RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Analysing crisis communication strategies employed by organisations to manage reputation and stakeholder trust:
A Case Study

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Awareness of the Problem

How organizations manage and maintain a positive reputation to the public and their stakeholder trust both internally and externally is crucial. The researcher became aware of the problem when several cases arose on social media, on how certain organizational leaders responded and treated their customers. This raised the question on how multi-million-dollar organizations repair their image with the public, and how they eradicate any chances of a repetition.

1.2 Background to the problem

There are a handful of organizations that face several crises, ranging from natural disasters and product retraction to ethical lapses. How an organization responds to such crises can impact its reputation to the public, stakeholder relationships, and long-term viability. It is important that organizations employ effective communication strategies that will minimise damage, not only in the present but the future as well, enhancing the preparedness and response capabilities (King III, 2002).

This research aimed to cover the problem on how organizations manage their reputation to the public and maintain their stakeholder trust both internally and externally, all while analysing the crisis communication strategies employed. By analysing the customer's perception towards product effectiveness such as quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction, the researcher was able to analyse how well Lululemon invested in repairing their negative reputation.

1.3 Need for and social significance of the research

In a 2004 interview, founder, and former CEO Dennis J. "Chip" Wilson, of Lululemon Athletica, revealed the origin of the company brand, how he produced the name after noticing Japanese people struggle to pronounce English words with the letter "L" in it.

Lululemon is one of many companies that are diverse and accommodating but have leaders that extensively use stereotypes to define and ostracize minority employees, who face obstacles in their career that do not seem to apply to white colleagues. The social significance of this research offered insights into consumer confidence, ethical considerations, brand image, crisis

management, and community engagement. By understanding how Lululemon navigated these aspects of corporate communication, we learned valuable lessons for promoting transparency, accountability, and trust in businesses across industries.

1.4 Problem statement

The problem was as stated thus: How do companies navigate and communicate during crises to maintain their reputation and stakeholder trust?

1.5 Unit of analysis

The researcher focused on Lululemon, the organization as a whole and how well they implement their crisis communication strategies.

1.6 Characteristics of unit of study

Lululemon is a fashion forward athletic brand that does not only produce a product but rather caters to the mindset of their customers, that values wellness, mindfulness, and a healthy lifestyle. They offer the following:

- High-Quality Performance Apparel
- Innovative Marketing and Branding
- Brand Ambassadors
- Premium Pricing

Lululemon focuses on presenting a lifestyle that customers may achieve by using their products, rather than the products themselves. This strategy has proven useful for the company since it allows them to charge higher prices for their products, which are viewed as a means to healthier living and better wellness (MarcomCentral, 2024).

1.7 Assumptions

Just like any high-quality brand, Lululemon's vision is to produce athletic wear that serves as a lifestyle, all while making profit in the process. But just like any cake there are layers to the organization and the recipe must be to perfection, or else there will be a beautiful cake that cannot be eaten. Lululemon has layers, things that are concealed from the public.

1.8 Goal

The goal of this research was to determine how effective an organization's communication strategy is, or lack thereof, and how they affect their relationships not only in the moment but

in the long term. It also explored how often the organizations implemented the developed strategies to portray a positive image to the public.

1.9 Research Questions

The problem may be broken down into the following sub-problems:

a) How effective are the company's communication strategies in terms of transparency, apology, denial, or corrective action?

b) What roles do traditional media and social media platforms have in shaping the public's perception during a crisis?

c) How do the different stakeholders, both internally and externally, perceive and respond to an organization's crisis communication efforts?

d) What effect does the leader's communication style and decision-making process have in repairing the organization's reputation?

e) In what way can an analysis of the customer's perception towards product effectiveness such as quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction help the organisation to repair its image?

1.10   Objectives

Based on the above research questions the following are the objectives of the research study:

- To analyse the company's communication strategies in terms of transparency, apology, denial, or corrective action.

- To analyse how traditional media and social media platforms have an impact in shaping the public's perception during a crisis.

- To understand how different stakeholders, both internally and externally, perceive and respond to an organization's crisis communication efforts.

- To analyse the impact of the leader's communication style and decision-making process in repairing the organization's reputation.

- To analyse customer perceptions towards product effectiveness such as quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction and how it can help the organisation repair its image.

1.11 Conclusion

This research dissected Lululemon's communication strategies, the frequency of communication, tone, and channels used, and assessed the customer's perception of Lululemon's products in terms of quality, performance, and style. By looking at how the customers respond to the products in terms of quality, performance, style, and the overall customer satisfaction and perception, the researcher was able to analyse how effective the company's communication strategies were in terms of transparency, apology, denial, messaging consistency or corrective action.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

By looking at the overall customer perception of Lululemon's products in terms of quality, performance, and style, this literature review examined how effective Lululemon's communication strategies are, in managing its reputation and maintaining stakeholder trust. By looking at relevant scholarly research and case studies, this review aimed to shed light on the tactics employed by Lululemon during times of crisis and evaluated their effectiveness in safeguarding the company's image and relationships with key stakeholders.

According to King III (2002), the ability to act decisively during a crisis is crucial to an organization's ability to survive. The research findings also suggested that senior executives and other employees of the company determine whether an organization is ready for a catastrophe. This research served as a comparison to Lululemon's communication strategies by researching how other organizations respond in times of crisis.

A case study on the COVID-19 pandemic by Panneer et al (2021) provided evidence-based policy directions and decisions that outline plans for reconstructing the healthcare system and economy through multi-stakeholder engagement. This article provided insight on a global scale on how Lululemon could proactively minimise risks and communicate with the public.

Communication channels are essential for delivering messages, influencing attitudes, and fostering or undermining trust, particularly when it comes to crisis communication. Matole (2023) went into further detail on how businesses handle their reputation during a crisis and how various channels of communication affect trust. By looking at Matole's research findings, the researcher was able to provide solutions for Lululemon on how they could use all effective communication channels to portray a positive image to the public.

According to Page, Freberg and Saling (2013), crisis management cannot only be internally but externally as well, and some of the crises could be out of an organisations control. Kaul and Chaudhri's research study (2015) goes into detail on how social media communications can have impact on corporate reputation. By looking at Lululemon and how they use their social media platforms in comparison to other organisations, it was able to give the researcher insight on how effectively Lululemon prioritised the media in communication.

How the organisation interacts with the public is crucial, especially since one wrong mistake and skyrocket a train of negative review. The study served as a starting point for further research on the use of social media to dispel public anxiety and confusion while simultaneously issuing correct information.

Pirson, Martin and Parmar (2017) provided a contingency model for the formation of stakeholder trust, which considers the personal values of the trustor and the effects of stakeholder-specific vulnerability. It provided insight to the researcher and acted as a map for Lululemon with how it interacts with its stakeholders.

Lululemon having a positive relationship with the community is beneficial for the reputation and brand image. Hyvärinen and Vos (2015) made it clear as to how a great communication network between governmental and non-governmental organizations may support community-based crisis management.

Over the past year, Lululemon has been involved in a few scandals, some which were started by the company's leader. In the article, Haesevoets et al (2016) provided evidence on how major infractions were made right by using an apology. The research showed that the timing of the apology can affect the organization's ability to repair its reputation.

Another case study by Hayashi and Soo (2012), examined the three attributes of effective leadership: the capacity to adjust swiftly to evolving situations, effectively use communication resources, and welcome adaptable modes of cooperation, using Hurricane Katrina as an example. Natural disasters test a leader's communication and leadership skills. The researcher incorporated the research findings in her study by comparing how effective Lululemon is with its leadership. How a leader acts decides the climate of the organization and the performance levels of the employees.

 Novac and Bratanov (2014) dived down into the factors that affect organizational climate, which included but were not limited to, motivation, structure, interpersonal values, support etc.

With the racial scandal by Lululemon's CEO Dennis J. "Chip" Wilson on the origin of the company brand, the climate of the organisation and the performance levels of the employees may have dropped significantly. How stakeholders perceive the organization depends on the internal and external environment, and thus affects their behaviour.

The literature reviewed emphasizes the complex relationship between brand communication, product excellence, and consumer perceptions. Across various scholarly articles, industry reports, and case studies, several key themes have appeared, shedding light on the strategies and mechanisms employed by Lululemon to navigate the dynamic landscape of the athleisure market. The study of Lululemon offered valuable insights on how well famous organizations are in repairing their reputation and the communication strategies employed to do so.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

Effective communication strategies and product excellence are essential success factors for brands looking to stay ahead of the competition and build stakeholder trust in today's fast-paced and connected environment. Lululemon, a renowned leader in the athleisure market, is a prime example of a company that has successfully managed stakeholder interactions, reputation, and product efficacy.

The goal of this study was to explore the complex world of Lululemon's communication tactics on how they manage their reputation and restore stakeholder trust. This was achieved by looking at the product efficacy and how they affect customer satisfaction and brand perception.

3.2 Research Approach

To analyse the communication strategies employed by Lululemon in managing their reputation and stakeholder trust, the researcher made use of the mixed method research approach of both qualitative and quantitative research approach. By analysing the customer's perception on the product's effectiveness in terms of quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction, the researcher was able to determine the extent to which Lululemon deployed their communication strategies and manage their reputation.

With the qualitative research approach a content analysis was made to provide insights into the brand's communication tactics, as well as stakeholder interviews to explore topics such as transparency, responsiveness, and their perception on Lululemon's communication efforts.

In the quantitative research approach, surveys/questionnaires were sent out, targeting Lululemon's customers to measure their satisfaction levels and perception of the product quality, performance, style, and overall brand experience.

In adopting a mixed-methods approach, the researcher was able to use the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to address the complexity of the research objectives and provide rich insights into the communication strategies and product effectiveness of Lululemon.

3.3 Description of research population

In analysing the communication strategies and product effectiveness of Lululemon, it was essential to define appropriate research populations that represent relevant stakeholders who interact with the brand directly or indirectly.

The researcher included current and past consumers of Lululemon products across different demographics, including age, gender, income level, and geographic location, as well as customers who have purchased Lululemon apparel, accessories, and related products, either physically or online, and individuals who engaged with Lululemon's online platforms. They provided insights into how Lululemon's communication strategies influenced their perceptions of the brand and its reputation.

The public are individuals who may not be direct customers or stakeholders but have awareness of Lululemon as a prominent brand in the activewear market. The data that was collected by the researcher included the public perception of Lululemon's reputation and brand image.

By carefully selecting and defining research populations for analysing communication strategies and product effectiveness, the researcher was able to gather relevant insights from stakeholders who were most directly affected by Lululemon's branding and product offerings.

3.4 Sampling Method and Size
3.4.1   Sampling Method

In this research, probability sampling was used. Simple random sampling ensured that each member of the population had an equal opportunity to take part and minimize biasness.

The researcher also made use of stratified sampling whereby she divided the population into subgroups based on the relevant characteristics such as demographics and geographic location.

This ensured representation from different segments of the population, allowing for comparisons across subgroups.

3.4.2   Sampling Size

Since stratified sampling was used, it ensured that each subgroup is represented adequately in the sample. For the quantitative method, the sample size consisted of twelve individuals, with the subgroups consisting of teenagers from the age of sixteen to nineteen and young adults from the age of twenty to twenty-six.

For the qualitative method, the sample size consisted of twelve individuals, whereby the subgroups consisted of teenagers from the age of sixteen to nineteen and young adults from the age of twenty to twenty-six.

3.5 Data gathering instrument

Since the researcher used a mixed-method research approach, for the qualitative research approach, the instruments used to collect data were interviews. For the interview, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the customers. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences and opinions.

In the quantitative research approach, the instruments used to collect the data were surveys/questionnaires.

For the surveys/questionnaires, the researcher designed a structured questionnaire to collect the data on the customer satisfaction and perceptions of the product effectiveness. The research made use of the Likert scale to measure satisfaction level, perceived product quality, performance, style, and overall brand experience. By incorporating closed-ended questions, the researcher was able to gather demographic information and customer preferences.

With this method of data gathering, the researcher was able to compare qualitative insights from the interviews with quantitative data from the questionnaires to confirm and enrich the analysis.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

As stated before, a mixed method approach was used; henceforth, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were most proper for analysing the communication strategies and product effectiveness of Lululemon.

For quantitative data collection, these methods included structured questionnaires.

Step 1: Design surveys/questionnaires to gather quantitative data on customer satisfaction, product perception, and brand experiences.
Step 2: Distribute the surveys/questionnaires to the identified sample population via online platforms such as google forms.
Step 3: Determine the appropriate scales and question types such as a Likert scale for the surveys/questionnaires.
Step 4: Monitor response rates and follow up with reminders to increase participation if necessary.

FIGURE 1: QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The questions to be asked for the questionnaires/surveys can be found in APPENDIX ONE: STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE.

For qualitative data collection, these methods included interviews.

Step 1: Conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders, such as customers and employees.
Step 2: Develop interview guides to explore stakeholder perceptions of communication strategies and product effectiveness.
Step 3: Document responses and insights using audio or video recordings, supplemented by detailed notes.
Step 4: Create coding frameworks for content analysis of Lululemon's official communications.

FIGURE 2: QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The questions to be discussed by the interviews and focus groups can be found in APPENDIX TWO: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.

3.7 Method of Analysis

Below is the step-by-step method of analysis for analysing the communication strategies and product effectiveness of Lululemon:

STEP 1: DATA PREPARATION Gather all qualitative and quantitative data collected during the data collection phase
STEP 2: DATA CLEANING AND CODING

> ➤ Clean and organize the data to ensure consistency and accuracy.
>
> ➤ Code qualitative data (interview transcripts) using thematic coding techniques to identify key themes and patterns related to communication strategies and product effectiveness.

STEP 3: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

> ➤ Calculate descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, median, standard deviation) for quantitative data collected through surveys and questionnaires.
>
> ➤ Summarize customer satisfaction levels, perceived product attributes, and overall brand experiences.
>
> ➤ Conduct correlation analysis to explore relationships between communication strategies (frequency of communication) and perceived product quality and style.
>
> ➤ Decide which communication strategies or product attributes have the greatest impact on stakeholder perceptions.

STEP 4: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

> ➤ Review coded qualitative data to identify recurring themes and sub-themes.
>
> ➤ Organize themes into meaningful categories and subcategories to facilitate analysis.
>
> ➤ Look for patterns and connections within the data to identify relationships between communication strategies, product attributes, and stakeholder perceptions.

STEP 5: SYNTHESIS OF THE DATA

Synthesize key insights and patterns found from both qualitative and quantitative analyses to draw meaningful conclusions.

STEP 6: INTERPRETATION

> ➤ Interpret the results in the context of Lululemon's business goals, market environment, and competitive landscape.
>
> ➤ Discuss implications of the findings for Lululemon's communication strategies, product effectiveness, and overall brand image.

STEP 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

> ➤ Based on the findings, provide actionable recommendations for Lululemon to enhance its communication strategies, improve product quality, and strengthen stakeholder trust.
>
> ➤ Prioritize recommendations based on their potential impact and feasibility of implementation.

FIGURE 3: METHOD OF ANALYSIS

When analysing the communication strategies employed by Lululemon and the effectiveness of its products, several categories were considered to provide a comprehensive evaluation. Below are the categories used in analysing the findings. The categories were derived from the repetitive patterns or themes that appeared in the responses of the participants in analysing communication strategies and product effectiveness. Codes were assigned for easy interpretation.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES		PRODUCT EFFECTIVENESS	
CATEGORIES	CODES	CATEGORIES	CODES
1. Stakeholder Engagement	SE	1. Quality	Q
2. Crisis Communication	CC	2. Style and Design	SD
3. Messaging Consistency	MC	3. Customer Satisfaction	CS
4. Transparency	T	4. Performance	P

FIGURE 4: TABLE OF CODES

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Tabulation of Quantitative Data

The table below shows the data collected by the researcher through quantitative data collection using a structured survey. The table summarises the five themes of data that the researcher looked at. The first section talks about the product quality, performance, style and customer satisfaction. The second section is about reputation management in terms of perception, brand image and crisis management, followed by the third section, which concerns the media and public perception. The fourth section deals with the leadership communication styles and decision-making. Section five closes off with the stakeholder perception and response (the customers).

Respondents	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
Source of Info	Family and Friends	Social Media	Family and Friends	Family and Friends	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Family and Friends	Social Media
Products Owned	Six - ten	One - five	Six - ten	One - five	Six - ten	One - five	One - five	Six - ten	One - five	One - five	One - five	One - five
Quality Rate	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Average	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Satisfaction Rate	Satisfied	V. Satisfied	V. Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Neutral	Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	V. Satisfied
Recommendation	Probably	Definitely	Definitely	Definitely	Probably	Probably	Not sure	Definitely	Definitely	Probably	Definitely	Definitely
Brand Description	Trendy	Trendy	Luxurious	Trendy	Athleisure-focused	Trendy	Like Shein	Athleisure-focused	Trendy	Athleisure-focused	Trendy	Luxurious
Perception Factors	PQ and CC	Product Quality	Product Quality	Brand Image	Customer Service	Brand Image	Social Responsibility initiatives	Social Responsibility initiatives	Brand Image	Brand Image	Product Quality	Product Quality
Past Issue Awareness	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

|												
Effectiveness in handling issues	Ineffective	Neutral	Neutral	V. Effective	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	V. Effective	Neutral	Neutral	Effective
Perception Rate	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Media and PR Rate	Average	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Average	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Effective Media Coverage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Media Influence	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat	Yes, somewhat	No, not at all	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly
Effective Media Coverage	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Rate of Leadership skills	Average	Good	Good	Excellent	Average	Average	Average	Average	Excellent	Good	Good	Good
Leadership Comm Style	Uncertain/Inconsistent	Open and honest	Open and honest	Open and honest	Defensive	Authoritative	Open and honest	Authoritative	Open and honest	Open and honest	Uncertain/Inconsistent	Open and honest
Leader decision in instilling confidence	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly	Yes, significantly	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat	Yes, somewhat	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat	Yes, somewhat	Yes, significantly
Leadership Satisfaction rate	Neutral	V. Satisfied	V. Satisfied	V. Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	V. Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	V. Satisfied
Awareness of recent crises	Not very aware	Not aware at all	Not very aware	Not very aware	Somewhat aware	Somewhat aware	Not aware at all	Not very aware	Not aware at all	Somewhat aware	Not aware at all	Very aware
Rate of info through comm channels	No, not very informed	Yes, somewhat informed	Yes, somewhat informed	Yes, somewhat informed	Yes, somewhat informed	No, not very informed	No, not informed at all	Yes, somewhat informed	Yes, very informed	Yes, somewhat informed	No, not informed at all	No, not informed at all

Effective Communication channels	Social Media	Social Media, News Coverage	Social Media	Social Media	Social media, Newsletter, Press release	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media
Rate where comm efforts restored trust	Yes, to some extent	Yes, completely	Yes, to some extent	Yes, completely	Yes, to some extent	Yes, to some extent	No, not really	Yes, to some extent	Yes, completely	Yes, to some extent	No, not completely	Yes, completely

TABLE 1: QUANTITATIVE DATA BASED ON THE STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE (APPENDIX ONE)

4.2 Analysis of Quantitative Data

4.2.1 Section A: Product Quality, Performance, Style and Customer Satisfaction

The graph below shows summarises the first section on the product quality, performance, style and customer satisfaction.
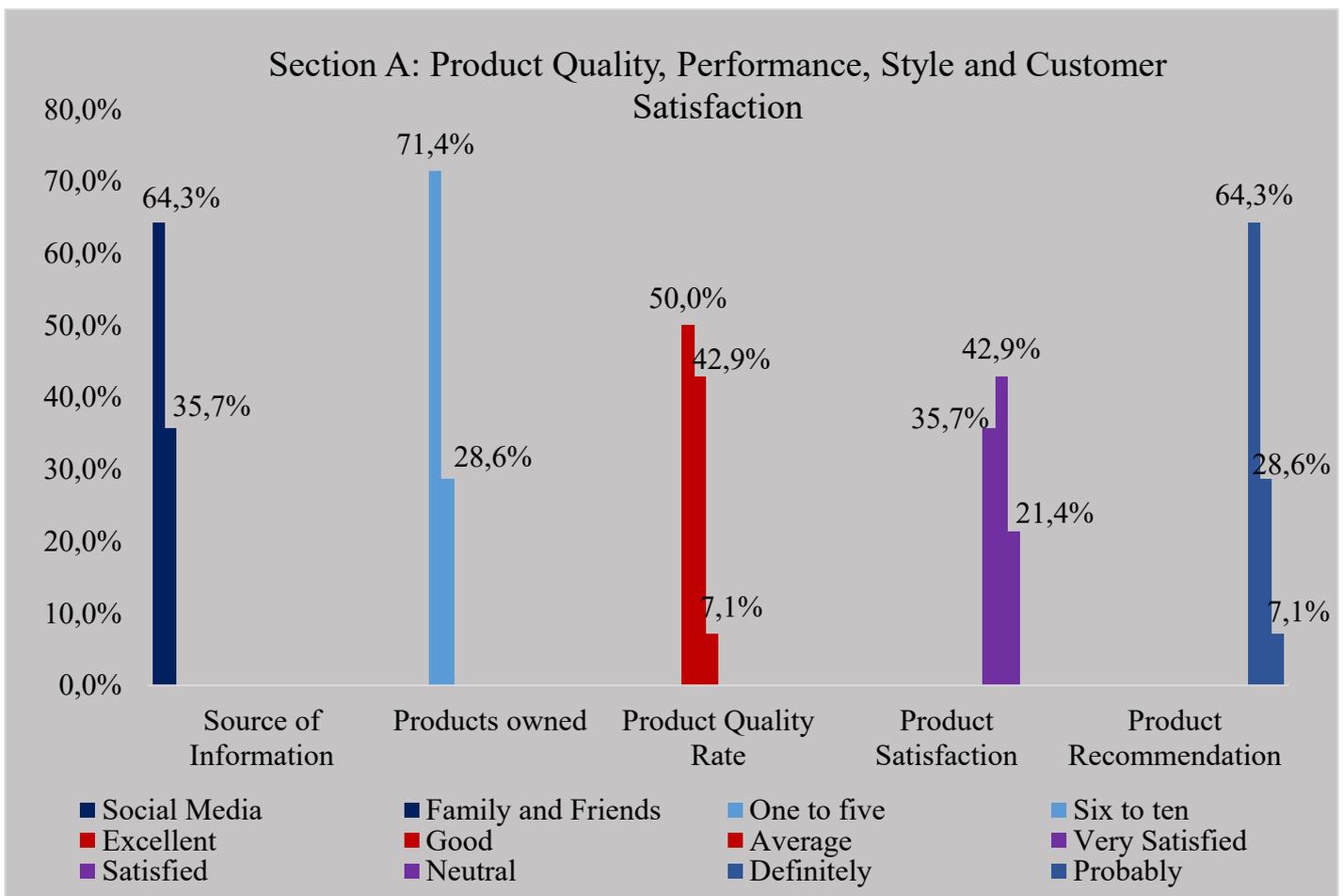
GRAPH A: Histogram depicting Section A responses on product quality, performance, style and customer satisfaction
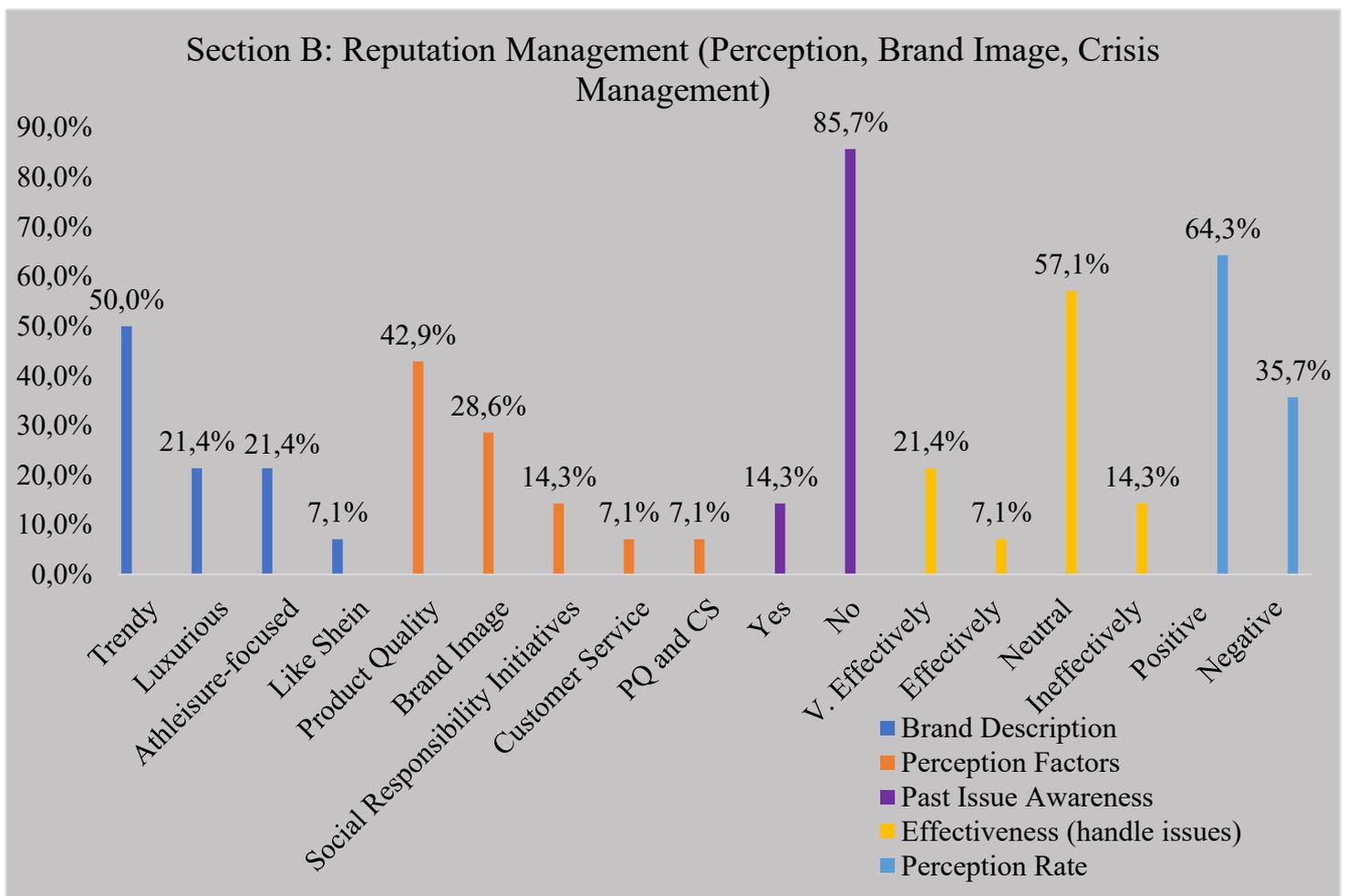
In the above graph, the first sector represents the source of information; which talks about how the participants first heard of the Lululemon products. Out of the twelve respondents, 64.3% of them heard of the products through 'social media' and 35.7% through 'family and friends.

In the number of products owned, 71.4% of the respondents mostly owned 'one to five' products while 28.6% owned 'six to ten' products. When asked to rate the quality of the products, 50% of them rated them as 'excellent', 42.9% as 'good' and 7.1% of them as 'average'.

In terms of satisfaction with the products, 35.7% of them were 'very satisfied,' 42.9% of them as 'satisfies' and 21.4% of them as 'neutral.' With this data in mind, 64.3% of the respondents would 'definitely' recommend Lululemon products to others, 28.6% of them 'probably' and 7.1% of them are 'not sure'.

4.2.2 Section B: Reputation Management (Perception, Brand Image, Crisis Management

The graph below shows summarises the second section on reputation management in terms of perception, brand image and crisis management.

GRAPH B: Histogram depicting Section B responses on reputation management in terms of perception, brand image and crisis management

In the above graph, the first sector depicts the brand description; which refers to how the participants view Lululemon's brand image. Out of all the respondents, 50% of them view the brand as 'trendy', 21.4% of them view it as 'luxurious', another 21.4% view it as 'athleisure-focused' and 7.1% of them view the brand image 'like Shein'.

When it comes to the factors that influence the respondents' perception of Lululemon's reputation, 42.9% of them chose 'product quality,' 28.6% of them 'brand image,' 14.3% of them 'social responsibility initiatives,' 7.1% of them 'customer service', and another 7.1% of them selected both 'product quality and customer service'.

In terms of Lululemon's reputation and their past issues, 85.7% of the respondents were 'aware' of the past issues and 14.3% of them were 'not aware'. However, when it comes to Lululemon's effective handling of said issues, 57.1% of the respondents believe Lululemon is 'neutral' in handling them, 21.4% of them 'very effective,' 14.3% 'ineffective' and 7.1% of them feel they are 'effective.'

Prior to any crisis, 64.3% of the respondents would 'positively' rate their perception of Lululemon, while the remaining 35.7% would rate their perception as 'neutral.'

4.2.3   Section C: Media and Public Perception

The graph below shows summarises the third section of the media and the public's perception of Lululemon.
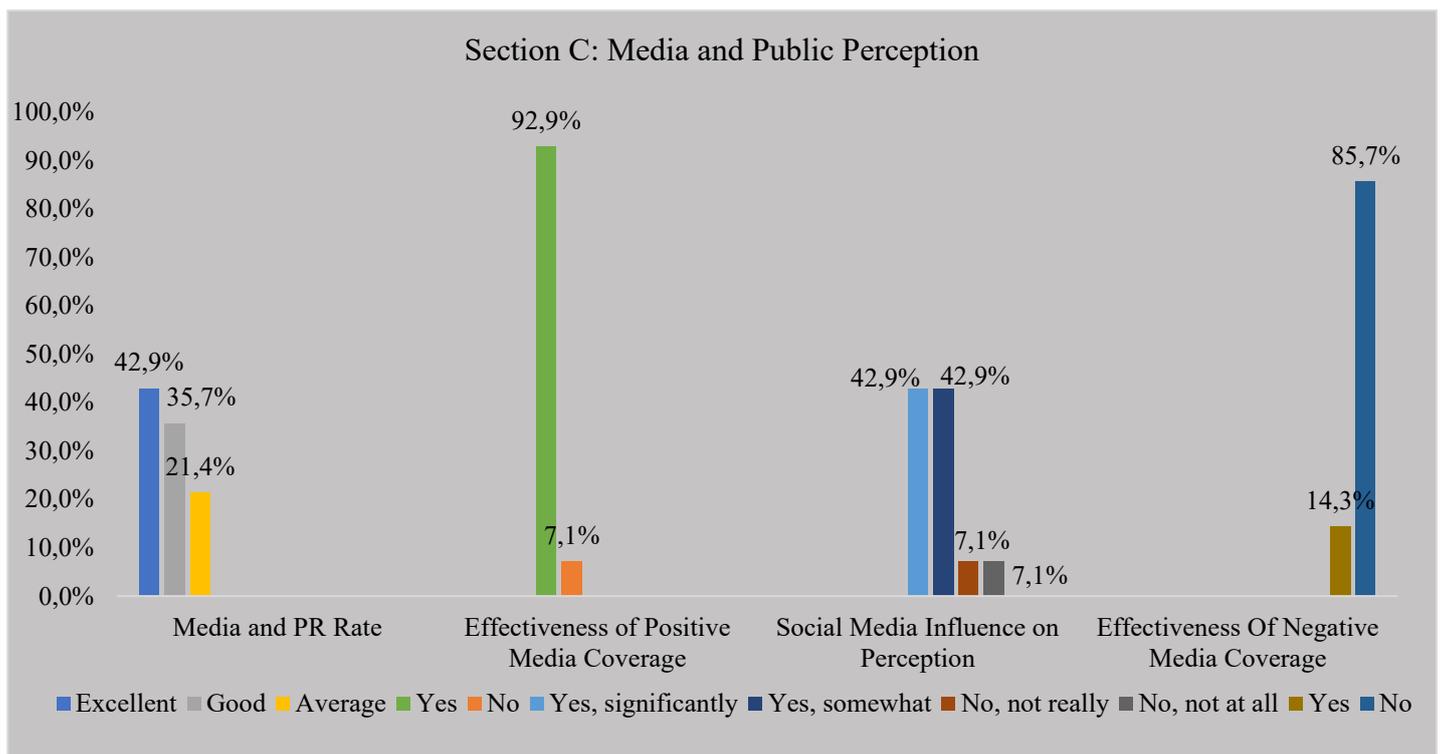
GRAPH C: Histogram depicting Section C responses on the media and the public's perception of Lululemon
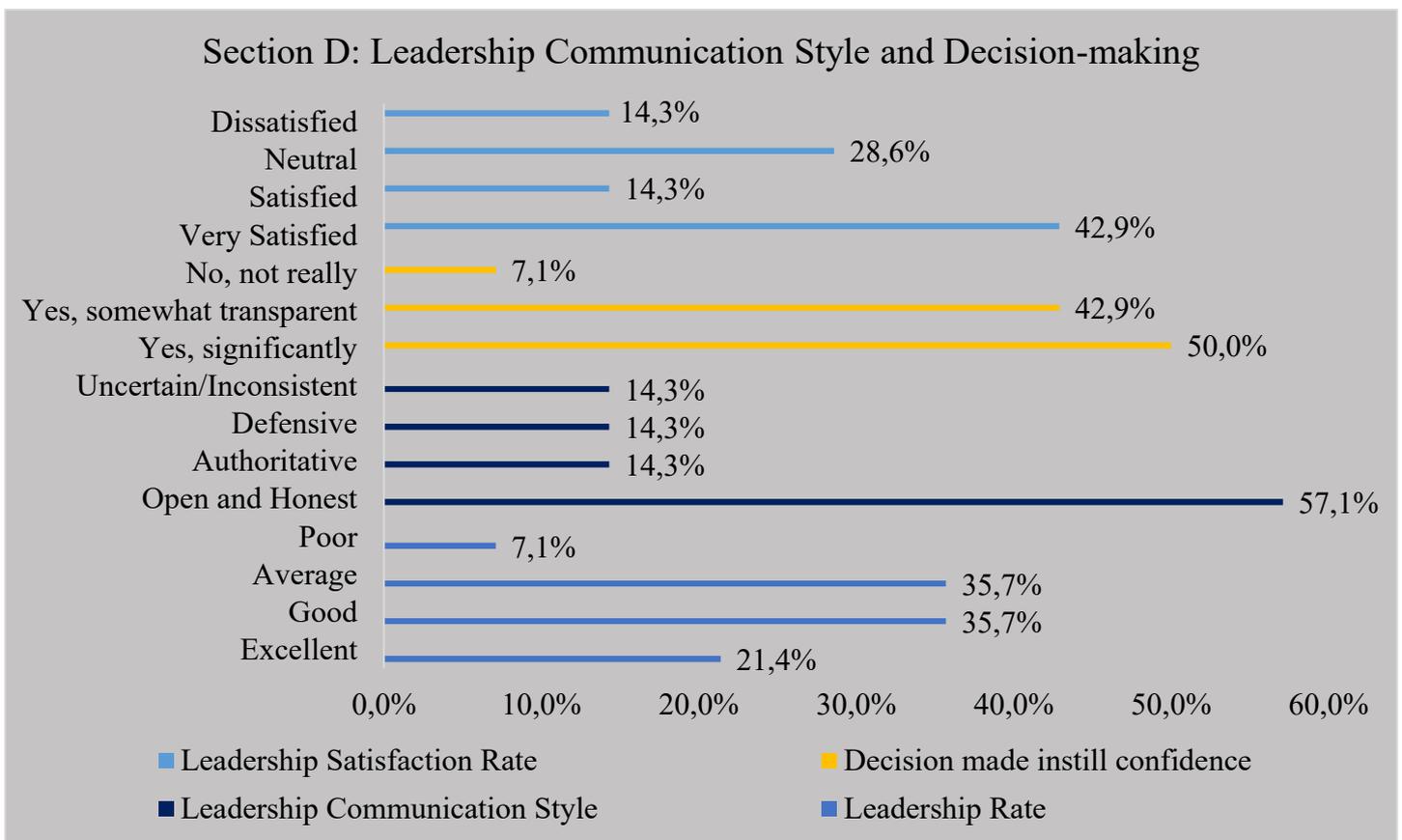
In the above graph, the first sector refers to the media and public relation rate; which talks about how the participants rate Lululemon's media and public relations efforts. Out of all the respondents, 42.9% of them rate their efforts as 'excellent,' 35.7% of them as 'good' and 21.4% of them as 'average.'

In terms of public perception, Lululemon's positive media coverage had a 'positive' impact on 92.9% of the respondents, while it had a 'negative' impact on 7.1% of the respondents. Because of this, the negative media coverage did not have a major impact on the respondents' perception of Lululemon. Out of all the respondents, 85.7% of them were not impacted by the negative media coverage, while 14.3% of them were.

When it comes to social media content and influencers, 42.9% of the respondents believe their perception of Lululemon is 'significantly' affected during a crisis, 42.9% of them are 'somewhat' affected, 7.1% of them do 'not really' believe they are affected and 7.1% of them believe their perception of Lululemon is not affected 'at all' during a crisis.

4.2.4 Section D: Leadership Communication Style and Decision-making

The graph below shows summarises the fourth section on the leadership communication style and decision-making.

GRAPH D: Histogram depicting Section D responses on leadership communication style and decision-making

In the above graph, the first sector deals with the leadership rate, which refers to how the participants would rate Lululemon's leadership in managing reputation challenges. Of all the respondents, 35.7% rate the leadership skills as 'good, another 35.7% as 'average,' 21.4% as 'excellent' and 7.1% as 'poor.'

When it comes to the leadership's communication style, 57.1% believe it to be 'open and honest,' 14.3% 'authoritative,' 14.3% 'defensive,' and another 14.3% as 'uncertain/inconsistent.'

Out of all the respondents, 50% of them believe that the leader's decision making 'significantly' instils confidence in Lululemon's ability to overcome its reputation challenges. For the other respondents, 42.9% feel that Lululemon's leadership decision-making 'somewhat' instils confidence and 7.1% feel that it does 'not really' instil confidence.

Overall, when it came to how satisfied the respondents are with the leaders' handling of the reputation repair process, 42.9% of them were 'very satisfied,' 28.6% were 'neutral,' 14.3% were 'satisfied' and another 14.3% of them were 'dissatisfied.'

4.2.5 Section E: Stakeholder Perception and Response

The graph below summarises the last section on stakeholder perception and response.
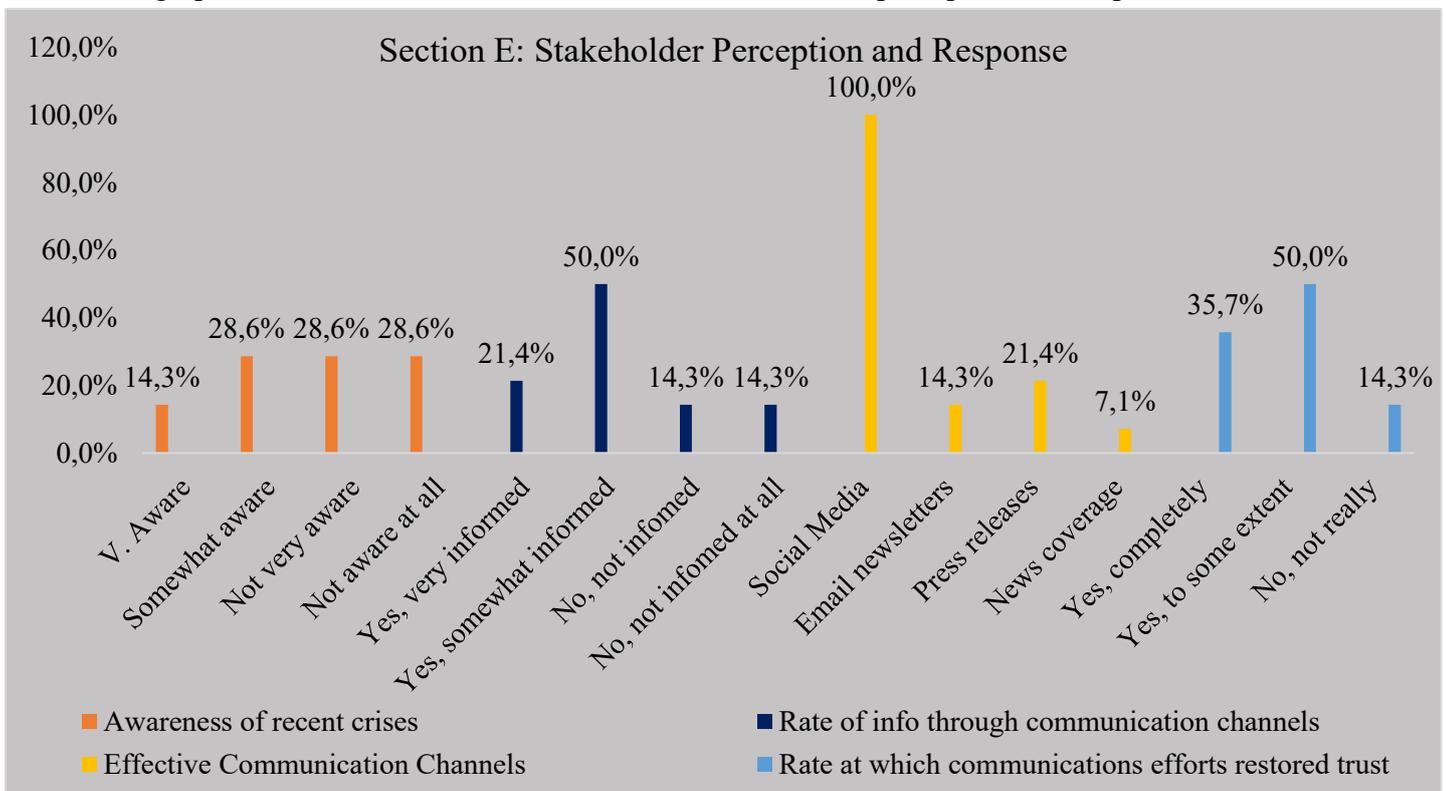
GRAPH E: Histogram depicting Section E responses on stakeholder perception and response

In the above graph, the first sector illustrates the awareness of recent crises; which refers to how aware the participants are of Lululemon's recent crises. Of all the respondents, only 14.3% are 'very aware,' 28.6% 'somewhat aware,' 28.6% 'not very aware' and 28.6% are 'not aware at all.'

Regarding Lululemon's communication channels and how informed the participants are, 21.4% of them are 'very informed,' 50% 'somewhat informed', 14.3% 'not very informed' and another 14.3% are 'not informed at all.

When asked which communication channels they find most effective in receiving updates about Lululemon, all respondents selected 'social media platforms'. But 14.3% also selected newsletters, 2.4% press releases and 7.1% news coverage (television, newspapers).

When asked as to whether Lululemon's crisis communication efforts were able to restore the participants trust in the brand, 50% of them said 'yes, to some extent', 35.7% responded 'yes, completely' and 14.3% said 'no, not really'.

4.3 Validity and reliability of data

A few ways in which the researcher evaluated the validity of their data was by asking specific objective questions that left no room for different interpretations. She made sure that the sample matched the audience. In this respect, surveys were sent out to customers of Lululemon, and the researcher made the survey compulsory with the use of Google Forms. She also made use of screening questions.

A few ways in which the researcher evaluated the reliability of the data was by making use of two sample groups to determine reliability and asking related questions with different wording.

4.4 Tabulation of Qualitative Data

The table below shows the data collected by the researcher with the use of a semi-structured survey. The table summarises the five themes which emerged from the findings. The first theme deals with product quality, performance, style and customer satisfaction. The second theme is reputation management in terms of perception, brand image and crisis management, followed by the third theme, which is media and public perception. The fourth theme refers to leadership communication styles and decision-making. The last theme concerns stakeholder perception and response (customers).

Respondents	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
Lululemon customer	Once off purchase	1 year	6 years	2 years	7 years	A few months	Zero years	1 year	3 months	Not a customer	Not too long	1 year
Quality Issue	No	I have not	No, helped replace worn out leggings	No	No	Quality varies	No	No issues	Limited choices	I have not	None so far	None
Design features (loved)	No	Seamless and comfortable	No lint, has pockets	No	Trendy styles	Stretchy	Looks good	Comfortable	I love their running leggings	Can't think of any	None that I can mention	The clothes are comfortable
Suggestions for products	No	Wider size range	No	None	Brick & Mortars Shops	High size inclusivity	No	More accessible	Have wide range of products and design	N/A	Make products for minorities	Makes more sizes
Words associated with Lululemon	Sports	Leggings	Athletic wear	Sporty wear	Fashionable & cost effective	Active and agility	Gym wear and fitness	Athleisure	Affordable	Fitness wear	Racism (the founder)	Simplistic
Rumours about Lululemon	No	Yes, owner caters to smaller sized women	The CEO is fat-phobic	No	No	None	No not really	Use of sweatshops	None	Racial incidents in a corporate level	Rumours of racism	None
Crisis effectively managed	Yes	Yes. They are still a big brand	Yes, since the demand has not changed	No	N/A	Probably	N/A	It was never addressed	N/A	No, they did not apologise or address the issue	Yes, they did. It could have been a bigger issue	I think so
Suggestions for reputation management	So far good as it is	Be more inclusive	No	None	Give bonuses to loyal customers	None	N/A	They are doing just fine for now	Quick reply to issued raised	Address the issues that tarnish their reputation	No	Better advertising
Social Media Activity	Often	Moderately active	Chronically active	Very Active	Moderate active	Very active	Not often	Somewhat active	Somewhat active	Instagram and X (Twitter)	Not so active	Instagram
Lululemon Content	No	No, they do not do brand deals with influencers	Sponsored posts and influencer endorsement	No	No	Yes, mostly fitness influencers	No	Not that I can remember	Adverts of Sport wear	Reviews from customers	Influencer endorsement	TikTok reviews
Social Media Influence on purchase	No	I have not	Yes, the influencer endorsements	No	No	Yes. Influenced to buy leggings	No	No	No, I have not been influenced	Yes, A jacket that accentuates the waist	No	Yes, Hoodies

	Yes, it helps to widen the market	Yes	Yes, it shows the face of the brand and how people perceive it	No	Yes, picture helps influence decisions	Yes, it influences the masses	Yes, social media is most influential	Social Media	Yes, media helps decide my purchase	TM is not biased but SM is opinionated	Yes	Media showcases Lululemon positively
Media influence on information	Yes, it helps to widen the market	Yes	Yes, it shows the face of the brand and how people perceive it	No	Yes, picture helps influence decisions	Yes, it influences the masses	Yes, social media is most influential	Social Media	Yes, media helps decide my purchase	TM is not biased but SM is opinionated	Yes	Media showcases Lululemon positively
Leader's comm style	Effective	Quite effective	Low context	I don't know	Progressive	Good	Unknown	Direct and bureaucratic	Its adequate	N/A	I don't know	I'm not sure
Unclear & Inconsistent Communication	No, always clear	N/A	No, everything seemed clear to me	No	No	No	N/A	I think it has been consistent	No	No	No	Not really
Time where decision-making was (+) or (-)	None, besides what exists	N/A	No	No	No	None	N/A	No	No, I have not	No, I can not	Not really	No
Suggestion for comm	No	N/A	No	No	Continue with current formula	None	N/A	Streamline the process	Simplify communication	Have a diverse team	Be more diverse	None
Lululemon comm influenced product purchase	None	I have not	No	No	No	None	N/A	No, there hasn't been	No, I have never	No, I have not	Not really	No
Lululemon community involvement = positive outcome	Not aware	Not that I know of	No. Social Media posts show how CEO is fatphobic	I don't know	No answer	None	N/A	I am not sure	Never encountered such.	Yes, a controversy. Lack of community resulted in racism allegations	Yes, the founder's comments on different races	Nope
Areas that Lululemon excels or lags	Product development	I am not sure	Not aware	I don't know	No answer	None	N/A	I don't think so	Customer complaint resolution	Not having a diverse collection	Not sure	No
Suggestions to enhance communication	None	N/A	No	No	No	None	N/A	More direct communication	Quick feedback to customer query	N/A	Not really	None

TABLE 2: QUALITATIVE DATA FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (See Appendix B)

4.5 Analysis of Qualitative Data (according to themes)

Product quality, performance, style and customer satisfaction of Lululemon

In the responses of the participants, a common theme is noticeable in terms of there being 'no issues' with product quality. Regarding the design features, 'comfortable' is how the respondents would describe the products. According to most respondents, the Lululemon products are 'seamless, comfortable and stretchy.' This shows how well the company works in providing good designs. However, the company is lacking in producing a 'variety of different sizes' for their products. Most of the respondents believe that Lululemon could further improve by catering to people of all shapes and sizes.

Reputation management (perception, brand image and crisis management)

Most of the respondents perceive Lululemon and its products as 'sporty yet fashionable.' Since the company is solely athleisure wear, one could conclude that the public's perception of Lululemon is accurate. However, when it comes to certain rumours that circulate in the company, most of the respondents are not aware of such negative rumours, while others are. Customers are aware of how the CEO of Lululemon is not only 'fatphobic' but has been involved in racial incidents when it comes to product production, as well as the naming of the company. Because of these incidents, the respondents strongly advise that the company resolve the racial issues and be more inclusive.

Media and public's perception of Lululemon

Most of the respondents are 'actively online' and because of this, they are able to interact with Lululemon content from 'influencer endorsements, sponsored advertisements, and customer reviews' on social media platforms. Because a majority of the respondents are active on social media, they believe that social media do not have an influence when it comes to purchasing an item, as well as when forming an overall opinion of Lululemon products.

Leadership communication style and decision making

The majority of the respondents are unaware of the leadership communication style, solely because of the scandals surrounding the company on a corporate level. However, most of the respondents do not believe that the communication is unclear. The CEO has specifically said on multiple occasions that Lululemon products have not and will not cater to people with a larger body size. This indicates that the leader's communication is quite clear. This in turn, suggests that the decisions made by the leader do not have a positive impact on the community.

Stakeholders' perception and response

With respect to communication from Lululemon themselves, the company has not been successful in influencing the respondents to make a purchase. Because of this, the majority of the respondents do not believe that Lululemon's involvement with the community will yield positive outcomes.

Lululemon has been insistent on not providing a wider range of size collection and this is where the company lacks, according to the respondents. However, for the people that the company does cater for, Lululemon excels in their product development. For the company to enhance

their communication strategies, a few respondents believe it would be wise to have a diverse team that offered direct communication, all the while looking at the distinct perspective of each class.

4.6 Credibility, Trustworthiness and Reflexivity of data-collection process

A few ways that the researcher was able to increase the credibility of the data collection was by being transparent with the participants while interacting with them.

In order to improve the transferability of the results, the researcher was able to identify and weed out any assumptions of the respondents. In terms of dependability, the methods used to collect the data were appropriate, the data was documented correctly, and the participants were selected in relation to the research criteria. To ensure confirmability, the data was not influenced by the researcher's own opinion or bias.

The researcher was intentionally reflexive and aware of her own possible influence in collecting and interpreting the data.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Before the start of the study, the researcher obtained an informed consent from the participants involved in the research, who are all customers of Lululemon (See appendix C). The researcher clearly explained the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the research, and ensured that the participants were able to understand their right to withdraw at any time.

The researcher protected the confidentiality of the participants' personal information and ensured that the data collected was anonymised to prevent identification of individuals (Cawthra, et al., 2020).

The researcher treated participants with respect and dignity throughout the research process, acknowledging their autonomy and perspectives, and ensured equal treatment of all participants and stakeholders, regardless of their background, status or affiliations.

The researcher minimised the risk of harm to participants by conducting the research in a manner that prioritised their well-being. The study was non-maleficent (Cawthra, et al., 2020).

The researcher was transparent about the research objectives, methods and potential conflicts of interest, and also provided accurate and honest representations of findings, avoiding misrepresentation or manipulation of data to fit predetermined conclusions.

3.8 Conclusion

By carefully considering the research approach used, the sampling methods and size of the research population, the researcher was able to obtain accurate results, thereby achieving the objectives of the research study. The researcher kept top of mind the ethical considerations that needed to be incorporated in acquiring the data and analysing it.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the following: conclusions, discussion, relation of findings to the conceptual framework, extent to which objectives were achieved, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1   Quantitative Analysis Conclusion

Based on the common trend found in the quantitative data, the majority of the respondents love the Lululemon products. They have great quality, are appropriate for the athleisure world and are overall a great purchase. However, with the scandals surrounding the company in terms of brand reputation, there were neutral and negative mentions of Lululemon from the quantitative surveys. The company's high negative brand mention rate indicates a strong lack of communication strategies employed in managing their reputation.

5.2.2   Qualitative Analysis Conclusion

In the qualitative data, a common trend was found from the responses given by the participants. Aside from their love for Lululemon products, the participants elaborated on the negative mentions surrounding the company. Most of the participants want the products to be size inclusive, to cater to a diverse body group. They believe that by doing so, Lululemon will reach an even bigger customer base and repair their reputation.

5.3 Discussion

The results from both the quantitative and qualitative study suggest that in terms of product quality, performance and style, Lululemon exceeds expectations. However, the results also

imply that Lululemon may not be effective when it comes to navigating and communicating during crises in order to maintain their reputation and stakeholder trust.

5.4 Conceptual Framework

According to the conceptual framework created by the key sources, the following advice was given on managing one's reputation during an organisational crisis.

King III (2002) talks about the difference between crisis communication and crisis management and how it is important to differentiate between the two. In terms of crisis management, an organisation such as Lululemon, along with its team members, must decide on the issues that need to be addressed within the crisis plan.

Regarding the statement of Lululemon's CEO, Wilson, on the origin of the company name, according to King III (2002), all team members must portray certain characteristics during crisis management and team effectiveness. The team should be a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, abilities and knowledge levels to accomplish specific tasks. They should also work to accomplish a certain goal, in this case, clean up the CEO's mess. With the success in production sales, and the positive input of Lululemon products from the participants, one may assume that the team was effective in averting and managing the crises.

It is important to note that the company's ability to foster a loyal customer base through its focus on product quality, style and performance is a testament on the effectiveness of its main business strategy. Because of this, loyal customers engage in the word-of-mouth marketing, further enhancing the brand's image (King III, 2002). This is something that Lululemon could take note of.

Lululemon's communication strategies, coupled with the effectiveness of its products, have created a powerful brand that enjoys high levels of customer loyalty and stakeholder trust. The research results highlight the importance of maintaining transparency, delivering on quality and size variations, and consistently aligning product offering with customer expectations. One might say that the CEO's statement, although it was racially unacceptable, shows honesty and transparency.

The findings also suggest that Lululemon's reputation management is an all-inclusive process, reinforced by the company's ability to seamlessly integrate its communication efforts with its operational strengths.

5.5 Objectives Achieved

From the research findings, a number of objectives were achieved throughout the duration of the research study. These are as follow:

- In terms of transparency, apology, denial, or corrective action, Lululemon was able to respond accordingly. The company was transparent enough about the origin of the company name but also made corrective measures to issue a public apology;

- Traditional media and social media platforms have a major impact in shaping the public's perception. In terms of crisis prevention, how Lululemon made use of the media channels painted a positive or negative image of the brand;

- When it came to understanding how different stakeholders, both internally and externally, perceive and respond to an organization's crisis communication efforts, only external stakeholders were consulted (the customers).

- Analysing customer perceptions towards product effectiveness in terms of quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction was effective and most of the respondents had positive things to say about Lululemon. Because of their "great" products, the customer perception helped the organisation repair its image.

5.6 Limitations of the study

A common method of data collection used by the researcher was the snowball data collection. Because the research study was investigating the company Lululemon, which is based in Canada, the researcher shared both the qualitative and quantitative surveys with friends she knew, who are customers of Lululemon. She also advised the participants to share the surveys with other Lululemon customers that have had experience with the company and its products in general.

This method of non-probability sampling through snowball data collection on the analysis of Lululemon's communication strategies, reputation management, and product effectiveness may have presented several limitations that may have impacted the generalisability and reliability of the findings. These limitations are as follows:

5.6.1 Sampling Bias

Since sampling relies heavily on referrals, the participants in this study are connected through similar interests and demographics primarily consisting of existing Lululemon customers and

individuals in particular communities. Therefore, the study may not have accurately captured the perspectives of those unfamiliar with the brand, neutral or negative perceptions.

5.6.2 Overrepresentation of Positive Feedback

The snowball sampling method may have unintentionally overrepresented loyal and satisfied customers, which could have resulted in an exaggerated evaluation of product quality, performance and customer satisfaction. The participants are more likely to recommend the study to others with similar positive experience resulting in the data to be skewed to a more favourable outcome. This limits the study's ability to critically assess the negative perceptions of Lululemon's product performance if the positive outweighs the negative.

5.6.3 Limited Generalisability

Because the nature of snowball sampling is based on referrals, and similar interest and experiences, the findings cannot be generalised to a broader diverse population. Lululemon's communication strategies might be perceived differently across diverse demographics but the limited diversity that snowball sampling has to offer leads to a narrow or even false interpretation of the company, leaving out important perspectives.

5.6.4 Conclusion

While snowball sampling offers valuable insights into Lululemon's communication strategies by reaching participants who are aware of the company and its products, its limitations of sampling bias, overrepresentation of positive feedback and limited generalisability, should be acknowledged.

5.7 Recommendations

Because snowball sampling was used, researchers should address the limitations by incorporating more diverse sampling methods. Random sampling would provide a more balanced analysis of the brand's reputation management and stakeholder trust strategies. This approach will reduce sampling bias and increase the generalisability of the findings.

Lululemon should make use of social media as it is a key channel for brand reputation management. According to Kaul and Chaudhri (2015), social media have drastically altered the relationship between organisations and their stakeholders. Lululemon's procedures for handling social media conversation must be carefully planned in order to limit negative media coverage. The processes employed must also work hand in hand with the diverse PR team of

the company in repairing their reputation (King III, 2002). Therefore, understanding the impact of social media would be particularly useful in assessing how Lululemon adapts to modern consumer behaviours (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2015).

While the current study focuses heavily on customer feedback, future research should broaden the scope to include other key stakeholders, such as employees. Employees can offer feedback on the internal communication of the company and how the communication strategies deployed influence the internal culture and brand advocacy.

By diversifying sampling methods, evaluating social media campaigns and expanding stakeholder perspectives, future studies can offer deeper insights into how Lululemon's communication strategies and product effectiveness contribute to its reputation management and stakeholder trust. These recommendations would not only address the current limitations, but also provide a clearer and more balanced understanding of the brand's positioning in the competitive athleisure market.

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APPENDIX ONE: STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

This research study is being conducted to analyse the communication strategies employed by organizations to manage reputation and stakeholder trust. The researcher will focus on Lululemon and its communication strategies in managing their reputation and stakeholder trust, as well as the effectiveness of its products in terms of quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction. The time limit for this study will be up to two to three weeks. Would you mind answering a few questions on your experience of the services provided? [If no, then discontinue the interview. If yes, then proceed.]

This evaluation entails answering a series of closed-ended questions, which means you must choose the response that best describes your experience, from the list provided. It is important to note from the outset that your answers will be treated with confidentiality, and you will remain completely anonymous throughout the research project.

This questionnaire has a total of five sections (A, B, C, D and E) and 30 questions. Please read each of the following questions carefully and put a tick on the answer that best suits you.

Section A: Product Quality, Performance, Style, and Customer Satisfaction

1. How did you hear about Lululemon's products?
   - ☐ Social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc)
   - ☐ Family and Friends
   - ☐ Newspapers and Journals
   - ☐ Others (please specify) _____

2. How many Lululemon products do you have?
   - ☐ 1-5
   - ☐ 6-10
   - ☐ More than 10

3. How would you rate the quality of the products?
   - ☐ Excellent
   - ☐ Good
   - ☐ Average
   - ☐ Poor

4. How satisfied are you with Lululemon products?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

5. Would you recommend Lululemon products to others?

- ☐ Definitely
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not

6. Please provide any other comments or suggestions regarding Lululemon products.

_____

_____

Section B: Reputation Management (Perception, Brand Image, Crisis Management)

7. How would you describe Lululemon's brand image?

- ☐ Luxurious
- ☐ Trendy
- ☐ Athleisure-focused
- ☐ Innovative
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

8. What factors influence your perception of Lululemon's reputation? (e.g., product quality, customer service, brand image)

- ☐ Product quality
- ☐ Customer service
- ☐ Brand image
- ☐ Company values
- ☐ Social responsibility initiatives
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

9. Are you aware of any past issues involving Lululemon? (e.g., product recalls, ethical concerns)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

10. How effectively did Lululemon handle these issues?

   ☐ Very effectively

   ☐ Effectively

   ☐ Neutral

   ☐ Ineffectively

   ☐ Very ineffectively

11. Prior to any crisis, how would you rate your perception of Lululemon?

   ☐ Positive

   ☐ Negative

   ☐ Neutral

Section C: Media and Public Perception

12. How would you rate Lululemon's media and public relations efforts?

   ☐ Excellent

   ☐ Good

   ☐ Average

   ☐ Poor

13. Did the positive coverage have a massive impact on your perception of Lululemon?

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

14. Do you believe social media content and influencers affect your perception of Lululemon during a crisis?

   ☐ Yes, significantly

   ☐ Yes, somewhat

   ☐ No, not really

15. Did the negative coverage have an impact on your perception of Lululemon?

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

Section D: Leadership Communication Styles and Decision-making

16. How would you rate the leadership of Lululemon in managing the recent reputation challenges?
    - ☐ Excellent
    - ☐ Good
    - ☐ Average
    - ☐ Poor

17. How would you describe the leader's communication style during the crisis?
    - ☐ Open and honest
    - ☐ Authoritative
    - ☐ Empathetic
    - ☐ Defensive
    - ☐ Uncertain/Inconsistent

18. Has the leader's decision-making process instilled confidence in Lululemon's ability to overcome its reputation challenges?
    - ☐ Yes, significantly
    - ☐ Yes, somewhat
    - ☐ No, not really

19. How satisfied are you with the leadership of Lululemon in handling the reputation repair process?
    - ☐ Very satisfied
    - ☐ Satisfied
    - ☐ Neutral
    - ☐ Dissatisfied
    - ☐ Very dissatisfied

Section E: Stakeholder Perception and Response

20. How aware are you of Lululemon's recent crisis or reputation challenges?
    - ☐ Very aware
    - ☐ Somewhat aware
    - ☐ Not very aware
    - ☐ Not aware at all

21. Do you feel adequately informed about the situation through Lululemon's communication channels?

    ☐ Yes, very informed

    ☐ Yes, somewhat informed

    ☐ No, not very informed

    ☐ No, not informed at all

22. Which communication channels did you find most effective in receiving updates from Lululemon about the crisis? (Select all that apply)

    ☐ Official website

    ☐ Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)

    ☐ Email newsletters

    ☐ Press releases

    ☐ News coverage (TV, newspapers)

    ☐ Other (please specify) _____

23. Do you believe Lululemon's crisis communication efforts have restored your trust in the brand?

    ☐ Yes, completely

    ☐ Yes, to some extent

    ☐ No, not really

    ☐ No, not at all

We have reached the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for taking the time to answer the questions.

APPENDIX TWO: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

My name is Serena Amber Martin, and I am a second-year corporate communication student at Helderberg College of Higher Education. I am conducting a research study on the analysis of the communication strategies employed by organisations to manage their reputation and stakeholder trust. I will be using Lululemon for my study.

Through a series of interview questions, I am trying to understand how Lululemon's manages their reputation and the communication strategies they incorporate, as well as their decision-making process and the perception of internal and external stakeholders. I also want to know the effectiveness of Lululemon's products in terms of quality, performance, style, and customer satisfaction. Would you mind taking a few minutes to answer questions that will best describe your experience with Lululemon?

Please note that your answers will be treated with confidentiality, and you will remain completely anonymous throughout the research project. Thank you for your time.

Personal Information

Please fill in your personal details in the following section.

Title: (Mr/Miss/Ms/Mrs/Dr) _____

Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: (DD)/(MM)/(YYYY)

Sex: (M/F) _____

Occupation: _____

Highest level of education: _____

Place of residence: _____

Nationality: _____

Home Language: _____

Section A: Product Quality, Performance, Style, and Customer Satisfaction

1. How long have you been a customer of Lululemon?
2. Have you ever experienced any issues with the quality of Lululemon products? If so, could you please describe them?
3. Are there any design features or style elements of Lululemon products that you appreciate or dislike?
4. Do you have any suggestions for how Lululemon could enhance its product offerings or customer experience?

Section B: Reputation Management (Perception, Brand Image, Crisis Management)

1. When you think of Lululemon, what words or phrases come to mind?
2. Have you ever encountered any information or rumours about Lululemon that affected your perception of the brand? If so, could you elaborate?
3. Do you believe Lululemon effectively managed its reputation during those crises? Why or why not?
4. Do you have any suggestions for how Lululemon could enhance its reputation or improve its crisis management approach?

Section C: Media and Public Perception

1. How active are you on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or X (formerly known as Twitter)?
2. Have you encountered any content related to Lululemon's products on social media? If yes, what types of content have you seen (e.g., user reviews, influencer endorsements, sponsored posts)?
3. Have you ever been influenced to buy or avoid purchasing Lululemon products based on what you have seen on social media? If so, can you provide examples?
4. Do you find information from traditional media or social media more influential when forming opinions about Lululemon's products? Why?

Section D: Leadership Communication and Decision-Making

1. How would you describe the communication style of Lululemon's leadership team?

2. Have you ever felt that the communication from Lululemon's leadership was unclear or inconsistent? If so, can you provide examples?

3. Can you recall a specific instance where Lululemon's leadership communication or decision-making process positively or negatively affected your perception of the company?

4. Do you have any suggestions for how Lululemon's leadership can enhance communication and decision-making within the company?

Section E: Stakeholder Perception and Response

1. Have you met any instances where Lululemon's communication with customers has influenced your own purchasing decisions or perceptions of the brand? If so, describe the situation.

2. Have there been any instances where Lululemon's communication with the community or industry has led to positive outcomes or controversy? If so, explain.

3. Are there any specific areas where Lululemon excels or lags in terms of communication with stakeholders? If so, which areas?

4. Do you have any suggestions for how Lululemon can enhance its communication strategies to foster stronger relationships with its stakeholders?

Thank you very much for your time and input. You have been extremely informative over the course of this interview. I hope that you have a pleasant day.

APPENDIX THREE: CONSENT FORM

Study Title:

Analysis of Lululemon's Communication Strategies for Managing Reputation and Stakeholder Trust

Researcher:

Ms. Serena Amber Martin
Email: martins@hche.ac.za
Helderberg College of Higher Education

Purpose of the Study:

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Serena Amber Martin. The purpose of this study is to explore Lululemon's communication strategies and how they manage their reputation and build stakeholder trust. The insights gathered from this research will contribute to a better understanding of corporate communication practices within the retail industry.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview conducted through Google Forms. The form will contain a series of open-ended questions designed to gather your perceptions of Lululemon's communication strategies, your experiences as a customer, and your views on the company's reputation and trustworthiness.

- Your responses will be recorded and stored securely.
- The Google Forms survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate or to exit the Google Form at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to withdraw, any data you have submitted will be destroyed and will not be included in the study.

Confidentiality:

Your responses will be kept confidential. The data collected through the Google Form will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Any identifying information will be removed or anonymized in the final report. The results of this study may be published or presented at academic conferences, but your identity will not be disclosed.

Risks and Benefits:

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. The primary risk is the potential discomfort in discussing personal perceptions of Lululemon's communication strategies. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of corporate communication strategies in the retail industry.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Serena Amber Martin at martins@hche.ac.za.

Consent:

By selecting "I Consent" below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the information provided above. You agree to participate in this research study and consent to your responses being recorded and used for research purposes.

- ☐ I Consent
- ☐ I Do Not Consent

Thank you for your participation!