

## **Maintaining a Coherent Corporate Identity in the Face of Politically Rooted Crises**

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### **Abstract**

The perceived convergence of the corporate/business world with mainstream politics has immersed many organisations in Southern Africa in unprecedented crises, which threaten to soil not only their brands but also their identities, especially in this age of social media. The empirical cases involving Dendairy, Impala Car Rental, Clicks South Africa and Hotplate Grill bring to the fore a realisation that social media platforms can also be instrumental in amplifying negative images about companies. This study zeroes in on the crisis communication strategies (if any) used by the aforementioned organisations in response(s) to crises in which their brands were associated with controversial politics in the environments within which they operate. This qualitative research deploys the concepts of corporate identity, reputation and stakeholder management to examine the way(s) in which the organisations have responded and adapted or failed to adapt in crisis contexts. This phenomenological study adopts a comparative approach since it underlines that in as much as there are differences with regards to the nature of the crises faced by each organisation, there are also fundamental similarities from which inferences can be drawn and lessons can be learnt. The research submits that although in corporate communications it is ideal and, indeed, standard practice that communications should be rational and deliberate, crisis communications call for more immediate modes of communication. Despite the spontaneous nature of these crises, efficient crisis response strategies should be effected and efficiently implemented. The research goes beyond questions of whether or not the crises communications deployed by the companies were coherent; it also zeroes in on how (if at all) the organisations managed to sustain a coherent corporate identity and image.