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AC Strategic Communication
Management
2259XADV14

Danielle van Berkom
2339595

Introduction

This report is based on findings about Britney Spears as a brand. The report will set out the identity of Britney Spears as part of the organisation identity, followed by three relevant issues surrounding the pop star. Then an issue analysis will be drawn by using an issue checklist and a risk matrix. Important Stakeholders will be listed followed by an analysis of these stakeholders. At the end an advice will be given on how to resolve the issue and reach the set objectives.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Organisation Identity

1.1	Synopsis	4
1.2	Child star	4
1.3	Pop superstar	4
1.4	A sexier image	4
1.5	Marriages	5
1.6	Troubles in the spotlight	5
1.7	Family struggles	5
1.8	Comeback	5
1.9	Recent projects	6
1.10	Management team	6
1.11	Online marketing and social media	6
1.12	Core values, vision & mission	7

Chapter 2: Relevant Issues

2.1	Issue 1: Parenting Skills	8
2.2	Issue 2: Psychological breakdowns – conservatorship	8
2.3	Issue 3: Lip-syncing scandal –Las Vegas show	9

Chapter 3: Issue Analysis

3.1	Issue Checklist	10
3.2	Risk Matrix	10

Chapter 4: Stakeholder Analysis

4.1	Artist and Image	11
4.2	Management team	12
4.3	Fans and visitors	12
4.4	Media and press	12
4.5	Record Label	13
4.6	Venues and bookers	13

Chapter 5: Communication Advice

5.1	Scenario	13
5.2	Stakeholders	14
5.3	Objectives	15
5.4	Strategic options and responses	15
5.5	Planning and costs	16

Conclusion	17
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Literature	18
-------------------	----

Appendix: Reflection & Evaluation Crisis Day	20
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Chapter 1: Organisation identity

This analysis is focused on female artist Britney Spears. She has been one of the most successful, and controversial, solo acts in popular music since the 1990s. Six of her first seven albums reached a number one status on the 'Billboard' 200.

1.1 Synopsis

Britney Jean Spears was born on December 2, 1981, in McComb, Mississippi. At the age of eleven she starred in *The All-New Mickey Mouse Club*. In 1998 she released her first hit single "...Baby One More Time" which instantly launched her as a new and popular female pop star. Spears achieved massive sales with her first album before she experienced personal and professional setbacks. In 2011 she made a comeback with *Femme Fatale* and her latest album originates from 2013. At the moment she has her own show in Las Vegas and Spears is working on a new album to be released later this year.

1.2 Child Star

At a young age Britney Spears developed an interest in performing. "Ever since I was 7 or 8 years old, my mom would have company over, and I was always performing for everybody in front of the TV. Even when I went to school, I was always the weird child; I would go outside and instead of playing, I wanted to have 'Star Search' competitions," Spears told *Hollywood Reporter*. (*Biography.com, 2016*)

At the age of 8, she auditioned for a spot on the Disney Channel's *The All-New Mickey Mouse Club*. She did not succeed to get the part, but a childhood dream was achieved. Spears was allowed to showcase her vocal talents on the popular entertainment competition *Star Search* in 1992.

When she was 11, she auditioned a second time. This time she did get the part alongside other upcoming talents such as Justin Timberlake and Christina Aguilera.

1.3 Pop Superstar



After the show's cancellation in 1995, Spears decided to focus on developing her musical career. She landed a contract with Jive Records and in September 1998 she released her first single, "...Baby One More Time." The song reached the top of the pop charts at the end of January 1999, accompanied by a music video in a Catholic schoolgirl uniform. The video and especially her outfit drew criticism

from parents of her young fan base, but Spears claimed to be an innocent girl.

The eponymous album sold more than 25 million copies worldwide. In 1999 Spears picked up 4 awards, including for female artist of the year and best new artist. She became a headliner of the teen pop music wave that included fellow *Mickey Mouse Club* stars Christina Aguilera and Jessica Simpson.

Rumours about her relationship with Justin Timberlake at this time were confirmed.

In 2000 she released a new album "*Oops!... I Did It Again*". The recording was an instant number one hit in the album charts, selling more than 1 million copies in the week of the release.

1.4 A Sexier Image

In 2001 Spears for the first time moved towards shedding her innocent image, by taking her looks and sound in a different direction. The single "*I'm a slave 4 u*" was nothing like her previous tracks. When she performed the song at the MTV Video Music Awards, Spears officially broke with the past by dancing with a seven-foot albino python around her neck and wearing a barely-there costume.

Spears got a leading role in the movie *Crossroads*, with a lot of drubbing from critics but still grossing more than 60 million dollars worldwide. By that time her relationship with Timberlake came to an end.

In 2003 during the MTV Video Music Awards. She and Christina Aguilera shared a kiss with pop superstar Madonna during a performance. This action was seen as a way for Spears to present her more sexualized identity. Spears acknowledged that Madonna was an important influence on her. Spears's *In the Zone* album, which included vocals from Madonna on "Me Against the Music", hit stores that November. The album's top single, "Toxic," got the singer first Grammy Award for Best Dance Recording.

1.5 Marriages

In 2004 Britney Spears battled her intense work schedule by rebelling. She marries her childhood friend Jason Alexander in Las Vegas, but annulated the union again only two days later. She then got involved with backup dancer Kevin Federline whose girlfriend at the time was pregnant of their second child. This relation was under high pressure because of the scrutiny on her private life by the media. Federline and Spears married in 2004. Shortly after her wedding, she released *Greatest Hits: My Prerogative*. In April 2005 Federline and Spears announced they were expecting their first child. A reality show called *Britney and Kevin: Chaotic*, which told the story of their early relationship through personal videos, was poorly watched. That September, the couple welcomed son Sean Preston.

1.6 Troubles in the Spotlight

After the birth of her son, her parenting skills became a topic of discussion. In 2006 she was caught on film driving her car with her infant son in her lap. Media called her behaviour "irresponsible" and "troubling," saying that Spears was sending "the wrong message to millions of her fans." In September 2006 Federline and Spears had a new addition to their family with the birth of their son Jayden James. Two months later Spears filed for divorce claiming "irreconcilable differences." After the divorce Spears frequently attended the club scene, hanging out with Paris Hilton. She frequently checked in and out of rehabilitation and then in 2007 shaved her head in a California beauty salon while the paparazzi took pictures.

By the summer, Spears and Federline were in the midst of a custody battle for their two sons. Despite her personal challenges, she released the album *Blackout*. The single "Gimme More" was released in September and received a warm welcome from the public and critics. Nonetheless Spears's performance of the song at that year's MTV Video Music Awards was a disaster. She appeared nervous on stage, sluggishly dancing and poorly lip-synching. A few days later, Spears was charged for a hit-and-run incident in a parking lot. (*Biography.com, 2016*)

1.7 Family Struggles

Despite these setbacks, *Blackout* reached a number two slot in the *Billboard* charts after its release. This success did not last long, as Spears had another breakdown in January 2008. She was taken to the hospital for psychiatric evaluation after she refused to return her sons to their father after a court-appointed visit. After this Federline received full custody of the two boys. Spears returned to the hospital for another evaluation after rumours were spread she suffered bipolar disorder. The diagnosis was not confirmed. Spears' parents believed manager Sam Lutfi was a bad influence on Britney Spears. They went to court and control over Spears's personal, professional and medical matters.

1.8 Comeback

A few weeks after this crisis Spears made her appearance on the popular sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. That summer she made a successful return to the MTV Video Music Awards, bringing home three awards for the single "Piece of Me." In late 2008 Britney Spears released her next album, *Circus*, which rose to the top of the charts thanks to the success of her number one single "Womanizer." Spears then seemed to have settled down, saying being done with going out.

1.9 Recent Projects

In 2011 Spears proved she could still make powerful pop music with *Femme Fatale*, which featured hits as "I Wanna Go" and "Till The World Ends." The recording climbed to the top of the charts, becoming her sixth number one album. Spears seemed to do better in personal life as well. She and boyfriend Jason Trawick got engaged in December 2011 though they later split in early 2013.

In 2012, Spears took on a new challenge: She joined the judges' panel of *The X Factor* in its second season, embracing the role of the difficult-to-please critic. Despite the initial enthusiasm, Britney Spears left the show after one season.

In late 2013, Spears made headlines with the release of her eighth studio album, *Britney Jean*. This was her most personal album so far, she said. The album received mixed reviews, with some critics calling it "introspective" and "mature," and others deeming it "forgettable." That same year Spears also began her residency at Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino in Las Vegas with the show *Britney: Piece of Me*. Initially this was a contract for two years, but recently she signed a contract for two more years, to stay through December 2017

In 2015, Spears teamed up with female rap star Iggy Azalea for the single "Pretty Girls", which song they performed live at the Billboard Music Awards in May. At the end of 2015 Spears announced she was working hard on another album.

1.10 Management Team

Britney Spears has a management team that arranges most of her professional and public actions and appearances. The management team arranges and scripts interviews, arranges contact moments with the fan base, they direct communication on social media channels, they decide which promos are good for her career and measure her image through the eye of the public. (*Breathe Heavy, 2013*)

1.11 Online marketing and social media

Spears' is one of the main pop stars of our time, what makes her so unique, next to her artistic achievements, is the way her employees build and strengthen her celebrity brand image by making use of online media channels. The team makes use of a website and blog (www.britneyspears.com), two YouTube channels (Britney Spears and Britney TV), a Twitter account and a Facebook profile. In 2012 Britney Spears launched an iPhone application called "It's Britney," which provides official news and exclusive messages and allows users to assemble digital images of Britney and themselves.

These platforms allow Britney Spears and her team to be in touch with her fan base. This way they can interact with their target group on a daily basis. Spears communicates important messages through her social media applications and reporters have to rely on these sources for press announcements because she does not appear on many interviews. By doing so, a feeling of privilege and loyalty is being created, as loyal fans who follow her channels will get the news as soon as press representatives receive the information, sometimes even before. Together with her team Spears responds to questions of her fans while clearly indicating who is actually giving the responses. Her team is not acting to be her, when a post is made by Spears herself, the message is marked using the "~Brit" signature. Each online channel serves a unique and specific purpose, although the team tries to connect them and integrate them as closely as possible.

The way the Spears' team makes use of online marketing has served as an example for many other brands, artists and companies. The marketing strategy aims to make use of several channels to be able to connect to a fan base as closely and real-time as possible. The marketing strategy consists out of five main factors:

Choose carefully: For Britney Spears the marketing strategy focuses efforts on three main social media applications, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, in addition to *BritneySpears.com*. The most important thing that needs to be avoided is unnecessary complexity. It is key to choose a channel that serves the purpose of a company best. Twitter is useful for brief update while personal updates are best written on a blog that allows a better control of information flow and comments, etcetera..

Pick the application, or make your own: Britney Spears and her team have decided to make use of thirds party channels (i.e., YouTube, Facebook, Twitter) in combination with a personal blog on her website that is under full control of her and her team. This is a strong choice since applications might decrease in popularity. MySpace is a characteristic example of an application that lost substantial importance since the launch of Facebook. This shows it is vital to have a solid website that is under personal control, that is going to stick around and is not determined to decrease popularity with the rise of new applications and platforms.

Ensure activity alignment and media plan integration: Key is the alignment of information that is available on different channels and applications. All the information needs to be aligned and consistent with the overall media strategy. For example, Britney Spears communicates all information through her social media applications and does not issue press releases. This ensures that data available through traditional media and online is consistent.

Be active and interesting: It is important to be active and interesting on online channels. For fans it is very interesting to leak demo tapes, to post teasers and, generally, spread the product launch over a period of several weeks. The main reason for companies to fail marketing strategies is because they fail to give regular updates or simply because they use those tools to distribute off-the-shelf advertising messages, which is not helping to build a fan base.

Be unprofessional and honest: The reason the strategy used by Britney Spears and a team serves an example, is the fact that they communicate in a clear and honest way. There are no 'acting as Britney-posts'. When Britney Spears posts herself, the message is signed "~Brit", which is a clear indication to her fans that Spears herself is the author. The language used for updates on Facebook and Twitter is consistent with the way friends would speak to each other, informal. Such honesty is important to clearly differentiate between messages posted by the Britney Spears team and by the popstar herself. (Kaplan A. M. & Haenlein, M., 2012)

1.12 Core Values, Vision & Mission

Britney Spears is not a company with determined core values, a clear vision and a mission. Although if would have to draw up these elements based on the research above I would say these are as follows:

Core Values

young, edgy, leading and connected

Vision

Leading marketing strategies create a lasting bond with a fan base

Mission

Our mission is to create a strong brand image around one of the world's greatest pop stars by connecting with our fan base in a unique and leading way.

Chapter 2: Relevant Issues

Many issues are to be found, surrounding Britney Spears in her personal and professional life. There were up and downs, and mainly the down times were showing issues of proportions. For example there was the custody and parenthood issue surrounding her marriage and her two sons, where she was criticised for her lack of parenting skills and her lack of responsibility due to her heavy partying behaviour. (Fuller, B., 2011) Her psychological breakdowns and drug use, resulting in shaving her head and several stays in the hospital and in rehabilitation clinics, caused a whirlwind in the media. (Mograth, R. & Willgress, L., 2016) Then there were accusations of a lack of talent because of her poor lip-syncing skills during several live appearances. (Dailymail, 2014) Even though some of these issues were relevant years ago, they actually turn out to still are because of the impact they have had on the image of the pop star. Britney Spears will always be remembered by her personal breakdowns, and the lip sync scandal is still ongoing as she recently signed a prolongation of the Las Vegas contract. (Mercurynews, 2015)

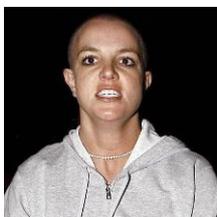
2.1 Issue 1: Parenting Skills



The issue of the lack of parenting skills has died out a bit by now, but was a big deal around the time Britney Spears and Kevin Federline were fighting custody for their two sons.

This issue now is in the 'Maturity/Resolution phase'. Recent statements and photos show Britney Spears has resolved her issues with ex-husband Federline who has received full custody over the two boys. They both live in peace separately and have contact whenever necessary. This contact solely focuses on the well-being of their two sons. Spears shows signs of improved parenting skills and according to Federline 'co-parenting with Britney Spears is great'. (Daily Mail, 2015)

Issue 2.2: Psychological Breakdowns - conservatorship



Currently Spears is under conservatorship. After her breakdowns in 2006 her personal and financial belongings were placed under controls of her father. In 2008 the conservatorship was made permanent. Initially Spears seems frustrated about the restrictions. She said she thought it was too in control and that there was no passion or excitement. In 2008 in an interview with MTV she characteristically spoke the words: "Even when you go to jail, you know there's the time when you're going to get out. But in this situation, it's never-ending."

Spears' father, 63, is responsible for her physical well-being, making sure she takes her medicaments. He also manages her estate. He takes in about 130.000 dollar a year as a conservator. His bills are reviewed and approved by a judge. He has sought increases over the years such as 1,5 percent of gross revenues from the performances and merchandising tied to the Las Vegas shows. Spears herself and the court lawyer did not approve. Spears' father and his lawyers have aggressively kept at bay anyone they consider a threat to Britney Spears' well-being. A former business manager, boyfriend and a lawyer were serve with restraining orders. To have the conservatorship resolved, fan based websites such as *BreatheHeavy.com* started campaigns. This website launched the campaign 'Free Britney'. Owner Jordan Miller said he had received an irate call from Britney's father who threatened to have the website taken down.

Ever since the start of the conservatorship Britney Spears has said little publicly about the arrangement. Discussions and actions coming from the fan base are still present. (Kovaleski, S., F. & Coscarelli, J., 2016) This issue in in the 'Active phase' ever since the MTV interview ending the conservatorship up to this day. The situation never turned into a crisis, but it drew a lot of media attention and up to this day the fan base discusses about the issue as it has never been resolved.

2.3 Issue 3: Lip syncing Scandal – Las Vegas show



Accusations on Britney Spears' live singing talents have always existed, since the beginning of her career. In 2013 Spears signed a contract for 66,5 million dollars, about 475.000 dollars a night, to play shows in Las Vegas in *Planet Hollywood*. Ticket prices varied up to 800 dollar per ticket. Even though her live singing qualities have always been questioned, visitors were outraged about the high ticket prices for a playback act as the show was being advertised as 'Britney Spears LIVE in Vegas'. The discussion was brought back life at the end of 2015 when Spears announced a two year prolongation of her contract until the end of 2017. (Mercury News, 2015)

Britney Spears' lip syncing talent has already been a big media scandal from the moment a hundred outrageous fans stormed out of her concert in Perth, Australia in 2011. Other artists got involved in the media outrage, such as John Mayer who happened to be down under at the same time as Spears, to promote his new album. He tweeted the following: "*If you're shocked that Britney was lip-syncing at her concert and want your money back, life may continue to be hard for you.*"

The hundred angry fans who stormed out of Spears' concert were disappointed by the whole performance and Spears's lip-syncing during the two-hour show. Spears never mentioned the city by name. Concert goers complained they had paid between 150 and 1400 dollars to see the pop star, and that the show was just impersonal and of disappointing quality.

After this event, politicians in three Australian states – Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales – called for new laws to force music promoters to disclose whether a concert will be live or lip-synced. A lip-synced concert may never be promoted as a live performance. (Ambrose, M., 2011)

The second media explosion on this issue was in 2014 when first the issue was denied and after admitted by Spears' manager. Adam Lever, in the end of 2013, insisted that Spears would be singing live during her shows and that there would be no lip-syncing at Planet Hollywood. In a new interview in 2014 the manager confessed that Spears does not sing live throughout the entire show. (Daily Mail, 2014)

Ever since, numerous newspapers and magazines from around the world wrote criticising articles on Spears' playback act. The highly popular French newspaper *Le Figaro* (2014) criticized Spears' Vegas show as a whole. They did not only find the playback highly disturbing, the dance moves lacked energy, she was very stiff and her back-up dancers had to save the show. Overall the show was called scandalous. (*Le Figaro*, 2014)

Recently the contract was prolonged for another two years which unleashed another storm of international criticism. The French website *Non-Stop People* (2016) recently wrote about Spears' playback act as a joke. Critics said that it is ridiculous that the singer take such an amount of money and does not feel the dignity to deliver a show worthy of her name and the amount of money people pay for a ticket. According to the website Britney would have said on Kiss FM: « *Je vais chanter en live, je chante toujours en live [...] Ça ne vas pas être toujours juste mais je vais faire mon possible.* ». She says she will sing live, as always. Videos appeared online, made by visitors, showing how Spears' forgot to sing when the playback including her pre-recorded voice kept playing during one of her shows in Vegas. This launched a whirlwind of criticism by media and visitors. (*Non-Stop People*, 2016) Because of the recent revival of this issue it is in the 'Active' and 'Intense phase'.

Chapter 3: Issue Analysis

Because of the current status of the third issue on the lack of live singing talents of the pop star it was decided to work out a communication advice on this issue. To make sure the issue is relevant, it is necessary to run a checklist:

3.1 Issue Checklist:

- Openly debated problem in society?

Yes it is, as can be read in Chapter 2.3 about the third issue Australian government is concerned with the advertisement of lip-sync performances a live performances as they are misleading. Not only in Australia but around the globe criticism is being heard, especially from the public.

- Growing media attention for problem over time?

Yes there is a growing media attention, again. In the past there have been several media explosions on the issue and every time the media attention died out a little bit. At the moment we are in the midst of a new wave of media attention regarding the issue.

- Is there a conflict between stakeholders?

Yes there is a conflict between stakeholders. The artist and her management team are aligned but the media is opposed to this in this scenario. This could lead to a shift from alignment to opposition on the side of fans.

- Problem ready for solution?

Yes, the problem could be solved by clearly stating Britney Spears is lip-syncing, but determined to please visitors and fans with a mind-blowing show to keep fans on her side as she is not solely a singer but merely an entertainer.

- Would the solution involve policy decisions?

Regarding the issue of advertisement policy issues could be involved such as a restriction of advertising with the word 'live'.

The checklist above shows that the third issue is current and ready for action. The risk matrix below shows this is a reasonable choice as well as there are some high risk factors with high impact happening right now.

3.2 Risk Matrix

To be able to fill in a risk matrix for the selected issue, each possible risk is graded on a scale from 1 to 10 on both likelihood and impact.

	Likelihood (1-10)	Impact (1-10)
<i>Loss of fan base</i>	4	8
<i>Contract breach</i>	2	8
<i>Image damage or loss</i>	8	8
<i>Envy by fellow artists</i>	5	4
<i>Damaging articles critics</i>	9	8
<i>Money back claims</i>	4	3
<i>Decrease of visitors</i>	3	6

This results in a matrix that exactly shows where the highest risks lie.

		Impact				
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Likelihood	Very High				Articles critics (9/8) Likely to continue as it is already happening, impact is medium since Spears' has faced many of these media storms.	
	High				Image damage/loss (8/8) Likely to happen and high impact since this could damage the entire credibility of Britney Spears as an artist.	
	Medium		Envy fellow artists (5/4) Medium likelihood because of their battling status for popularity, impact would be low because of shared fan bases.			
	Low		Money back claims (4/3) This is unlikely to happen and has low impact because of the big fan base and the contractor mostly has a guarantee.	Decrease of visitors (3/6) Unlikely to happen because of many fans, impact would be medium as if it continues measures would be taken.	Loss fan base (4/8) Unlikely because of the close contact marketing strategy, if it would happen high impact, an artist is nothing without fans.	
	Very Low				Contract breach (2/8) Unlikely to happen, contract was recently prolonged due to succes, would have a high impact, loss over 100 shows.	

As can be seen in the Risk Matrix above *image damage and/or loss* are very likely to occur and would have a high impact. The highest risk comes from the media as it inevitable more criticism will be published on different channels, which will have a high impact as the media are a highly influential stakeholder in the music industry.

Chapter 4: Stakeholder analysis

To get an insight in what stakeholder are being affected by this issue an overview was created on the stakeholders connected to Britney Spears. It is important to know about the frequency with which they need to be informed, how active they are, what kind of interest they have regarding the issue and how communication with these stakeholders should be done.

In addition to an analysis of the interests of current stakeholders, it is crucial to try to predict which stakeholders will show an interest in the and those who still have to declare their interests. The threat coming from a risk must be considered, which is why a risk matrix should be made visual. (Dalton, J., 2011)

As issue management is not a linear process Issues do not necessarily follow a linear path, but instead follow paths that reflect the intensity and diversity of the values and interests stakeholders brought to an issue and the complexity of the interaction among the ... factors." (Jacques, T., 2007)

4.1 Artist and Image

In this case this is Britney Spears herself. She is closely engaged with the issue and has quite a lot of influence on how to deal with the situation. Because Spears is under conservatorship she does not have the final saying, but because the issue could as well affect her in a personal way, possibly causing another breakdown, she should and will have a saying in this. Britney Spears as an artist and woman has a personal and commercial interest coming with this issue. This is why she needs to be communicated with in a very active way, directly and intensively with direct lines. She also needs to be visible as she is the person the issue evolves around. Her fan base and the press would want her to stand for her beliefs regarding the issue.

4.2 Management Team

The Management Team needs to keep informed and is engaged closely. They are moderately active and visible. As shown in Chapter 1, the team behind Britney Spears is very much engaged with an online strategy. They appear online to make statements, give updates and post whenever Spears cannot do so herself. In an issue as such they would be actively screening the internet and social media. They mainly have a commercial interest and the team keeps short lines of communication by using the internet, e-mail, telephone and direct lines in person.

4.3 Fans and Visitors

Fans and visitors need to be closely engaged in this issue. Normally the marketing strategy as it is being used by the artist and her team is to closely keep in touch with the fan base. This should be no different in times of crisis. Fans are loyal, and as this is the fact, they would feel a personal interest. This issue therefore should be honestly displayed and discussed to keep loyal fans satisfied. Loss of the fan base, as seen in the Risk Matrix, would have a high impact. Fans have got a lot of influence because without fans an artist is not capable of bringing music to the people. They are very active and moderately to highly visible, especially online. This is why communication should be done via social media, website, fan mail and during live concerts.

4.4 Media and Press

The media and press need to be closely engaged as well. They have big influence on the overall image of the artist as they have a big influence on the fans. The issue should be addressed and managed closely in regards to the media. The media have a commercial interest on the issue and therefore are very business-like. Negative and critical reviews and releases on the issue would have a medium to high impact on the overall image of the artist which could affect numbers of ticket and album sales, fan base and thus profit and loyalty. Communication with the press in the past few years was never done by Britney Spears herself giving a conference or an interview. Communication has always went through social media applications and channels. So if these channels will be clearly and thoroughly managed by the management team the press will get real-time and up-to-date information on the issue through these channels.

As stated by John Dalton (2011) corporations must also prepare a detailed question and answer form to be able to answer questions co-ordinately when necessary. A corporation must have recommended positions on an issue so that these will permit the development of consistent messages that convey the position of the organization to the stakeholders.



Message development therefore is a vital part of any issue management process and feeds directly into corporate communications activities, such as website content, press and media releases, speeches from the CEO, interviews, spokespeople's comments, and engagement with social media as shown in the message, development and framing triangle.

For this specific issue this means the media would be able to contact the management team by e-mail of a phone call and therefore the management team should have a statement and question/answer form ready.

4.5 Record Label

The record label needs to be kept satisfied, they have solely commercial interest in the issue. They are moderately active in the background and very little visible. Britney Spears uses already existing songs during her Vegas shows which means they do not have to be as active on the foreground.

Communication with the record label happens from time to time in personal meetings, or mostly by phone calls or through e-mails.

4.6 Venues and Bookers

Venues and bookers mainly need to be kept informed. They cannot be left out of the importance of this issue. They have a commercial interest. In this case *Planet Hollywood* is the contractor and venue. They are moderately active and visible, as after the first promotion they are kind of in the background. Important is that a decrease of visitors would not have such an impact on the artist Britney Spears as shown in the Risk Matrix, but it would have on the venue as this would lead to a decrease in profit. This is why the venue needs to be informed by using e-mail, telephone and structured contact in person when the artist and her team are on location.

Stakeholder Mapping



Chapter 5: Communication Advice

5.1 Scenario

The issue, as stated in chapter two, is a whirlwind of criticism after the acknowledgement Britney Spears lip-synchs her entire show at *Planet Hollywood* in Las Vegas. Possible scenarios as they were visualised in the Risk Matrix in chapter 3 are:

- Loss of fan base
- Contract Breach
- Image damage or loss
- Envy by other artists
- Damaging articles critics
- Money back claims
- Decrease of visitors

Derived from the Risk Matrix the two most likely to happen scenarios are the appearance of critical notes in the media and image damage or loss. All the other mentioned risks are inseparably connected to these two main scenarios.

An example to clarify this:

The media releases very bad reviews after attending the *Piece of Me* Las Vegas show, (prospective) fans read the article and can take in the news in roughly two ways:

- 1) They love Britney Spears so much that they do not care at all
- 2) They reconsider their interest and appreciation for the pop star

Option number one would not be of much influence on the issue. The second option though would be something to be properly managed as this could affect the overall view on the pop star and thus could lead to image damage or loss, it could decrease visitors and ticket sales, it could cause people to claim back their money spent, it could cause a loss of fans and financially the worst case scenario would be *Planet Hollywood* ending the contract.

As you see all the possible scenarios lead to one main risk factor: damaging articles by the press and media.

5.2 Stakeholders

A comprehensive advise to Britney Spears and her management team is to focus on their most important stakeholders: their fan base. In the past their fan base has responded neutral to the reveal of her lip syncing and her fan base remained very loyal. This can be abstracted from several articles written by fans, released after previous shockwaves of media attention on Spears' lip-syncing. Three of these responses are listed below:

- A. Britney Spears wears tight corsets that make it impossible for the singer to open up her diaphragm, and she is being tossed around the stage like a doll, which makes it impossible to sing without being out of breath. Spears' concerts are all about the glitter and the glamour, about entertainment. Fans do not go to a Britney Spears concert to hear her voice, they want to see the music they listen at home come to life, and see it turned into a spectacle. Younger followers care less about voice and more about performance. If fans buy albums, listen to the music at home and like it, the use of backing tracks during live performances take nothing away from the overall performance. They're actually opening the door for the crazy showmanship people want to see, music is but one part of the show. So as a wise actor once said: "Leave Britney alone. Let her lip sync. She knows how to put on a performance, so sit back and be entertained." (*Sperry, A., 2013*)
- B. "I am totally pulling a 'Leave Britney Alone' move here, and saying – to all haters out there who are criticizing her for lip syncing, it's time to move on!" In this article a fan tells it is clear to everyone Spears' does not sing live, sometimes her microphone is not even up to her mouth when the vocals are hearable. But, states the fan: "Who cares? You weren't paying to see her sing a ballad live, were you? You're paying to see her entertain, and that. She. Does!" She continues: "Should she be singing on stage? Maybe. But does she? No, never. I can say first hand I've gone to multiple Britney shows *knowing* that I was there to see her put on a show, dance and be entertaining. And I left satisfied time and time again [...] Brit is entertaining. Period." (*Hollywoodlife, 2014*)
- C. Sam Lansky (2014) stated merely the same in his responsive article 'You still want a piece of her?'. He says nobody goes to a Britney Spears concert to be blown away by the dulcet quality of her live vocals, but it may be expected that she knows when to sing on her own vocals in the backing track. The prove she does not know when to playback is visible in her Las Vegas show, where she misses some pieces every now and then. Yet, this does not seem to matter to her fans. Lansky concludes by saying: "Fortunately, all her fans know that she isn't singing live in the first place, so it's not exactly disillusioning — and in fairness, she was probably just too busy being iconic to be bothered." (*Lansky, S., 2014*)

5.3 Objectives

The objectives for this advice are:

- Take direction in this constantly returning issue for once and for all
- Keep the fan base on the side of Britney Spears and her team
- Sideline the media, or at least decrease their influence on the public opinion
- Convince the audience that lip-syncing does not break down on entertainment value

Now that the environment has been scanned, the issue been identified and analysed, the development of the issue has been forecasted by setting objectives, logically will be continued by pointing out strategic options and responses. *(Dalton, J., 2011)*

5.4 Strategic options and responses

As pointed out in chapter 4.2 it is advisory to focus on the stakeholders that are influential and easily being influenced because of their loyalty, the fan base. For this matter use of an advocacy strategy would be best, as this strategy is a response that makes use of campaigning and lobbying specific stakeholders to influence the debate in the favour of the person or company with the issue, in this case Britney Spears and her team. *(Dalton, J., 2011)*

In an advocacy campaign it is important to be clear about objectives and what is being considered, including the scope and critical outcomes. Central in the whole process is brand engagement. This engagement can be measured by monitoring like, comments, followers, reposts, etcetera. Feedback must always be evaluated in terms of media noise, output and outcomes. A question such as 'have stakeholders altered their beliefs or shifted their opinions?' could help measure this. Issues managed successfully, like most advocacy campaigns, are about changing peoples' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour. *(Dalton, J., 2011)*

Rather, advocacy is aimed to change the public opinion on a policy—specifically, policymakers' opinions—and achieve a particular policy change. To develop a advocacy strategy, you need to answer questions such as: 'what is the advocacy goal?', 'what are specific objectives?', 'are there partners to collaborate with?', 'are there key upcoming events to mobilise the strategy?' and 'what are the specific activities that will be carried out?' *(Pathfinder, 2011)*

In this specific case it is not about a policy (yet), but there are intentions on changing the advertisements for lip-sync acts, as they would no longer be allowed to advertise with the word 'live'. This specific fact is the core to the strategy I would like to advise on. Whether Britney Spears sings live or not, she does perform live, and this is exactly the way fans see it. The loyal fan base has been carefully built and managed and will not run now media are spreading a negative tone of voice on the lip-syncing qualities of the pop star.

Britney Spears and her team are advised to start with coming clean on the lip-sync rumours. For once and for all, share with the world that Britney during the high-intensity show, indeed is lip-syncing. It is key to state that she and her team believe that Britney Spears as an artist stands for a high-impact show that revolves around dancing, colours, glitter and spectacle and not solely around her singing qualities.

This would be step one and would be to fulfil the first objective on taking direction in this issue. Second of all it would immediately address the fan base as Spears' fan base has clearly stated they love their idol for her music and pay tickets to be entertained. By coming clean and stating that she want the best possible high-impact show for her beloved fans, the fans will not run.

By having the fans behind them, the media loses power over the public opinion. People will always have an opinion on issues like this, but a loyal and aligned fan base is the best option Britney and her team have.

The first three objectives are a one-step aim and goal. By coming clean the way described all three objectives are merely reached. Nonetheless the fourth objective is the harder problem to overcome because this objective covers a broader perspective. Also in this case it is important to consistently stick to the come clean story and to film and release a short documentary that will be released online. By doing so this video can be integrated and released on several channels according to the characteristic marketing strategy the team has used in the past years. This short documentary will show the process from songs to live appearance, including a personal interview with Britney Spears.

A brief storyline of the documentary:

- The documentary starts off with Spears' songs, the writing, the recording, the mixing and then the rehearsing.
- The next thing shown in the video, is the rehearsals for the Vegas shows. The dancing, the costume fitting, the movements, everything that comes with the show. This way the public and the media will get an insight of the hard work that is put into preparing these high-impact shows.
- Pieces of her show will be shown in the documentary including the fast costume changes, the stunts and the condition Britney is in after running and dancing for 1,5 hours.
- In between these fragments the pop star will tell how she has always battled to sing live, as she really wanted to, but that her shows became bigger, more energetic and extremer as that is what her audience clearly wanted. This made it impossible for her to sing live. But as she gained popularity as a singer years ago, she was afraid to let it go. Over the past years she has felt the love and support of her loyal fans. They made her feel appreciated and gave her the courage to finally come clean on her lip-syncing during her performances.
- The documentary should be as natural and pure as possible, showing the 'real' Britney Spears.
- The pop star could also repeat what many fans have said: *'It is Las Vegas, without extravagant glitter and over the top glamour there is no show, so I had to make concessions'*.

After this short documentary (Advised is to keep it under 30 minutes for a brief and straight-forward approach), and to give the strategy an extra boost, Britney Spears will perform her *Piece of Me* shows in *Planet Hollywood* without a microphone. There will only be a microphone on stage so the pop star can talk to and with her audience in between songs. This way she instantly breaks the rumours and taboo, and can her audience fully focus on the entertainment value.

5.5 Planning and costs

Britney Spears just signed a new contract for Las Vegas and the most recent article on her playback act is from last month, which means immediate action is to be advised. As Britney Spears is on a few weeks break at the moment and performing her show three to four days a week a time span of 4 weeks recording and 2 weeks of editing should work, which would result in a ready-to-release documentary at the end of July 2016. Research shows an average cost around 200.000 dollar for a short documentary as such, everything included until the date of release. Costs taken in account are equipment (such as cameras, lighting, sound gear, stage rental) food, staff housing, production costs, editing and misc. Of course from the moment of release the already existing costs of the management team still remain.

Prod Equip	Camera package (3-day week)	4 Weeks	\$9,000.00	\$36,000.00
	Grip & Lighting (3-day week)	4 Weeks	\$15,000.00	\$60,000.00
	Stage rental (3-day week)	4 Weeks	\$9,000.00	\$36,000.00
	Sound gear	4 Weeks	\$1,500.00	\$6,000.00
	Dolly / track / accessories	4 Weeks	\$1,500.00	\$6,000.00
	Craft services / food	1 Flat	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
	Office expendables	1 Flat	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
	Production expandables	1 Flat	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
	Misc prod equip	1 Flat	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
	Prod Equip subtotal			\$194,000.00

An example on a cost sheet for a short documentary with about the same time span as advised for Britney Spears and her team. (Peters, O., 2015)

Conclusion

The main issue is the existence of accusations on behalf of Britney Spears, stating she is lip-syncing. Britney Spears and her team have been using a buffering technique for years. They waited for the storm to calm. The issue returns again, for the third time, and thus it's time for a more decisive approach. By being consistent and make use of the proven to be working marketing strategy a statement can be released that will deal with this issue for once and for all.

A short documentary will be filmed in four weeks, after two more weeks of editing the documentary will be released on all channels in use (website, Facebook, twitter link, Youtube). By clearly showing love, trust and gratitude towards her loyal fans she will be able to turn the rumours in her favour.

She will no longer have to hide the fact she is lip syncing but can transform the gossip into something positive, a focus on the overall entertainment value of her shows.



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Appendix

Evaluation and reflection Crisis Day

During Crisis day I was the moderator for Berlin Film Festival.

- **What did you know on forehand about the situation (facts)?**
I had heard about the fact that there was a movie that could not be shown in theatres or be released at all on order by North-Korea. I knew the name of the movie as well,. Besides this I did not know the rest of the story.
- **Can you determine the type of crisis you are dealing with?**
We were dealing with a sudden crisis as the bomb attack on the cinema affected our organisation and could not be foreseen. Immediate action was required.
- **Who was part of the 'spokesmen team'?**
Head of the police department and the president of Berlin Film Festival we on the team
- **Why did you choose those people/roles?**
We made this decision because the president of the Film Festival needed to apologise for taking the risk of letting the Berlin Film Festival take place in the cinema. The head of the police department was part of the team because we needed an authority on board to be able to answer questions about the investigation. Merely her role was to tell the journalists that there was no further info at the moment due to the ongoing investigation. If the president of the Film Festival would do so, journalists might seek a reason for holding things back, where if the head of police department does so, it is being seen as an objective message.
- **What do you think of your role during the preparation and press conference?**
My role was moderator. I welcome the press, introduced the issue and the spokespeople. After the spokespeople were done with their story I invited the journalists to ask questions and it was my job to give direction to who was asking and answering the questions. I found my role interesting as it is the role that keeps an overview on the situation. It brings some sort of calm to a crisis situation.
- **What do you think of the press conference and roles in general? Tips & Tops?**
I liked the day a lot, it was a short amount of time to read into the subject, come up with a statement and to make sure the statement could be brought to the audience including a Q&A list. At the same time, this is how crisis situations work, you never have much time to deal with these kind of situations. We really felt the pressure as if it was a real-life situation.
Tops: real-life feeling, good practice, great we had to think of critical questions as journalists in the audience.
I cannot really come up with *tips*, I found the day interesting. Maybe the assignment could be linked to this day, not just in a reflection as attachment. The crisis day could be integrated as part of the assignment, I think that would be interesting.
- **Did you prepare a Q&A and did it cover all the questions? If so, include the Q&A**
We did cover a lot, but not everything, we missed a few critical questions that were asked such as a question on victims that came straight from Twitter, This was a question that came as a surprise and I found it very clever as this happens in real life too. Another question came from a German exchange student. The crisis was about Berlin and thus she was very critical and seemingly emotionally disturbed by the lack of responsibility by the president of the Berlin Film Festival. I found it very impressive, the way she did this.

- **Did you think of a strategy and how did you follow the strategy?**
Yes we did, we used the strategy of the victim role including a part where we would take the blame. We could have taken measures to avoid the location where the events occurred, but we stated that North-Korea had told us it was a mistake to blame us as terrorists and that they had said we had nothing to fear from them. This is exactly how we executed our strategy.
- **Did you think of a key message, how did you use the knowledge from the course? If so, include the key message.**
Our key message was to say it was not our fault, we were not to blame. Yes, it would have been better if we had reconsidered the location but we were told that we had nothing to fear so we assumed our visitors were safe.
- **What have you learned from this experience? Reflect on both roles (Journalist & Spokesman)**
As a spokesman I have learned that it is very important to take a stand in a strategy and stick to it. Trying to be prepared on as many possible questions as you can, is key. As a journalist I learned that it is important to seek the truth by asking critical questions. It is interesting to listen in a certain way and filter what would make a good headliner too.
- **What would you do the same and what differently next time?**
What I would do the same is pick a strategy from the beginning. As we brainstormed about it we quickly came to the strategy that we wanted to use. From this point of view we continued. What I would do different probably is that I was a moderator and I did not ask journalists to tell us from which newspaper, magazine, tv- or radio stations they were. I saw other moderators do so, and because we were the first one to make our statement I did not take this into account. I will definitely do so next time.
- **How has this experience contributed to you as a professional?**
I gained my interest, I might like to do more with these kinds of situations and communication. I now know how a group works when a crisis situation needs to be handled and I would like to experience this again in the working field.

