective (Roper & Fill, 2012).

This is particularly relevant with regard to the distinction between institution and individual. Should the crisis primarily be perceived as affecting the Royal House as an institution, its strong reputational capital may enable recovery over time. However, if scrutiny centers on the individuals representing the institution, most notably Mette-Marit, and to some extent Marius Borg Høiby, the prospects for reputational repair become more complex. Unlike institutions, individuals carry personal credibility that may be more difficult to restore when harmed. This distinction is especially significant given the Crown Princess's future role as Queen. Should negative perceptions of her personal judgement persist, there is a risk that reputational damage may spill over to the institution. In such a scenario, the monarchy's long-term legitimacy may become intertwined with, and damaged by, her personal reputation.

Key Learning Objectives

Built upon Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, **Table 2** presents an overview of the case's key learning objectives. The table links measurable action verbs to different levels of learning and shows how each level applies to the case context.

Table 2. Key learning objectives.

Key Learning Objectives	
<i>Remembering</i>	The sequence of events leading to the ongoing crises involving Crown Princess Mette-Marit and Marius Borg Høiby, and the management decisions publicly communicated by the Norwegian Royal House to date.
<i>Understanding</i>	How individual conduct can affect a personified heritage institution and create tension between personal credibility and institutional legitimacy.
<i>Applying</i>	A structured approach to analyzing the Norwegian Royal House's strategic options across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons, including assessing alternative courses of action and evaluating the potential outcomes and risks associated with each decision.
<i>Analyzing</i>	The implications of different crisis responses for stakeholder trust, reputational spillover, and the future succession of the monarchy.
<i>Evaluating</i>	The strategic trade-offs between preserving succession continuity and protecting the institution from long-term reputational risk.
<i>Creating</i>	A coherent and defensible crisis management strategy that safeguards the monarchy's long-term legitimacy while addressing the risks posed by individual actors.

Discussion Questions

To initiate a class discussion, the main question is provided to the class. The class is to discuss and reflect upon the question to ultimately be able to provide well-grounded recommendations and suggestions resulting in a case solution. In addition to the main question, assisting questions will guide further discussion to enhance analysis and reflection.

Main Question

As a communication and branding consultant to the Head of Communications at the Norwegian Royal House, how would you reason in this situation, and *what actions would you recommend in the short, medium, and long term?*

Assisting Questions

- Is the public scrutiny directed towards the monarchy or the royal family members?
- Should Mette-Marit become Queen? When should a decision be taken? Why?
- Will these incidents be forgotten in five years?
- Does the current silence of the King and Queen risk damaging the trust capital they have spent decades building?
- Should the Norwegian Royal House implement a 'code of conduct' for its public-facing representatives, similar to the reforms introduced by the Spanish monarchy?

Teaching Suggestions

The following section provides the presenter with guidance and suggestions for preparing and presenting the case. The primary goal is to achieve the learning objectives and to help the audience understand the case by providing a structured discussion.

Pre-Presentation Phase

The pre-presentation phase includes the class benefiting from the written case material being distributed from the course presenter, or session instructor, at least 24 hours prior to the presentation, which includes the written case's components of the timeline of events beginning with the opening scene, followed by the background, the incident description, and lastly, the case question.

Furthermore, to ensure the student has a comprehensive understanding of the relevant issues presented in the case (i.e., public opinion and stakeholder reactions), the presenting instructor should carefully review the case beforehand. Moreover, when ensuring that the theory and case facts are aligned, the theoretical frameworks presented in the case's teaching notes document should be reviewed. Additionally, the management discussion set by the communication and branding consultant to the Head of Communications, Guri Varpe, should receive particular attention.

The case scenario (the written case document), comparison study with the Spanish monarchy (management decision document), and the final managerial dilemma (case question) should all be outlined in a well-organized presentation strategy to ensure a smooth discussion session. If the case is being distributed in a group setting, responsibilities should be clearly assigned and time management established in advance.

Ultimately, to foster clarity and discussion, suitable visual aids should be created, such as a presentation slide deck, timetables, framework models, and a timeline overview. Additionally, it is also recommended and vital to prepare relevant discussion questions that will lead the class to an organized, constructive discussion.

Introduction Phase

When introducing the case, it could be helpful to initiate with a short reflection question to interest the audience and ease into the issue. For example, the presenter could ask the audience if they are aware of the current situation concerning the Norwegian monarchy to break the ice. Such opening questions draw attention to prior knowledge while easing the initial pressure in the room.

After a very brief discussion, the presenter can narrow the focus by asking the audience whether anyone has followed recent media news regarding the Norwegian Royal House. This enables the presenter to assess the audience's knowledge of the case and lead into a short summarising news reel to set the stage for the case, while also providing an overview of trending news regarding the manner.

The presenter can then introduce the case by detailing the present reputational situation for the Norwegian Royal House and explaining the central management challenge from the perspective of the communication and branding consultant to the Head of Communications. This enables a logical transition from general thought to structured case analysis, preparing the audience for the theoretical frameworks and discussion that will follow.

Discussion Phase

The discussion phase should begin by reminding the students that they are now taking on the role of communication and branding consultants to the Head of Communications for the Norwegian Royal House. This indicates moving from analysis to action and putting people in decision-making mode. The main management decision question should then be clearly restated. Before initiating the discussion, the presenter should briefly confirm that the case information and decision context have been understood and clarify any remaining questions from students or session participants.

During the discussion, the presenter will serve as the moderator. The moderator should maintain a neutral stance, encourage multiple perspectives, and ensure that the arguments are grounded in the theoretical frameworks established earlier. Additionally, utilizing the prepared list of assisting questions from the teaching notes document can encourage discussion, such as asking about the distinction among the approaches.

A good starting point could be to let the audience establish the several key stakeholders related to the case. To maintain the structure, essential recommendations and strategic alternatives should then be written on a whiteboard or visual slide and categorized as short-, medium-, and long-term actions, utilizing the suggested board

plan. The moderator should ensure balanced involvement by raising hands openly, making a couple of cold calls, briefly splitting the classroom into smaller discussion groups, and then having a couple of those groups share their discussion insights or volunteers.

At the conclusion of the conversation, the moderator should summarize the main strategic decisions provided, highlighting points of agreement and disagreement, and then move the discussion to the central issue: ensuring institutional legitimacy while maintaining brand heritage in today's context of modern media.

Conclusion Phase

Bringing the case to its conclusion, the management decision will be presented. Exploring the actual actions taken by the Royal Family will facilitate further discussions, allowing for a comparison between students' takeaways and the actual decisions made. After presenting the management decision and allowing a discussion, the students will be asked to summarize the main takeaways. After allowing the class to comment, the presenter can comment on any missing crucial takeaways.

Time Plan

Creating a time plan for the presenter will help structure the presentation by allocating time to different parts. The fixed time will be flexible during the presentation. The presentation lasts 45 minutes. The first 10 minutes of the presentation will be devoted to introducing the case. To ensure that everyone in class can participate in the upcoming discussion, the class will have an assigned slot after the case introduction to ask questions (5 minutes). After any clarification, the class will transition to the discussion of the case questions, and there will be an open discussion (20 minutes). Finalizing the presentation, the conclusion will be presented, and the students will get the opportunity to summarize key takeaways (10 minutes). **Table 3** presents a suggested time plan.

Table 3. Suggested time plan.

Introduction of the Case	Taking Questions	Presenting the Case Question and Discussion	Concluding the Case and Summarizing Key Takeaways
10 minutes	5 minutes	20 minutes	10 minutes

Board Plan

The board plan functions as a useful supporting tool to the presenter and class, allowing a structured overview of the results shared during the discussion. A clear board structure aids in the selection of the most viable options by simplifying a comparison of options. **Table 4** demonstrates an example of how the framework may look when filled. Though the board plan should function as a framework to guide the discussion, and not be structured to answer a predetermined question.

Table 4. Suggested board plan.

Key Task and Challenges	Alternatives	Actions
Short term		
Containing Reputational Spillover	• Transparency and confrontation • Silence and institutional distance • Controlled clarification	• Press conference • No further comments, continue duties as normal • One structured statement
Medium Term		
Stabilizing Trust in Individuals	• Partial withdrawal • Full reintegration • Gradual recalibration	• Mette-Marit reduces public duties, and Haakon assumes greater visibility • Mette-Marit resumes full visibility • Selective engagements and controlled media appearances
Long Term		
Rebuilding and Strengthening Institutional Legitimacy	• Succession recalibration • Succession continuity	• Mette-Marit is relieved of her royal duties, and Haakon assumes a full symbolic leadership role • Mette-Marit is allowed to become Queen, and the monarchy relies on its reputational capital to absorb the crisis

Reflection

Writing this case has been both intellectually demanding and highly insightful. One key learning point from the writing process was the complexity of transforming ongoing real-world controversy into a pedagogical tool without knowing the final outcome. Unlike ‘finished’ cases, where the outcome is known in retrospect and can be evaluated with the benefit of hindsight, this case required us to focus more on framing the dilemma clearly rather than guiding the reader toward a predetermined solution. It was especially challenging to define what constitutes a ‘management decision’ in real time, since the Norwegian Royal House had not introduced any structural changes. Hence, recognizing communicative efforts as a strategic decision was a central tool for the case construction. Essentially, working with the case has deepened our understanding of crisis management as a dynamic process.

Moving from being students solving cases to becoming case writers represented a significant, yet rewarding, shift in perspective. As students, the instinct is to analyze and recommend solutions. As case writers, however, the responsibility was to present the case without solving it, ensuring that several strategic alternatives remained open for discussion. We had to consider the amount of information necessary for a meaningful classroom discussion, how to structure and present the narrative to highlight tensions between the institution and the individual, and how to connect empirical information to relevant theory without steering participants toward a preferred conclusion. Taking the presenter’s perspective led us to consider how the discussion would unfold and to identify parts of the case that would encourage deeper analysis and discussion. The assisting questions played a big part in nuancing and broadening the main management decision question.

Despite the few communicative efforts by the Royal House, it was a relatively straightforward process to link its actions to relevant corporate communication and crisis management theory. Distinguishing between silence, accommodation, reasoning, and advocacy strategies demanded attention to nuance, especially since the responses do not fall neatly into one category. Analyzing stakeholder positions also required careful categorization. Perhaps the most insightful aspect of the case writing process was exploring the distinction between institutional reputation and individual credibility, and the potential intertwining of both. The case highlights how a strong institutional reputation can serve as a buffer in times of crisis, while also demonstrating the risks of reputational spillover when individuals embody the brand in harmful ways.

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