

**CORPORATE E-COMMUNICATION: Its Relationship with the Corporate Logo in  
the Construction of the Consumers Online Interaction**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to examine the influence of the corporate logo on the consumer's attitude within corporate e-communication.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This research designed a model and a number of hypotheses, based on previous studies on corporate logo, its antecedents on e-communication, corporate image and corporate reputation. Online survey was conducted consumers and followers of the shopping social networking platforms (Facebook and Twitter) in from Colombia.

**Findings** – Taking into account previous corporate constructs theories, the author proposes a new conceptual framework to explain how corporate e-communication interacts within an organisation's structure, and also to show that the consumer's interaction in corporate e-communication platforms is based on the corporate logo perception held by consumers; as a consequence, the corporate reputation is affected.

**Originality/value** – This study contributes on the understanding and expansion of the organisation's structure by introducing a new corporate construct, named 'corporate e-communication', defined as the digital interaction than an organisation has with its stakeholders, it involves everything it says, shows and does. However, there are a few other areas of concern with regard to consequences related to corporate image and corporate reputation, particularly in Colombian retail setting.

**Keywords:** corporate e-communication, digital interaction, corporate logo, stakeholder attitude, social media; corporate image

## **Introduction**

In today's world, digital platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and the website) have a crucial role in the way companies communicate, as these channels contribute to the construction and management of the organisation's interaction with their stakeholders (Drèze and Hussherr, 2003). The constant communication exchange through corporate websites and social media networks between firms and consumers make all types of digital communication a fundamental tool of corporate communication (Abdullah et al., 2013).

Scholars have talked about the fundamental role of internet platforms in organisation's communication (Gilpin, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2015), especially in terms of marketing strategies, where they have identified Facebook as a great social network to reach a massive number of consumers and interact with them more efficiently (Duffet, 2015; Whiting et al., 2013). Twitter is an effective online microblogging platform to create brand awareness and engagement with shareholders (Gilpin, 2010). It seems that the new trend is mainly focused on brand awareness and online engagement, and e-communication channels have been created for that. Therefore, e-communication should be integrated in the corporate structure.

This article contributes to the understanding and expansion of an organisation's structure by introducing a new corporate construct, named 'corporate e-communication', defined as the digital interaction that an organisation has with its stakeholders. It involves everything it says, shows and does. It is influenced by corporate constructs, which can be divided into antecedents and consequence dimensions. The antecedents are those constructs that build the consumer attitude within the corporate e-communication, and the consequence dimensions are those constructs influenced by the interaction created in the corporate e-communication channels.

In the last few decades there has been an increasing amount of research into corporate logo, corporate image and digital communication platforms (e.g. Abdullah et al., 2013; Muller et al., 2011). It has added to the understanding of how multiple online channels contribute to the construction of corporate image. This research allows public relations practitioners to paint a richer portrait of an organisation through dialogue and direct interaction with stakeholders. In addition, a company's reputation is built by a social and semantic digital network system (Gilpin, 2010). Moreover, scholars (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Dowling, 1994) have suggested that corporate logo is related to a corporate image. In 2014, Foroudi et al. demonstrated the inclusive relationship between a favourable logo and its sub-constructs (i.e. corporate name, typeface) from the consumer's perspective, and its effect on a favourable corporate image and favourable reputation. Therefore, the corporate logo/brand must parallel means of corporate communication, including e-communication channels, to allow audiences to have a full understanding of what the company really is (Llorente-Barroso and García-García, 2015).

In order to obtain a full understanding of the relationship between corporate logo and corporate e-communication, the following sections will provide a background and antecedents of those constructs from the most recent literature. It also explains how the market has converted Facebook and Twitter into a digital communication channel to transmit the

company's image. Additionally, for the purpose of this research, a conceptual framework has been built based on the analysis of previous frameworks relative to the subject mentioned.

### **Corporate Logo Background**

The concept of the corporate brand/logo began in the 70s when Margulies (1977) showed with case studies how a simple change in the company's name could affect the corporate identity. In the 80s, Winters (1986) ran an investigation of how corporate advertising affected company image and reputation.

In the same year Bernstein (1986) also affirmed that organisations present their personality and values through the corporate logo, which encompass those corporate dimensions. The subject becomes popular in the 90s, when several authors addressed this topic in a broader conceptual structure, including concepts such as corporate identity, corporate image, culture, organisational design (Chajet and Shachtman, 1994; Crumpton, 2012; Dowling, 1994; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Fryxell and Wang, 1994; Park, 2005). In the following years until present, research constructs have been a focal point of investigation with a key focus on corporate image and reputation, where the corporate logo plays the main role of the company reputation and the customer promises (Van Riel et al., 2001). Early research focused on the difference between the corporate logo's intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics (Van Riel, 2001). The most recent research of Corporate logo has been into the marketing field, where the target market and the consumer perspective are the focal point (Foroudi et al., 2014; Muller et al., 2011).

Taking into account previous and recent definition, corporate logo is what differentiates one organisation from another; it is a fundamental element in the organisation's communication and also in the company's image (Foroudi et al., 2014; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Henrion and Parkin, 1967; Margulies, 1977; Melewar, 2003; Melewar and Saunders, 1999; Olins, 1978; Pilditch, 1970; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997; Selame and Selame, 1975; Van den Bosch, de Jong, and Elving, 2005). In 2015, Llorente-Barroso and García-García stated that a logo is a sign of a symbolic nature with its own autonomy, whose construction is based on some of the connotations of the expressive elements of which it is constituted.

With the purpose of obtaining positive responses from the audience, firms use their corporate logo within their communication strategies. This approach develops recognition and empathy from stakeholders toward an organisation's logo/brand, allows the audience to define an organisation, and also transmits a company's status through the colours, shapes, texture used (Aaker, 1991; Balmer and Gray, 2000; Downey, 1986; Foroudi et al., 2014; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Melewar et al., 2005; Muller et al., 2011; Pittard et al., 2007; Van den Bosch et al., 2005, 2006; Van der Lans et al., 2009).

Today's managers invest large amounts of money in the creation and maintenance of their firm's logos, as they are aware of how corporate logo can affect consumer perception and consequently the firm's reputation (Girard et al., 2013). A similar statement was exposed in 1995 by Dubberly, who said that if the corporate logo is not memorable and/or meaningful;

the company cannot reach their goals (van Riel and van den Ban, 2001; Dubberly, 1995). This means that logos contribute to the brand recognition process (Peter, 1989; van Riel and van den Ban, 2001).

Following the same line, Pham et al. (2012) stated that logos are the primary instrument with which to communicate corporate image, increase recognition and enhance customer loyalty, although these logos can also provoke negative emotions in the audience. Other scholars have demonstrated the positive results on brand modernity, loyalty and responses from an organisation's logo (Muller et al., 2011).

Taking into consideration that this research is focused on e-communication, it is relevant to quote the concept of corporate e-logo stated by Check-Teck (2001), which says that despite the high numbers of benefits the internet brings to an organisation, this can affect the logo in a negative way, as it can damage some of its main elements such as: design, colours and other factors, besides the huge competition faced on digital channels. Thus, if a company wants to generate a positive image and reputation (Best, 2001) for its stakeholders through digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, the corporate logo should be a vital phase within an organisation's digital marketing strategy (Check-Teck, 2001).

### **Corporate E-Communication**

The evolution of the internet has changed the way human beings communicate with each other. It has made e-platforms the main channel for interacting and an example of those platforms are Facebook and Twitter. Through these, users are able to show status, connect with different people around the world and share thoughts and feelings. This revolution has affected the relationship between companies and customers/clients, as those channels have become the main platforms of corporate communication. E-communication platforms satisfy the consumer's desire of being associated with companies, as this makes them feel one with the brands they follow (Engeseth, 2005).

In the same way, Piskorski (2011) says that social media has been used by companies as an external communication with stakeholders such as customers and vendors. Most companies that implement social media in their communication plan have a multi-pronged strategy that crosses various platforms. Scholars have defined social media platforms as a tool for enabling consumers to interact with others, sharing information, experience, and perspective (Chinn, 2010; Weinberg, 2009; Parganas, 2015). Moreover, Social Media Platforms have given much attention to the marketing field, which has been used by enterprises for social networking, microblogging and social tagging; making this platform part of an integrated enterprise social media platform (ESM) (Leonardi et al., 2013).

According to Leonardi's definition, social media allows internal communication between co-workers and external communication with stakeholders. Moreover, from a marketing perspective, digital channels have been used in pursuit of cost efficiencies in building and maintaining brand and customer relationships (Drèze and Hussherr, 2003). In terms of the relationship between customers and corporate brands, research has pointed out the main role

of the social user in generating content and actively discussing, sharing and commenting on products and services, and by doing this generating a positive word-of-mouth reputation (Hanna et al., 2011). Taking into account the fact that everything an organisation says, makes and does is communicating in some way (Melewar, 2003), digital platforms have built multiple online channels for image construction and company interaction with their stakeholders (Gilpin, 2010). Nguyen et al. (2015) named this way of interacting as an external communication, which this research will refer to as an e-communication.

Abdullah et al. (2013) said that the internet is part of company's communication channels used to transmit messages to the constituents. They identified corporate websites, social media and the internet evolution as a powerful tool of corporate communication to promote the corporation's online brand personality and build the relationship with the audience. Supporting this statement, Whiting and Williams (2013) declare that social media is a means of global communication.

Additional to the high audience reachable by e-communication, today many companies are going into social media because of their lower-cost alternatives. These attempts to reach new stakeholders allow organisations to engage directly with stakeholders. As a consequence of this revolution, some companies now only exist online, which makes relevant the online appearance, as it is the main feature used to influence the stakeholders' minds (Nguyen et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary for companies to know how to display their online appearance allowing a positive response from their audience, and also understanding which corporate elements are involved. Social media also allows the chief decision maker in the organisation to grasp the prevailing mood of the public (Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995; Narver and Slater, 1990; Yan, 2011).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This framework evaluates the relationships between the research constructs, by interlink concepts and ameliorate the understanding of such (Jabreen, 2009). In this research the concepts that support or articulate together are: corporate logo, corporate name, typeface, e-communication, corporate image and corporate reputation. e-Communication (e-C) and corporate logo (CL) are the focal construct of this research, CL being a significant item influencing corporate e-communications. Corporate name and typeface are the dimensions that build corporate logo. Corporate image and corporate reputation are presented as constructs affected by e-communication (Figure 1).

Different Authors (Foroudi et al., 2014; Henderson, Giese, and Cote, 2004) state that corporate logo and typeface are related. The typeface has high importance as stakeholders form opinions from this, and which in turn influences the stakeholder's the impression of and reaction to the corporate logo. It can further be said that the company logo creates a reaction within the stakeholder to the corporate name (Foroudi et al., 2014). The corporate logo strongly influences the corporate image (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Dowling, 1994; Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004; Muller et al., 2011; Olins, 1989; Van den Bosch et al., 2005; Van der Lans et al., 2009).

The communication creates impressions and as a result images are being formed (Melewar, 2003). Therefore, Image is built through social networking, as social media is a digital communication channel (Gilpin, 2010). Additionally, corporate image affects corporate reputation, because a stakeholder instantly forms a picture of the company which affects and builds on the corporate image and reputation. Consequently, multiple images enhance the overall evaluation of consumers, which is defined as corporate reputation (Balmer, 1998; DeChernatony, 1999, 2001; Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Foroudi et al., 2014; Gray and Balmer, 1998; Gotsi and Wilson, 2001; Herbig and Milewics, 1994). Overall this research wishes to show that e-communication and corporate logo have a strong relationship.

<<<Insert Figure 1>>>

### **Modelling Testing**

The study followed a deductive approach, which is defined as a testing process that starts with a general approach and then an investigation into individual responses in order to discover whether the theory is true of specific instances. This approach most commonly adopts quantitative research (Hyde, 2000). Taking into account that this research seeks precision and the development of reliable statements about consumer opinions based on facts, a quantitative research methodology has been used. And it is also based on existing literature that will be apply to a specific market.

The data collection phase was conducted in Colombia, as this country is part of the emerging countries listed last year with a total score of 48.93 and an average GDP growth of 4.58% between 2014 and 2015. The company designated was a shopping mall named Arcife Shopping Centre. As this study aims to investigate customer experience across the whole country, the company's location will provide customer perceptions from different parts of Colombia. Additionally, the application of an online survey will contribute to this goal.

Quantitative research was based on online and face-to-face surveys from a sample of 428 respondents. For the purpose of this research a structured questionnaire with multiple choice questions was designed. Multiple choice questions allow the researcher to have a large sample population, formulate more reliable facts and also obtain specific information from the respondents (Malhotra et al., 2012). 28 surveys were used at the shopping mall, as the study seeks to know how many of the visitors have experienced the organisation logo through the organisation's e-communication. 400 participants contributed to the online surveys, all of whom are followers of the shopping social networking platforms (Facebook and Twitter). The sample size used in this study was 428 participants. 400 surveys were applied online and 28 at the shopping mall to evaluate the company's social media awareness from the mall visitors. The survey was posted on the organisation Facebook page, as the participants needed to have interaction with the company's e-communication to be able to answer the questionnaire. The survey's target was broad, as the participants needed to be online consumers, Spanish speakers and men and women. Measurement items from previous studies

were checked by the researcher for validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Table 1 illustrates the scale items per constructs selected to assess the constructs stated in this research. It also shows the source of each item.

<<<Insert Table 1>>>

## **Discussion**

This article contributes to explain how corporate e-communication interlinks with corporate constructs. Based on previous studies, a new conceptual framework was built. Models based on corporate logo and corporate image relationship was used to develop a new structure, where corporate e-communication takes place as a main factor. This study reaffirms that corporate name and typeface are sub-constructs of corporate logo and also the close relationship with corporate image and reputation. Moreover, this study suggests that the corporate logo perception held by consumers and corporate reputation influences the consumer's attitude or response within corporate e-communication. Therefore, the way stakeholders react to corporate e-communication is determined by corporate logo impression and also the firm's reputation. Arrecife Shopping Centre recalled the importance of having a good corporate logo to develop a positive reputation, this statement is based on the positive relationship between this two constructs shown in the data collection analyses.

Additionally, this research suggests that corporate e-communication plays a main role in the construction of corporate image which affects corporate reputation. Hence, this study states that corporate logo and its sub-constructs are the antecedent dimension which will affect the way stakeholders interact with corporate e-communication. And corporate image and corporate reputation are the consequences of the relationship between the antecedent dimensions. In other words, an organisation image and reputation is generated by the interaction of its corporate name, typeface and corporate logo with its corporate e-communication.

Additional to the theoretical contribution stated belong the data results which provide managerial contributions for the retail market, concerning the use of corporate e-communication to obtain a favourable corporate image by the right display of corporate logo through corporate e-communication. Moreover, it offers validated information which helps to understand the corporate e-communication role in retail and also how the Colombian market responds to it. The data analysis provides clear information about how consumers engage easily on the corporate e-communication channels (Facebook and Twitter) when the corporate logo is attractive to them. 83% of the respondents have engaged with the company's e-communication channels and 54.8% of them like the logo. Talking about Arrecife's corporate logo, the sample shows that even though a logo is recognisable it could not be memorable in the consumer's mind, since, the survey shows that 55% of the respondents said that the logo is recognisable and only 33% believe that it is memorable.

Moreover, the finding illustrates that credible information is interlinked with the company credibility, as 42,3% of the respondents believe that the information shown on the website is



credible and 50% of them think that they can trust the company. Taking into account that the surveys were applied online, it is possible to state that the way the corporate logo is displayed on corporate e-communication channels, such as: Facebook and Twitter, has a strong relationship with consumer perception toward corporate logo. This fact is shown in the results, when 46,3% of the respondents strongly agreed and another 40.5% agreed that Arrecife's logo (online version) transmits information about the company. Overall the survey demonstrated a high level of company awareness and engagement in the organisation's e-communication platforms (Facebook and Twitter).

In conclusion, this study showed the influence of corporate logo in corporate e-communication. Therefore, the data analysis fully supports the constructs relationship illustrated in the framework. The quantitative researches show the strong correlation between each theoretical construct, therefore it was concluded that each constructs have a strong influence on corporate e-communication and the way consumers react on its platforms.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study tested the relationship between corporate name, typeface, corporate logo, corporate e-communication, corporate image and reputation in Colombian consumers; taking corporate e-communication as the main construct. The study divided the constructs into two categories, antecedents, corporate name, typeface and corporate logo, as they influence the way consumers react to the corporate e-communication channels, and consequently, corporate image and reputation, as they will be affected by the way companies display their content on the e-communication channels. Despite the fact that the research objectives were reached in this study, the study faced some limitations.

The main limitation faced was the demographic, as this study was conducted in a single location and applied to one company. The findings may be different if the research had been carried out in a multiple location and different retail companies. Based on this, the researcher suggests for future research a multi-case study approach which should be attempted in an emerging country (e.g. Colombia) and a developing country (e.g.UK). This approach will provide a global understanding about how those constructs influence each other, and also will provide an in depth managerial implication to the retail market, which will be able to improve their corporate e-communication practices based on an international comparison.

Another limitation faced was the theoretical constructs selection, as the antecedents constructs was limited by corporate name, typeface and corporate logo. Although, these dimensions provide an accurate result for the objective stated on this research, the results could provide a deeper understanding of the research questions. Therefore, future research should include more corporate constructs on the antecedents dimensions to identify which corporate logo sub-constructs have more influence on corporate e-communication. This research sought to contribute early insights about corporate e-communication in Latin American markets. Accordingly, this research should be taken as a foundation for future studies in the same field with a broad study scale. In addition, a constructs research expansion was advised for further investigations.

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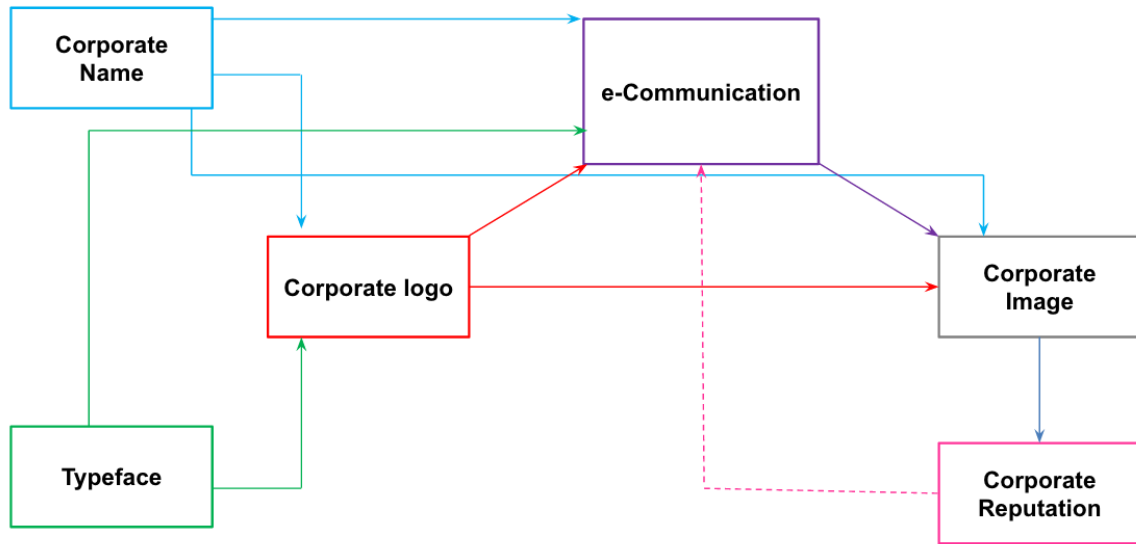
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Figure 1 Conceptual Framework – Developed by the researchers





**Table 1 Measurement items of the theoretical constructs**

Constructs	Scale Items	Sources
Corporate name	The company's name is easy to remember	Chan and Huang (1997), Collins (1977), Klink (2003), Kotler and Armstrong (1997), McCarthy and Perreault (1987), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name is unique versus the competition	Chan and Huang (1997), Collins (1977), Klink (2003), Kotler and Armstrong (1997), McCarthy and Perreault (1987), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name is always timely (does not get out of date)	Chan and Huang (1997), Collins (1977), Kotler and Armstrong (1997), McCarthy and Perreault (1987), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name communicates news about the company and the product's benefits and qualities	Collins (1977), Klink (2003), Kotler and Armstrong (1997)
	The company's name is short and simple	Chan and Huang (1997), Collins (1977), Klink (2003), Kotler and Armstrong (1997), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name is promotable and advertised	Chan and Huang (1997), Collins (1977), Kotler and Armstrong (1997), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name is pleasing when read or heard and easy to pronounce	Chan and Huang (1997), Collins (1977), Klink (2003), Kotler and Armstrong (1997), McCarthy and Perreault (1987), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name is recognizable	McCarthy and Perreault (1987), Kohli et al. (2002) Klink (2003), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's name is easy to recall I like the company name	Foroudi et al. (2014)
Typeface	The company's typeface is attractive	Henderson et al. (2004), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's typeface is interesting	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's typeface is artistic	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's typeface is potent	Childers and Jass (2002), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's typeface is honest	Henderson et al. (2004), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's typeface communicates with me when the logo is simply not feasible	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's typeface is immediately readable The company's typeface makes me have positive feelings toward the company	Foroudi et al. (2014)
Corporate Logo	The company logo is recognizable	Ajala (1991), Clow and Baack (2010), Cutlip and Center (1982), Henderson and Cote (1998), Klink (2003), Robertson (1989), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is appropriate	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is familiar	Kapferer (1992), Stuart (1997), Pilditch (1970), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo communicates what the company stands for	Kapferer (1992), Stuart (1997), Pilditch (1970) Henderson and Cote (1998), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo evokes positive effect The company logo makes me have positive feelings toward the company	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is distinctive	Ajala (1991), Cutlip and Center (1982), Henderson and Cote (1998), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is attractive	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is meaningful	Henderson and Cote (1998), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is memorable	Ajala (1991), Henderson and Cote (1998), Wheeler (2003), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is visible	Fombrun and Van Riel (2004), Foroudi et al. (2014)
The company logo is high quality	Henderson and Cote (1998), Foroudi et al. (2014)	

	The company logo communicates the company's personality	Bernstein (1986), Van Heerden and Puth (1995), Van Riel et al. (2001), Wheeler (2003), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company logo is interesting	Henderson and Cote (1998), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	I like the company logo	Foroudi et al. (2014)
Corporate e-communication	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) have an attractive appearance	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide accurate information	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide relevant information.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide timely information.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide easy to understand information.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide information at the right level of detail	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) present the information in an appropriate format.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide appropriate security measures.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) make it easy and convenient to make purchases.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide believable information	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide appropriate company information.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) provide customer service information.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The sites (Facebook and Twitter) have a design appropriate to the type of site.	Foroudi et al. (2014)
Corporate Image	I like the company	Brown and Dacin (1997), Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), Williams and Moffitt (1997) Foroudi et al. (2014)
	I like the company compared to other companies in the same sector	Williams and Moffitt (1997), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	I think other consumers like the company as well	Williams and Moffitt (1997), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's logo communicates information about the company to its customers	Henderson and Cote (1998), Pilditch (1970), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company's logo enhances the company's image	Brachel, 1999, Henderson and Cote (1998), Foroudi et al. (2014)
Corporate Reputation	I have a good feeling about the company	Chun (2005), Fombrun et al. (2000)
	I admire and respect the company	Chun (2005), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	I trust the company	Chun (2005), Fombrun et al. (2000), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company offers products and services that are good value for money	Chun (2005), Helm (2007), Fombrun et al. (2000), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company has excellent leadership	Helm (2007), Fombrun et al. (2000), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company is a well-managed	Chun (2005), Fombrun et al. (2000), Foroudi et al. (2014)
	The company is an environmentally responsible company	Chun (2005), Helm (2007), Foroudi et al. (2014)

	I believe the company offers high quality services and products	Chun (2005), Helm (2007), Foroudi et al. (2014)
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Source: The researchers