CONCEPTUALIZING AND MANAGING CORPORATE LOGO: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Abstract

Purpose – This paper examines corporate logo as an effective means of communication, by synthesizing knowledge from various domains to explore its relationships with corporate image and reputation.

Design/methodology/approach – The data were gathered during 7 in-depth interviews with UK communication/design consultancy agencies and experts, and 4 focus groups were conducted with a total of 24 people (17 men and 7 women) to encourage a sufficient level of group interaction and discussion on corporate logo.

Findings – Findings reveal convergence in views concerning fundamental components of corporate logo among managers, employees, and consumers. The categorization described herein provides a framework to further develop corporate logo, in order to advance a favorable corporate image and corporate reputation.

Originality/value – Corporate logo has received little attention in marketing literature. This study extends the current academic understanding about the role of corporate logo in strengthening the relationship between corporate image and corporate reputation. Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution towards the corporate logo, design, and identity literature by developing the sphere of influence of the corporate logo and its antecedents and consequences. Its findings will be valuable for marketing decision-makers and practitioners who are engaged in improving the logo of any company, considering the perceptions of managers, employees, and consumers about its reputation and image. Implications exist for marketing scholars, as well as for general and cross-functional managers involved in managing a company's corporate visual identity, and marketing decision-makers.

Keywords: Corporate logo, corporate image, corporate reputation, design, typeface, corporate name, color, attitude towards advertisement, recognizability, familiarity.

Introduction

Today's environment is evidently more visually oriented, and the creation of a corporate logo can be of immense value (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Foroudi *et al.,* 2017). Corporate logos are visual phenomena, and include name, typeface, color, and design, and they are utilized to enhance recognizability and differentiate products and the corporation (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; 2016). Typically, graphic designers and marketing practitioners have used logos to create a positive image in the minds of managers, employees, and consumers in order to enhance reputation (Foroudi *et al.*, 2018; Olins, 1989). As the use of corporate logos is becoming increasingly important, there is a widespread interest in corporate logo, image, and reputation among both academics and practitioners alike (Japutra *et al.,* 2016). A question that is being asked is, how and in what ways do corporate logos influence corporate image and corporate reputation and help underpin competitive advantage? (Van Riel *et al.,* 2001; Pittard *et al.,* 2007; Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009). According to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) there is a perceived lack of definition in academia. What precisely is meant by 'corporate logo'?

In general, previous research on corporate logo has focused on two broad motivations, namely: (i) to explore consumers' and managers' perceptions and practices regarding logo, and the *main drivers* that influence logo suitability at the level of managers, employees, and consumers (e.g., Van Riel *et al.,* 2001) and (ii) to investigate the *consequences* of logo on consumers' perceptions (e.g., Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009). Guided by the above motivations and in order to contribute to the extant corporate logo literature, the present study develops two main research questions: (RQ1) *What influences logo favorably?* and (RQ2) *What are the main influences of favorability on image and reputation?* In order to answer these research questions, the paper investigates corporate logo via three objectives. First, we identify factors that have a significant influence on logo (i.e. antecedents). Second, we evaluate relationships between the logo's antecedents and consequences, including the impact of logo on image and reputation. Finally, we provide an operational definition of corporate logo.

The study thus determines the main components of logo and associations between the components. We consider logo in a wide context, i.e. from the design, marketing, visual identity, and identity literatures. Utilizing several methods to classify the main components

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and benefits of logo, the significance of each construct in relation to logo are explored from different perspectives. The operational definition of logo, from the perspective of general managers and consumers interviewed, may then aid future empirical investigation and general and cross-functional managerial implementation. The framework developed has implications for managers wanting to develop a measure of logo and its key elements that can be analyzed.

Literature Review

Both practitioners and academics have placed significance on the subject of corporate logo (e.g., Bravo *et al.,* 2017; Japutra *et al.,* 2015) and it is recognized as a first crucial step in building visual identity (Bolhuis *et al.,* 2018; Melewar and Saunders, 1998). Developing corporate visual identity (CVI) is a process of identification that serves to reveal the organization's corporate identity (Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2006) and is a means to achieve competitive advantage. Early references to logo, identity, image, and reputation focused on visual identification and were studied mainly by practitioners until the 1980s, when they became the graphic design features for organizations (Simoes *et al.,* 2005). Visual identity is the 'face' of the company (Topalian, 1984) which brings visibility to a company and helps it communicate via integrated communications (Mann and Ghuman, 2018; Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). An integrated approach when embedded in social identity theory in its simplest form advocates developing and managing the impressions that stakeholders receive about organizations (Simoes *et al.,* 2005), including logo. Social identity theory is based on the assumption that people think differently in different situations (Bresciani and Del Ponte, 2017). Researchers such as Stuart and Muzellec (2004) confirmed the importance of logo and visual identity within the organizational identification domain. Logo selection is an organizational challenge and managers need to monitor logo effectiveness and other CVI elements (Foroudi *et al*., 2014, 2016, 2017). Attention on logo has shifted from design to the nature of the organization itself (Cole, 2015). Logo as a main element of CVI "plays a significant role in the way an organization presents itself to both internal and external stakeholders" (Van den Bosch *et al*., 2006, p. 871).

A review of the marketing literature - on this topic over the last two decades suggests that several shifts in emphasis are evident. Researchers have highlighted corporate image and

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investigated corporate identity, especially CVI in image formation (Balmer, 2008, p. 882). Logo design is crucial to a company's marketing effectiveness (Fan *et al.,* 2018; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). Marketing scholars see logo as visual identification and are conscious of the perceptions of organizational managers, employees, and consumers (Grobert *et al.*, 2016; Janssen *et al.,* 2017). The effect of design elements on consumer reactions has been examined in marketing research (e.g. Cole, 2015; Pittard *et al.,* 2007; Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009) and is mainly grounded in the branding literature (Simoes *et al.,* 2005). Research conducted by Turley and Chebat (2002) investigated the link between environmental design and consumer reactions in a retail setting. Authors have explained that retail managers had adopted branding philosophies to drive consumer behavior in their retail outlet. Authors compared the retail environment with packaging, which can attract customers and drive their purchase behavior (Naidoo and Abratt, 2018). Similarly, Waters (1997) recommended the use of branding concepts by managers, to benefit from the link between design elements and branding. The link between design and branding has been also discussed by Levin (2005) from a perspective of workplace design within an organization, and business strategy. A study conducted by Levin (2005) explained how and why organizations should focus on design of their workplace to differentiate it from their competitors.

The general stream of research - indicates that the overall logo is a central element in marketing (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Kelly, 2017) and communication (Kohli *et al.,* 2002; Pittard *et al.,* 2007). Logo can be used as an efficient management tool to orchestrate desired features (Balmer, 2017; He and Balmer, 2017). Furthermore, logo is used to communicate (Schmidt and Redler, 2018; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001) what the company is and what it stands for. It can make the task of formal corporate communications easier. Logo is a means to encapsulate the personality of a firm and its values (Ferrandi *et al*., 2015; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). Another stream of research states that logo serves as a cognitive 'switch' to recall an image to an audience (Johnston, 2016; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005) and may cut through clutter to gain attention. However, so far, the literature has no extensive study of compound logos in relation to consumer evaluations of logos (Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009), possibly as they are caught up in a welter of definitional conundrums. Several academics (Balmer, 2017; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Melewar *et al*., 2017) have emphasized that corporate

identity management and components such as logo and image should be studied by means of a multi-disciplinary approach.

To develop identity, organizations are recruiting graphic designers to emphasize logo and visual identity. Logo as a main element of CVI can portray companies to specify modernity (if needed). For many years, researchers asserted corporate identity as a visual phenomenon and ~~positioned~~ described identity as visual and verbal messages of organizational characters that integrated communications.

Within the multi-disciplinary approach - there is awareness that identity refers to an organization's distinctive characteristics, which could be rooted in the behavior of an organization's employees (Guzmán and Davis, 2017; Theurer *et al.,* 2018). As such, the management of logo is of strategic importance (Silva *et al*., 2017). Logos are used as a tangible cue to link the internal and external organization. Building image via logo requires a name, typeface (Foroudi *et al*., 2014; 2016; 2017; Henderson *et al.,* 2004), color (Tavassoli, 2001), and design (Foroudi *et al*., 2014). Building on the preceding review of logo from a multi-disciplinary approach (design, marketing, organization, and integrated-communication), definitions of the research constructs are depicted in Table 1, which also illustrates the potential for contextual factors to influence the way(s) in which corporate logo is conceptualized, built, and maintained.

"INSERT TABLE 1 HERE"

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach (interview and focus group) in order to obtain insights into issues and explore factors that influence corporate logo, and whether or not a corporate logo can satisfactorily communicate a company's identity via image and reputation. Qualitative methods are recommended ~~for use in~~ to study the field of corporate logo as a main element of corporate identity, as they are more appropriate for theory generation than theory testing (Balmer, 2001). Admittedly, the results may be too theoretical and have little managerial relevance. However, in addition to interviews, focus groups were also used for the following reasons: (1) "people are a valuable source of information", (2) "people can

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report on and about themselves, and they are articulate enough to verbalize their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors", (3) "the facilitator who 'focuses' the interview can help people retrieve forgotten information" (4) "the dynamics in the group can be used to generate genuine information, rather than the '"group think' phenomenon", (5) "interviewing a group is better than interviewing an individual" (Byers and Wilcox, 1991, p. 65).

Using a combination of personal interviews and focus groups increased the richness of available data. Although the two methods of qualitative research are considerably different from each other, combining the two can be used as a method that is complementary to a survey, while using mixed methods. While personal interviews provide information and insights into personal experiences of respondents, interactions between respondents of focus groups highlight social beliefs, practices and perceptions of a social group. To improve the validity, reliability, eradicate bias, and increase the study's truthfulness, this study employed the triangulation method (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Creswell and Miller (2000) described triangulation as: "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (p. 126). Triangulation is improvesing the validity and reliability of a study and the evaluation of its findings. Consequently, reliability, validity, and triangulation are relevant research notions, essentially from a qualitative standpoint, to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth.

To identify appropriate interview respondents, we contacted reputable UK based communication and design consultancy agencies. We communicated with the top 15 consultancies and identified appropriate people to contact regarding the research topic. Of 15 potential interviewees, all replied either by mail or by email; however, eight could not participate because of tight schedules. Consequently, 7 in-depth personal interviews were conducted face-to-face. Of these interviewees, one was a chairman, two held the position of general managing director, three held general design manager positions, and the last was a general manager of industrial design. Each interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes. All were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In addition to interviews, 4 focus groups were conducted with a total of 24 people (17 men and 7 women) to encourage a sufficient level of group interaction and discussion on corporate logo. Respondents' ages ranged from 25 to 42 years, with a mean of 31 years. Participants were culturally diverse, which makes the research more useful (Foroudi *et al.*, 2017). The data were collected ~~using~~ by postgraduate students who discussed ~~their~~ the participants' perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward logos and their relationship to company image and company reputation. A conducive, comfortable environment was provided (Malhotra and Birks, 2000). The aim of the interviews was to understand employees' and consumers' perceptions and experience towards corporate logo, the factors that influence the same, and its influence upon image and reputation. In addition, the interviews and focus groups were based on the relationships between corporate logo and elements, identified in the literature (corporate name, design, typeface, and color). Furthermore, the main perceived impacts of corporate logo (attitudes towards advertisements, recognizability, familiarity, corporate image, and corporate reputation) were also explored.

Analysis

To analyze the data, and improve the validity and reliability of the study, and in order to evaluate the findings, triangulation was utilized in two stages (Creswell and Miller, 2000). In the first stage, we built codes through creation of a shared understanding of logo and its dimensions, antecedents to corporate logo, and the corporate image concept. Furthermore, we determined the codes by addressing the research questions, problem areas, and/or key variables (Palmer and Gallagher, 2007). In the second stage, in order to produce a refined and complete synthesis and interpretation of the material collected, QSR NVivo software Version 8 was appropriate for data administration and to achieve results. The software was useful for mapping out diagrammatically and assisted researchers to view the whole text, thereby enabling the inter-relationships of codes to be seen at a glance. Furthermore, it was useful for data storage and retrieval. The data were checked concerning the content of nodes, which could affect the inter-relationships of the thematic ideas, reviewing the nodes (themes) for consistency, while proceeding through the qualitative data analysis.

Findings

Based on the research objectives and questions, the findings generally support those from previous studies with several notable differences, as discussed in the next section. Figure 1 illustrates the framework developed from the interviews.

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Many dimensions of logo were found. Corporate logo is a key element of identity. The textual analysis of interviewee data reveals the focus on what the company stands for, communication, and the distinctiveness of the logo, all of which influence perceptions. The following comments illustrate a manager's assessment of this finding:

> "[A] logo is an identity element, so it is an identifier which means it [can] be consistently applied as the link between the user and customer actually … [A] logo can contribute to [the] creation of the identity … [A] logo is [the] identity of a company and all employees should support it".

The findings are consistent with previous research in corporate branding and identity (Melewar *et al.*, 2017; Melewar and Akel, 2005; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2006; etc.). A major theme of logo concerns personality. Interviewees stated that logo should communicate a reliable message that enhances company personality. A design strategy manager reflects this idea:

> "I think [a] corporate logo can communicate everything about [a] company. Over time, it becomes [a] short form of [the] organization. When it is new it can catch some elements of a brand, personality and positioning". (AD)

One managing director said:

> "You can look at companies like Coca Cola or BMW, whether they have [changed] their identity numerous times over the years; in fact, we don't know if they changed their identity because they [have] got strong visual cues [that] just

evolve over time. I think, every-one think[s] if they change [their] logo, [it] is going to change their brand and [so] is misguided".

One interviewee from a corporate identity consultancy stressed that consistency is linked to corporate logo "as a part of company and brand". "It should be consistent and if it is not, customers may suspect the product or quality of the company".

Memorability is an experiential need found in the interviews. Comments about the memorability and familiarity of logo were seen as indicators. Conceptually, the term 'memorability' implies uniqueness and familiarity to customers. For instance, experts discussed it as follows:

> "A logo must be: trustworthy like eBay, memorable like Sanyo (a logo is the only element that has to work on its own); and read like it sounds, e.g. the VandA; different in the marketplace, such as Apple, and effective across the board, [including] media; usable like mobile phone services, SMS national, SMS international, SMS to email".

A logo reminds consumers of the brand or corporate name (He and Balmer, 2017; Liou *et al.*, 2018). From the participants' comments, it is obvious that a corporate logo can exhibit a brand; creating a well-established logo that is distinctive is critical in creating a brand that provides the perfect image (Pecot and De Barnier, 2018). When discussing the aspect of logo, the chairman of a company put an emphasis on its relation to brand:

> "[A] logotype like Coca Cola actually forms [an] identity within the brand"… [A] branding company helped us to design a logo. If it is expensive, for example, in our site, we still use our old logos because of the cost and not lack of desire; [the] logo will change and be [the] same everywhere [in an easier] economic climate. We try to deliver [a] good experience. We use one logo internally and externally. When the new brand came out, some people don't like it or do like it. It should be consistent; it should be recognizable as 'X', [a] good experience".

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Participants from a focus group referred to a logo as the identity of a company, which needs to be fashionable and modern to provide and ensure positive and reliable communications.

"A particular way of framing words or letters in unique forms to convey the identity of [an] organization or whatever it is", and also, "Logo characteristics [are the] identity … identity establishes [what] the moment is … Everybody walk[s] differently, what's in your face, the company[s] say 'this is me' through the TV or net or whatever. It is sometimes settled by that as [the] identity of the company, something which can represent the character and you would identify, I think company identity is like that. You've got the look [or] distinguishing characteristics of that organization and those distinguishing characteristics can be confusing for people".

Visibility is an extra role within the context of the corporate logo, used to communicate an organization externally. The following comments from focus group participants address the importance of visibility.

"A logo is a symbol of a company and should be visible and reflect transparency, consistency, authenticity and [be] distinctive. If the logo used is not consistent in all visual aspect[s] of the company, [the] customer might suspect the product or quality of the company … some logos are not very important and not visible, that's why the name can communicate to the target audience".

Corporate name - The main element of the corporate logo that predicts, fosters or weakens during consumption is the corporate name. The name is the most identifiable element of corporate identity (Bresciani and Del Ponte, 2017; Poon and Fatt, 1997), and can build up a firm's acceptance and global recognition by helping shape consumer expectations of the corporate image (Gray and Balmer, 1998).

The research findings are consistent with those from the earlier literature (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Topalian, 1984) which asserted that the better the company's name, the better the company's logo. A respondent in the expert interviews states:

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> "…look at Royal Mail, they changed their name to Consignia. What is Consignia? What does Consignia suggest [to] you? Nothing and nothing, Royal Mail changed the name to Consignia and they had to [go] back to Royal Mail."

Comments made by the interviewees also emphasized that a recognizable, simple, and short name can lead to a high-quality logo. This can be illustrated in the description provided by a manager of industrial design,

> "Often the name can help the company to be more recognizable", "the name helps [the] logo to be more recognizable and recall the company and the product", "[the] name of a company should be simple, straightforward, and recognizable to associate well with [the] logo of a company".

A chairman of a company stated:

> "the name is the big task for the creative director. If you say BA, it is British and is an airline and it is descriptive; if you don't know what it does, you are living on [a] different planet" … "You can see [the] name and logo together at first and I think the design cannot communicate without a name".

In summary, these findings were supported by other researchers (Bresciani and Del Ponte, 2017; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; 2017; Henderson *et al.,* 2003; Kohli *et al.,* 2002; Poon and Fatt, 1997) who claimed that the corporate name has a direct relationship to logo.

Typeface - The second dimension distinguishing corporate logo is typeface. It is a key communication objective (Henderson *et al.,* 2004) expressed through visual identity or corporate logo (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014: Henderson *et al.,* 2004). The corporate typeface is the core of an organization (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005; Xu *et al.*, 2017); it represents the physical facets. Rowden (2000) suggests that typeface is the voice of character and "the best typography has grace and certain invisibility" (p. 185). According to research on aesthetics, there is a connection between typeface characteristics and the influence upon consumer responses (Childers and Jass, 2002). Typeface design can rely on an understanding of a particular cultural heritage, which can be lost in other cultures (Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). Typeface has been defined by authors (Childers and Jass, 2002; Henderson

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et al., 2004; McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002; Tantillo *et al.,* 1995) as the visual perceptual property of a company, which is the art, or skill, of designing communication by means of the printed word.

Both academics and practitioners indicate that the typeface design influences perceptions of advertised brands, memorability, and readability (Childers and Jass, 2002; Henderson *et al.,* 2004; Xu *et al.*, 2017). According to Mollerup (1999), a typeface may refer to a certain trade, to a company, or to a product. If this reference only exists because of agreement or habit, then the choice of typeface is arbitrary (p. 109).

Managers should select typefaces that support strategically valued impressions. A well-chosen typeface marks a company's identity by supporting other elements of corporate visual identity systems. Typefaces can increase the likelihood of achieving greater visibility (Melewar and Saunders, 2000).

Henderson *et al. (*2004) emphasize the value of the typeface expressed through the corporate logo, which is also espoused by managers. This is important because organizations need to create an important strategic impression in the marketplace (Somerick, 2000; Tantillo *et al.,* 1995). Identifiable typefaces increase the likelihood of achieving greater feasibility and visibility (Melewar and Saunders, 2000) and lead to a positive image in the marketplace. As mentioned by an expert,

> "a distinctive typeface or a few pencil lines can communicate immediately no matter what it is, what size it is or how far away the consumer is, all this must be of major concern to the designer."

> "Today, [with] the number of fonts you can get on the Iinternet, I have more fonts [than] I ever remember using when I was in advertising, but all are available for anybody, so take those fonts and say, 'Ok, which is us or which certainly isn't us'. I [look at the] list of fonts and say, 'We are not there, we are not there, and we are not there', and then, you know I'm maybe chatting with the designer and say, 'Why are we not there, why are you there?' …".

Color - Nowadays, companies realize the value and power of a logo and its color to classify their products or services, and differentiate themselves from other companies or products as well as communicate information about their quality, value, and reliability. Consistent with the definitions by Bellizzi and Hite (1992), among others, color is defined as a medium of communication and is an integral element of corporate and marketing communications, which induces emotions and moods, impacts on consumers' perceptions and behavior, and helps organizations position or differentiate themselves from competitors (Aslam, 2006; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Liu *et al.,* 2018; Tavassoli, 2001).

Research on corporate strategy states that color as a corporate promotional element, applied across business units over extended periods, helps reflect a company's value, the values of its mission statement, strategy, and company characteristics (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Ridgway and Myers, 2014) to managers, employees, and consumers. Companies use appropriate colors to send signals to their audiences and to support a company's image by employing visual recognition to create advantage (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Foroudi *et al*., 2018; Hafeez *et al*., 2016). Colors are a vital element of a corporation and have a powerful application in marketing communications. The physical appearance of a brand is communicated through the corporate logo and its color. Color helps the firm to create a position or brand differentiation in the market away from its competitors and environment. It also has an influential effect and provokes reactions based on instincts and associations that can sustain corporate identities (Madden *et al.,* 2000), and customer perceptions. Color can attract consumers' attention toward the corporate logo.

The focus group members (representing customers) discussed more practical issues. For example, one focus group member commented that:

> "… some colors define different meanings which relate to a company's function" and "…even without the experiences; I can see the strength of logo and the meaningfulness of [the] logo. As [a] human being I can say that when you look at a logo, when [you] dislike it, [the] color doesn't match the context of the work of the company, it turns me off, I wouldn't see the logo [as] the mission of the

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company, I can say the logo is not presenting the mission and puts me off".

Design - The last dimension which differentiates the companies' corporate logo from their competitors' is logo design. Logo design is becoming increasingly significant as a means of differentiation because today's customers have changed and become savvy; in today's economies, only organizations that are able to differentiate themselves from their competitors will succeed (Sundar and Noseworthy, 2014; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). The design of a corporate logo is a clue used by the customer to evaluate their perception (Machado *et al.,* 2015). Design is a language that communicates with stakeholders (Stuart, 2016). Therefore, it is critical that marketing managers and researchers understand the influence of the design on the audience (Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009). A company attempts to communicate about its firm when designing an organizational logo. According to Clow and Baack (2010), the logo design needs to be compatible with the corporation's name. Those companies that use logotypes as the only sign of the company have a lot of requirements for the design of the logo. Design is defined as a creative process that conveys a message or creates effective communication for companies (Andriopoulos and Gotsi, 2001).

Design can serve as an integral part of supporting the corporate logo, even though it may not act as a primary factor (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014: Henderson and Cote, 1998). Effectiveness and usability are important in logo creation. Previous research paid attention to design as a means of differentiation to distinguish companies from their competitors (Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). Similarly, in the current study, interviewees commented on some aspects of the typeface, for example, "ideally, design and typeface should together present the same impression and, if the elements used in a logo are not coherent, people will see it separately as a contradiction between [the] design and words"; "You've got to look at the logo and say, 'Does it in any sense reflect the company's personality?'"; "When it comes to designing a logo, it's tricky to be distinct. When I have to make a logo that people like, I am seriously out of ideas as to how [to] comprehend the terms, where we can use the company name, its services or something else related to it"; "[I] see the name and logo together at first, after that, if the logo can communicate to me I think the design cannot communicate without the name"; and "The problem is that a corporate logo needs a careful design to be able to communicate the goals of the company and all the philosophy of the company".

The distinctiveness of the design was a very influential factor that affected people's judgment, as the following focus group interviewee highlighted:

> "Designing a logo is related to people's judgment, [and whether] they like it or not. Does it convey any meaning, does it present the uniqueness, does it represent any value, does it transmit any messages as well as identifying that company or that organization?"

Consequences of the corporate logo - The literature suggests that logo can lead to several outcomes. A favorable corporate logo has been found to lead to positive outcomes, such as favorable attitudes towards advertisements, recognizability, familiarity, and underpin corporate image and reputation.

Attitude towards advertisements - Consumer responses to advertisements have been of increasing interest to both academics and practitioners. Consumers rely on their attitudes toward advertisements when forming attitudes toward the brand/company. Furthermore, consumers with prior company/brand familiarity are more likely to draw on their existing company/brand knowledge, which influences their attitude toward specific advertisements or reinforces attitudes toward the company/brand (Campbell and Keller, 2003). Attitude toward an advertisement can be thought of as consumers' general liking or disliking.

Previous studies of cue usage by consumers have found that the consumers have great difficulty in articulating what in particular makes advertising distinctive, in terms of specific elements, such as color and design. Likewise, the findings of the current study illustrate that advertising includes aesthetic cues, such as logo, graphics, typeface, and color. Some reflections by a manager on the advertising and logo are in the following quotes:

> "The whole advertisement is [the] logo. [The] logo identifies the name of the advertiser and the content can communicate any of a million messages…" and "…in some cases the unique advertising might [be] those using the logo such as sponsorship of Formula One. In that case it is a very straightforward kind of reminder of the business. On the other hand, it can play a small role in an

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advertising campaign. It all depends on what ~~do~~ you want to achieve [with] the advertising and obviously the context [of] what you want do".

The corporate logo and advertising are tangible and important to customers and offer symbolic representations of an organization. Corporate logo and advertising are often used to emphasize information and attract attention. The corporate logo is used as an extrinsic cue by customers to predict and judge the quality of a product prior to consumption.

Recognizability - The recognizability of a product or service is extremely important to today's businesses to attract maximum attention and situate the company in the customers' minds for a long time. Therefore, many marketing scholars emphasize the importance of the relationship between corporate logo and product and service recognizability, to sustain competitive advantage in today's competitive global market (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). A high quality corporate logo was reported in the participants' comments as a contributing factor towards a favorable corporate image (Gupta *et al*., 2016). For instance, "it is very significant to think about your firm's brand. Think of famous brands such as Apple – the power of well-known brands is such that their logos alone are immediately recognizable. Your brand should show the logo is simple, reflects your company's values and [is] recognizable".

> "An effective logo provides an easily recognizable identity for your business or organization. It not only communicates who you are but what you are. Therefore, every business or organization contemplating adopting a logo should know the criteria that make for an effective logo"… "Our old logo created a corporate identity that gives the company, product or service a recognizable face" (Manager).

This finding is consistent with Bhattacharya and Sen (2003), who assert that the better a company's logo, the higher the recognizability of its product or services. Companies try to build a relationship with their customers. Customers often tend to make buying decisions based on the brand/corporate logo or name rather than just on the product itself. Companies employ logos to maintain success in a marketplace (Gupta *et al.*, 2016).

"Logo, packaging, color, country, and the information on the packaging are very important for potential customers. That's why product recognizability is complex, with information about the manufacturer or provider. The symbol/logo that represents the company is instantly recognizable. Customers buy a well-known product because they want to be associated with high quality and innovative technology and all recognize it from its name and logo… The symbol/logo that represents the company is instantly recognizable" (Design Manager)

Familiarity - Research on visual identity shows that this impacts upon company and product familiarity (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014: Melewar and Saunders, 1998). Furthermore, the direction of the interaction of product familiarity with a company depends on the logo (Melewar and Saunders, 1998). Similarly, the findings from the interviewees illustrate its impact on logo.

"We create a strong visual identity to inspire trust and familiarity in our product or service… when our company or any product or service is mentioned anywhere, our logo should convey it, and a part of that logo will be enough for our client to relate to our firm…" "…our logo encourages a positive personal reaction which includes a sense of trust and familiarity which helps our businesses succeed against tough competition from other companies" (Chairman).

Corporate image - Previous studies have given a lot of attention to the concept of the corporate image (Brown and Dacin, 1997), and the impact of the company's logo on positive and desired attributes to evoke a more positive image of an organization (Schechter, 1993; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). In fact, the findings of the qualitative study showed how a fit between logo and organizational image enhanced consumers' perceptions of the organization, which, in turn, led to more positive evaluations of the group's performance. These findings were consistent with prior research (Henderson and colleagues, 1998; 2003; Pittard *et al.,* 2007). This relationship has been highlighted by a manager in the following comments:

"our company's logo is an integral part of the corporate image of our business. Since the Internet is the emerging media in business, we realized our firm

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requires a design that can communicate with our customers in a clean, corporate, and convenient way and project the purpose of the company". "I think there is [a] more direct relationship between [the] corporate logo and corporate image than between corporate logo and corporate reputation. When you see a logo, you perceive the image first and then [it] reminds you of the reputation because the image is short term, [but] the reputation is built up, it takes time to build up and takes time to fade away, so image is more direct".

In general, corporate image is the external reflection of a company's internal identity; the logo can influence the perceptions of an organization's customers and help customers to formulate a framework of expectations about the company's product or services.

Corporate reputation - Anticipation of the corporate reputation is built up by image through logo. The importance of corporate reputation is particularly evident when the customers trust the company and its product. One of the focus group interviewees illustrated the importance of corporate reputation:

"I think certainly these days the reputation is built from trust [which] is a very high element, but the critical element of reputation is delivering to [meet] the consumers' expectations. Take EasyJet, most designers think EasyJet is [a] rubbish design, they look and say ['It's] big, orange and looks very ugly', but it is a very successful business, the reason is the element of the reputation that is delivering what exactly the customer expects, no less no more. It is managing its expectations in terms of reputation".

As such, the company's logo impacts on positive and desired attributes and can add value to the reputation of an organization. It has been argued that a well-orchestrated corporate image is deemed to be a major contribution to creating corporate reputation. One focus group participant explained:

"[The] Logo has an influence and effect on [a] company's reputation and image not only when it is designed. But over time, there are many things it also may

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affect. Logo always has a role. Particularly when people who see the organization for the first time, I think [the first] time is very important, and exposure is a very important component here. The more people know about the company, the less they see the logo. Many things affect the reputation of the company".

Discussion and Conclusions

The goal of this research is to investigate the role of the different dimensions (typeface, corporate name, color, and design) ~~in~~ on the corporate logo construct and ~~how~~ examine the factors likely to have a significant influence on the corporate logo and its impact on corporate image and corporate reputation from the consumers' perspective. The most significant finding of the current study was to provide a better understanding of the following research questions: (RQ1) *What are the factors that influence corporate logo favorability?* and (RQ2) *What are the main influences of corporate logo favorability on corporate image and corporate reputation?* As a qualitative exploratory study, this study provides rich data on the phenomenon to develop the relationship between the antecedents and consequences of corporate logo.

Every respondent had a unique perception of corporate logo and the majority of the respondents claimed that corporate logo is a significant phenomenon, which affects corporate image and reputation, and, as a consequence, the interest in corporate logos and corporate image has increased rapidly (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Dowling, 1994; Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005). We believe that this study provides a practical starting point for general and senior company management who seek to develop a favorable corporate logo. Furthermore, the results of this study help companies to conduct research that aims to find out which specific components of corporate logo managers, employees, and consumers find most imperative. As such, it appears that specific implications for general managers and graphic designers include the recommendation that they should strive to design or redesign a favorable logo of a business in their efforts to attain favorable business. Implications specific ~~for~~ to this context show the necessity of establishing and maintaining a favorable corporate logo.

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A further conclusion can be drawn from this research with regard to the differences between the mindsets of designers and general managers (Walker, 1990). Walker (1990) states that designers and managers belong to "two different tribes" and are characterized by different backgrounds and types of education with different outlooks (p. 146). For instance, managers are more inclined to emphasize words while designers emphasize visuals. Designers are more inclined to experiment, whereas managers tend more to think in economic and financial terms. The incorporation of designers' and managers' skills and attitudes holds great potential for an organization.

This study provides general managers with insights into the implications of the corporate logo. Managers and designers need to communicate in a common language from a similar standpoint (Henderson *et al.,* 2003; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Kohli *et al.,* 2002). In organizations, the general design manager and a general organizational group are responsible for facilitating communication and the flow of information between managers and designers. Furthermore, they all need to support the designers' ideas as well as encourage the competitive strategies and full incorporation of the design philosophy in the organization. General management needs to understand the process of design so as to communicate with designers by using a common language with a similar point of view (Henderson *et al.,* 2003; Kohli *et al.,* 2002). It is hoped that the findings of this study will help general managers and general design managers to collaborate with designers in a mutual understanding of the concept to enrich the market.

By bridging the gap between academics and professionals, managing a favorable corporate logo can be seen as an integrated approach to express the company's communication skills internally and externally. By establishing that the corporate logo is the main tangible asset in the expression of the company and is used as the 'glue' in communication (Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2006), which influences a favorable company image and reputation, this research aims to be helpful to general managers and communication professionals alike. The majority of the participants have mentioned that corporate logo supports the company's communication both internally and externally, and can create a sense of attachment for its consumers and employees and shape what consumers and employees associate with the company. The respondents believed that the creation of a favorable corporate logo is very costly and

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challenging for an organization (Henderson and Cote, 1998), and general managers make every effort to create one which is favorable, reliably communicating the corporate identity to the market (Gray and Balmer, 1998; Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001). Thus, the findings of this study are of the utmost importance to general managers; they play a significant role in the development of an organization through physical artifacts.

Managerial Implications

The evidence from the interviews shows that assessing the corporate logo can be valuable in the attempt to identify a company's weaknesses, and a weak corporate logo may be an indication of corporate malaise (Baker and Balmer, 1997). This emphasizes that a favorable corporate logo is part of an integrated approach to repositioning an organization (Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005). While the role of general managers in engendering a favorable corporate logo is important, it appears that the nature of the dynamics also plays a very important role in determining the favorable image and reputation of a business. The findings of the current research have vital proposals for marketing decision-makers and general managerial implications, by presenting an inclusive picture of the whole situation in which a favorable corporate logo could be constructed within a company to achieve a favorable image of the organization in the consumer's mind.

This research offers managerial contributions for decision-makers and graphic designers who wish to understand the whole situation of the relationship between a favorable corporate logo and the factors in its antecedents (i.e. corporate name, typeface, design) from the consumer's perspective, and its effect on a favorable corporate image and favorable corporate reputation. The findings of the current research has have vital managerial implications by presenting an inclusive picture of the whole situation in which a favorable corporate logo could be constructed within a company to achieve a favorable image of the organization in the consumer's mind. In other words, a clear understating of the dimensions of the relevant concepts can assist managers and designers to devise a favorable corporate logo which will create a favorable corporate image and corporate reputation.

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The creation of a favorable corporate logo is very costly and challenging for an organization, and managers make every effort to create one which is favorable, reliably communicating the corporate identity to the market. Thus, the findings of this study are of the utmost importance to decision-makers; they play a significant role in the development of an organization through physical artefacts.

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Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the extant theory about corporate logo, corporate image, and corporate reputation relationships in three ways. (1) The first and clearest contribution of the current study is to extend knowledge by examining managers', employees', and consumers' perception towards corporate logo and the core elements of logos and their evaluation by consumers and cross-functional managers (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Pittard *et al.,* 2007; Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009). (2) The second contribution relates to the detailed responses, which reveal that organizations approach corporate logo and corporate identity concepts more from a communications' point of view. The result is consistent with several other researchers (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005; Dowling, 1994; Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004; Olins, 1989; Van der Lans *et al.*, 2009) who have suggested that corporate logos are related to corporate image and influence internal and external organizations' communication, though they have rarely examined this relationship. This study explicitly explored this relationship. (3) The third contribution conveys the suggestion made during the course of the present study, that several authors (Clow and Baack, 2010; Muller *et al.*, 2013, Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009) investigated logos but not in relation to the corporate image. However, the current research traces the relationship between the construct of a corporate logo, the factors that influence the favorability of this logo (its antecedents), and its consequences.

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Consequently, the study has attempted to address the research gaps and respond to previous calls for investigations from the perspective of marketers (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Pittard *et al.,* 2007; Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005; Van der Lans *et al.,* 2009). This research is one of the first empirical studies making use of a synthesis of the corporate logo, corporate image, corporate reputation, corporate identity, design, and the literature on corporate visual identity

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to describe the corporate logo in a more holistic manner, contributing at the same time to the literature on logos, corporate visual identity, corporate identity, and design.

Future Research Avenues

There are several areas in need of further research. Perhaps the most important relates to an increase in the number of interviews and focus groups included in the study; however, we found that when new cases were added, little new information was revealed, indicating saturation (Eisenhardt, 1989). As this study employed exploratory research, replicated studies are now needed in order to gain greater generalizability and validity for the examined relationships. Although the results of this study provide support for a relationship among between corporate logo, corporate image, and corporate reputation, it only involved managers, consultants, and academics in the United Kingdom. However, we argue that the findings revealed in this research are not specific, and have value for business managers conducting business across industries. Also, regarding the differences between the mindsets of designers and general managers (Walker, 1990), conducting interviews with designers and comparing the results with those of general managers might be another worthwhile study, which could provide further insights into the topic. Finally, this study, which focuses on favorable corporate logo and its antecedents and its relation to corporate image and corporate reputation, opens numerous possible routes for future research. This study provides the foundation to extend the current body of knowledge in the literature on the corporate logo, corporate visual identity, and design.

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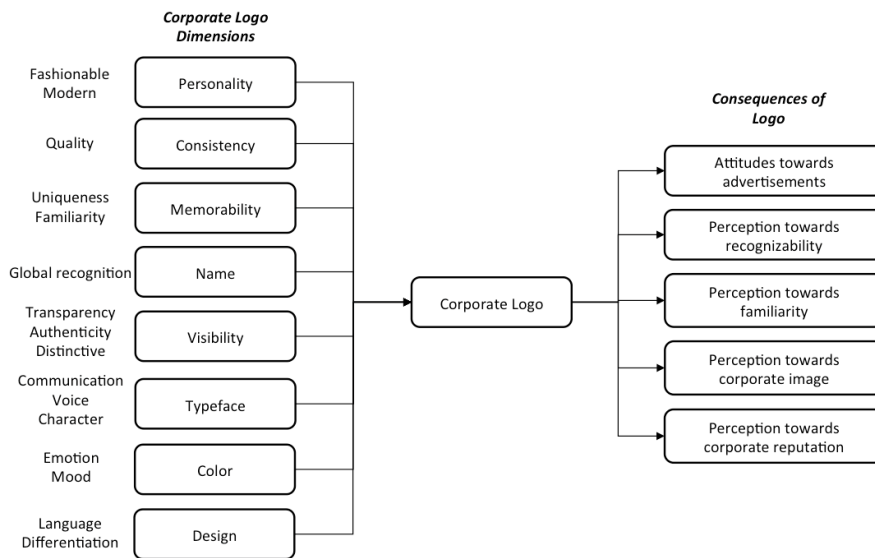
Figure 1: Dimensions and consequences of corporate logo

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Table 1: The detailed definitions and the research constructs

Construct	Definition	Description
Corporate logo	Corporate logo can be defined as the signature of a company (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997; Melewar, 2003) with an essential communication, and distinctiveness, which can reflect a company's image and reputation (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Melewar, 2003; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997).	**Corporate logo -** Marketers have focused on managers, employees, and consumers as primary receivers. In marketing, the corporate logo as seen can encapsulate the personality of a firm and its values (Cole *et al.,* 2015). Good logos can enhance attitudes towards advertisements, underpin familiarity (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014) and recognizability (Omar and Williams, 2006).
Corporate name	Corporate name can be defined as the most pervasive element in corporate and brand communications that identifies a company and increases recognition speed (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Kohli *et al.,* 2002; Schechter, 1993).	**Corporate names** are seen as a significant part of marketing. The corporate name can position the firm in the minds of managers, employees, and consumers (Selame and Selame, 1988), summarize reputation, and be a valuable asset (i.e. Coca Cola, Dow, De Beer etc.) From a marketing perspective, a company name is the main element of many communications' systems and is linked to promised and expected attributes. It is the most recognizable element of identity and should be readily identifiable by customers. Hence, a corporate name is pervasive in corporate and brand communications (Schechter, 1993).
Typeface	Typeface design can rely on an understanding of a particular cultural heritage, which can be lost in other cultures (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Van Riel *et al.,* 2001).	**Typeface** is a significant visual tool for accomplishing corporate communication objectives (Childers and Jass, 2002; McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002) and plays an important role for managers, employees, and consumers. A typeface is a representation of character and "the best typography has grace and certain invisibility" (Rowden, 2000, p.185). According to aesthetics, there is a connection between typeface characteristics and design characteristics on consumer responses (Childers and Jass, 2002; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014). Both academics and practitioners indicate that typeface design influences perceptions of brands, in terms of memorability and readability (Childers and Jass, 2002; Henderson *et al.,* 2004). The typeface used by an organization refers to visual perceptual aspects of a company, which is the art, or skill of designing communication by means of the printed word (Childers and Jass, 2002).

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Color	Color can be defined as a medium of communication and is an integral element of corporate and marketing communications, which induces emotions and moods, impacts on consumers' perceptions and behavior, and helps organizations position or differentiate themselves from competitors (Aslam, 2006; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Tavassoli, 2001).	**Color** is also an integral element of corporate and marketing communications, which can attract attention toward logo. Color is a strong cue for product and brand differentiation (Aslam, 2006; Ridgway and Myers, 2014), for creating and sustaining identity, and perceptions. Organizations use color to signal personality, position, and to sustain image by adding visual recognition. Colors induce emotions and moods, impact perceptions and behavior, and help organizations position or differentiate themselves (Aslam, 2006; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Tavassoli, 2001).
Design	Design can be defined as a creative process that conveys a message or creates effective communications for companies (Andriopoulos and Gotsi, 2001).	**Design** can affect reactions towards logos. Henderson and Cote (1998) asserted that logo design has three dimensions: naturalness, elaborateness and harmony. CVI managers need simple guidelines to manage visual elements of marketing in order to evaluate recognition, clarity of meaning, subject familiarity, and effects. A well -designed logo allows for easy recognition and quick association. A logo is vital in terms of what it is able to communicate about the company. Design can be defined as a creative process that conveys a message or creates effective communications for companies (Andriopoulos and Gotsi, 2001; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014).
Attitude towards advertisements	Attitude towards advertisements can be defined as an enduring feeling towards and evaluative judgment of an advertisement after an individual sees the message content embedded within it (Shimp, 2000).	**Attitude towards advertisements** - a company's corporate logo influences viewers' attitudes towards advertisements. Powerful corporate logos impact advertising as they affect memorability (Van den Bosch *et al.,* 2005) and are a "tangible representation of the personality, [as] the expression manifest in the behavior and communication of an organization" (Comrnelissen and Harris, 2001, p. 56). Over time, logo and advertising offer symbolic representations of a company and are used to highlight information and attract attention. Perceptions that customers have of corporate/brand should be shared, positive and consistent. However, attitudes towards advertisements differ (Foroudi *et al.*, 2014). Consumers can rely on their attitudes toward advertisements when forming attitudes about companies. While

		successful advertisements attract attention, attitude towards advertisements can be defined as an enduring feeling towards and evaluative judgment of an advertisement, after an individual sees the message content embedded within it (Shimp, 2000).
Familiarity	Familiarity with company and product refers to how familiar a consumer is with a given product category (Josiassen *et al.,* 2008).	**Familiarity** with a product or a brand "refers to consumer understanding of the product and its characteristics, as well as to his/her ability to evaluate its quality" (Herrera and Blanco, 2011, p. 286). Josiassen *et al.* (2008) propose that "image could serve as a summary cue that consumers use to sum up and encapsulate the evaluation of a product that they are familiar with" and consumers are believed to use "image as a proxy for the performance of a product when they have prior experiences with the performance of other, similar products" (p. 424). Researchers indicate that logos are a reliable, distinctive cue for organizations to create familiarity and influence consumer decisions (Henderson and Cote, 1998).
Recognizability	Recognizability is the identification of something that has been seen previously and comes back to mind when it is seen it again (Clow and Baack, 2010).	**Recognizability** concerns the identification of something seen previously and brought back to mind when seen again (Clow and Baack, 2010). A logo should increase recognizability towards the company and its products (Henderson *et al.,* 2003). Van der Lans *et al.* (2009) state that "logo recognition means consumers remember seeing the logo before. Because consumers recognize pictures more quickly than words, a company can communicate quickly by using a logo in the brand name" (p. 971).
Corporate image	Corporate image can be defined as the immediate mental picture of an organization that is held by an individual. It can materially affect individuals' sense of association with an organization and is likely to have an impact on behavior (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Karaosmanoglu *et al.,* 2011).	**Corporate image -** Discussion centers around the concept of corporate image (Bick *et al.,* 2003; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014). Yet, definitions of corporate image in early works are ambivalent. Corporate image is connected with the name of an organization and related to public or organizational image.
Corporate reputation	Corporate reputation is endowed with a judgment and is the overall evaluation of a company over time (Foroudi *et al.,* 2014; Gotsi and	**Corporate reputation -** Conceptualization of corporate reputation has been on the agenda of marketing academics and practitioners for the past

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refs	Wilson, 2001).	fifty years (Dowling, 1994; Foroudi *et al.,* 2014), yet the terms 'corporate identity' and 'corporate image' are used interchangeably with 'corporate reputation'. The main aim of corporate identity is to create and develop a positive reputation among organizational managers, employees, and consumers. According to Kotler (1997), identity "comprises the ways that a company aims to identify itself or position its product" (p. 292). Image affects corporate reputation. (Gotsi and Wilson (2001) conclude that corporate reputation is "a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time. This evaluation is based on the stakeholder's direct experiences with a company, any other form of communication and symbolism that provides information about the firm's actions and/or a comparison with the actions of other leading rivals" (p. 29).

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