THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN IMAGE FORMATION: A STUDY ON THE PROJECTION OF CORPORATE IMAGE ON THE CONSUMER*

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Abstract

In this article, how the corporate identity is reflected by the corporates through digital media, the level of formation of the corporate image in the desired direction as a result of identity presentation and the level of digital media dependence through image formation are analyzed. As part of the research, firstly, the digital media activities of corporations were analyzed through content analysis and the images that corporations tried to form on certain subjects were determined. Afterward, a questionnaire was applied to the consumers of these corporations to identify how the consumers perceived the corporations regarding the same subjects. As a result of the research, it has been revealed that the selected corporations were able to project the images they want to their consumers to a large extent. According to the results of the Chi-Square analysis carried out as part of the research, it was found that the perception of the corporate image by consumers is not dependent on digital media. In this regard, other activities (sponsorship, advertising, etc.) were proved to be more important than digital media activities during the image formation and maintenance stage.

Keywords: corporate culture, corporate identity, corporate image, digital media, corporate reflection.

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İMAJ ÜRETİMİNDE DİJİTAL MEDYANIN ROLÜ: KURUMLARIN OLUŞTURMAYA ÇALIŞTIKLARI İMAJIN TÜKETİCİYE NE ORANDA YANSIDIĞINA YÖNELİK BİR ÇALIŞMA*

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Öz

Bu makalede kurumsal kimliğin kurumlar tarafından dijital medya yoluyla nasıl yansıtıldığı, kimlik sunumu sonucu kurumsal imajın istenilen yönde oluşma düzeyi ve imaj oluşumu ile dijital medyanın bağımlılık düzeyi ortaya koyulmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında, ilk olarak, içerik analizi ile kurumların dijital medya aktiviteleri incelenmiş ve belirli konularda kurumların oluşturmaya çalıştıkları imajlar tespit edilmiştir. Daha sonra ise kurumların tüketicilerine anket uygulanarak aynı konularda tüketicilerin kurumu nasıl algıladığı tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, seçilmiş olan kurumların istedikleri imajları tüketicilerine büyük ölçüde yansıtabildikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında gerçekleştirilmiş olan Ki-Kare analizi sonuçlarına göre, kurum imajının tüketiciler tarafından algılanmasının dijital medyaya bağımlı olmadığı bulunmuştur. Bu doğrultuda, imaj oluşturma ve sürdürme aşamasında dijital medya aktivitelerinden çok diğer aktivitelerin (sponsorluk, reklam vb.) önemli olduğu ortaya konulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kurumsal kültür, kurumsal kimlik, kurumsal imaj, dijital medya, kurumsal dışavurum.

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Introduction

In an environment dominated by the free market, where hundreds of actors produce the same product, the image of the corporations must be good for the product or service to be "attractive." Since even the products considered as the most important factor in the attractiveness of corporations have become standard, corporations have turned towards producing different activities to differentiate themselves. So, at this point, the image has become important.

A great variety of factors plays role in image formation today. It is possible to consider digital media activities, social responsibility projects, press releases, advertisements, and sponsorship, etc. among these factors. It is important to examine the activities in these areas separately and to determine the transfer ratio of the different or holistic images formed by each of these activities to the consumer. However, some corporations focus on certain channels and ignore others during the image formation stage and by leaving the media they consider worthless out of their general strategies and keeping them open to arbitrary discourse, these corporations think they can form images through short-term discourses reaching to limited space around certain strategies. Some corporations even think that the images they try to project after their limited activities are shaped in the minds of the consumers, just like in their own minds. However, this does not work as idealized, and certain problems are experienced during the image transition between the corporation and the consumer.

Corporations can learn about the images they hold in the eyes of consumers concretely by using various methods. In this process, having a "positive" image is considered more valuable than projecting the desired image. As frequently stated in the literature, it is important to have a positive image. However, in an era where corporations strategically manage all their activities, it is important to integrate strategically planned qualities suitable for the target audience instead of certain qualities that have been formed arbitrarily by others, even if positive. This is important because the image determines the nature of the thin line between the success and failure of a corporation as well as its lifetime.

Literature Review: Theoretical Background

The concept of corporate image, which can be defined as the view of a corporation in the eyes of stakeholders, has been frequently studied in the past with an administrative perspective and has been the subject of various research projects. For example, Virvilaite and Daubaraite (2011) revealed that corporate social responsibility, although not being the most important factor, positively contributes to corporate image. The research by Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) found out that the corporate image has an impact on

perceived quality and customer satisfaction, but not on value, whereas it contributes indirectly to the perceived quality and value. The results showed that the corporate image has a significant but indirect effect on customer loyalty, claiming that customer loyalty is achieved both through the rejection of expectations and corporate image. Similarly, Weiwei (2007) aimed to define the relationship between corporate image and corporate reputation and their impact on customer loyalty.

The research by Cameran et al. (2010) examined the effect of corporate image and service quality on customer satisfaction in the professional service sector. This research revealed through Italian audit firms that the most important corporate image component for an audit firm is "usefulness". Claiming that the corporate image consists of social responsibility, product image, and corporate reputation, Ko et al. (2013) found that product image and corporate reputation have a direct impact on purchasing intent in the retail environment whereas social responsibility has an indirect effect.

One of the results of Chang and Fong's (2010) study of green product quality, green corporate image, green customer satisfaction and green customer loyalty is that the green corporate image has positive effects on green customer satisfaction and green customer loyalty. Ishaq (2012) found that the image has no effect in the stage of increasing customer loyalty and what matters is the service quality. Kim and Lee's (2010) research showed that the corporate image plays the most important role in creating and maintaining customer loyalty in the markets.

Flavian et al. (2005) found that corporate image affects trust in both traditional and internet banking. Moreover, the duration of the relationship was found to be effective in the intensity of the relationship between image and trust. Gatewood et al.'s (1993) research revealed that the image of a corporation is related to the present information (available, attainable, accessible).

Hu et al.'s (2009) research has shown that providing high-quality service and creating superior customer value can lead to high customer satisfaction, affecting the corporate image, and ultimately leading to consumer retention. The study emphasized that the positive image did not only help the corporation attract the customers but also positively affected the trust in the other related groups. Based on the idea that service quality, customer satisfaction, corporate image, and customer loyalty are important to deal with fierce competition and increase profit margins, Liat et al. (2014) revealed that all four variables are significantly interrelated and useful for promoting long-term business growth and ensuring sustainability. The research underlined that the quality of service affects customer satisfaction and the image of customer satisfaction, and the image affects customer loyalty.

The findings of Foroudi et al. (2014) research exploring the questions "What are the factors affecting the popularity of the corporate logo?" and

"What are the main effects of this appreciation on corporate image and corporate reputation?" reveal that the popularity of a corporation's logo is projected to the extent that consumers see the logo positively. The work of Chung et al.'s (2015) results revealed that the effects in question, the corporate image was found to have a moderator effect on the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer satisfaction as well.

The research conducted by Tsai and Yang (2010) found out that corporate product image, corporate citizenship image, and corporate reliability image are important elements for corporate attractiveness; and environmental sensitivity, which is one of the proposed applicant individual difference variables, moderating the relationship between corporate citizenship image and organizational attractiveness. The study of Huang et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between corporate social responsibility, service quality, corporate image, and purchasing intentions. The important result of this study is that corporate social responsibility has a significant positive impact on corporate image, service quality and purchasing intent.

As we can see, the concept of image is generally considered as an independent variable in the literature and evaluations have been made in the context of the effect of the image on something. Secondly, studies conducted have had the image as the dependent variable and measured the variables affecting the image. In this context, the aim has been to analyze what the image does, what it is effective on, and what affects the image rather than its quality. However, the questions of how the image is evaluated, whether the corporations can hold the images they portray or not, have drawn the interest of a limited number of studies (e.g. Savaş, 2016; Hatch and Schultz, 2011; Brown and Starkey, 2000; Brown, 1997).

Articles on image act on certain preliminary assumptions. Although it is important to assume that the positive image gives good results and the negative image gives bad results, the quality of image production and the gaps between the ends producing and receiving the image and transforming it by integrating the image with their own experiences, constitute the most important part of the image issue. The fact that there are only a limited number of articles on this issue in the literature is striking. Although there are theoretical articles on the subject, empirical studies seem to be inadequate. This study, on the other hand, aims to present the issue concretely by collecting information through surveys and different data collection tools and performing sectoral analysis. What matters is not the generalization of the image in positive or negative categories; it is the details of the image's quality based on the idea that the images created by each corporation's distinctive cultures and the subsequent projection of their identities are unique. Therefore, creating the image as desired by the corporation is important both in terms of being unique and the competitive advantage as an outcome of being unique.

There is a literature on concepts such as dysfunction that corporations

experience while getting away from the truth in the formation of corporate culture, identity and the transfer of the image. Corporations might get carried away in a wave of imitating their rivals in an attempt to be "the latest trend" due to the possibility of losing their weight in the market or competition, or they might not be able to control their inner beliefs about who they are and become something that no one else believes in except for themselves (Hatch and Schultz, 2011: 76-77). Therefore, it is important for corporations to carefully construct their cultures and present their identity, which is an output of the culture, as a result of planned steps, and to design a planned strategy based on reality rather than discourse during image formation. An image based on narcissism or false perceptions also distorts the image perception curve between the corporation and the target audience: "Andrew Brown extended this idea to organizations by defining *organizational narcissism* as a dysfunction of the collective need for self-esteem, a complex consisting of denial, rationalization, self-aggrandizement, egotism, a sense of entitlement, and anxiety" (As cited in Hatch and Schultz, 2008: 63).

At first glance, it can be thought that this occurs due to the desire to be successful. Today, corporations hold the opinion that the way to be successful is to integrate with positive features in the eyes of the target audience. If the image is positive, this will positively affect consumer behavior such as purchasing (Marangoz, 2006: 111). Indeed, the corporations that do not have positive features as mentioned can think that they can be viewed positively through discourses. While implementing this strategy, there are those who think that the strategy will actually work as well as the ones who adopt the strategy in question as "real." However, ultimately, this is a disruption in the perception of "reality" and is extremely crucial for the lives of corporations.

The existence of such a problem brings out the need to reveal the image the corporations attempt to form through digital media and to look at how much is projected on the consumers by analyzing their discourse and actions in the context of the image they try to create. The role of digital media in terms of projecting the image correctly to consumers is also important today. However, it can be argued that the components that make up the image should be mentioned primarily.

Corporate personality

The first component of corporate identity can be defined as corporate core personality. Corporations are established by a specific person or group. Therefore, it is not possible to evaluate the corporation independently of the value judgments and opinions of the relevant "founders" law: "When a company is formed by the union of natural persons, a new real person," (Machen, 1911: 256) becomes a person representing the sum of its creators. Personality is considered as to what someone actually is (McCrae and Costa, 1982: 1283). In this context, it can be said that the corporate personality of the corporation

comes before the corporate culture and corporate identity and represents the first existence of the corporation in its non-interacting form with the stakeholders.

Corporate culture

The second component of corporate identity can be defined as corporate culture: "Corporate culture refers to a core set of attitudes and practices that are shared by the members of the firm" (as cited in Tellis et al, 2009: 6). Just as a community has its own rules, the corporation as a community needs similar rules: "Corporate culture is a set of broad, tacitly understood rules which tell employees what to do under a wide variety of unimaginable circumstances" (Camerer and Vepsalainen, 1988: 115), so it is one of the essential requirements for employees to act in harmony and collaboration.

To manage the culture, it is necessary to understand what culture is, what it encompasses and how it should be evaluated (Schein, 2009: 20). Especially in the context of corporate culture, being able to create a new culture includes various elements. People come from different ethnic identities, cultural structures, and have different personality traits thanks to their past experiences (Sadri and Lees, 2001: 853). It can be thought that this situation brings along a basic adaptation problem. Therefore, creating a harmonious working environment requires certain common, guiding norms. At this point, corporate culture comes into play. Corporate culture determines the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the members (Kerr and Slocum, 1987: 99). As a result of this determination, individuals with different cultural backgrounds become integrated with the "new and shared" culture.

Corporate identity

Corporate identity describes one of the two main components of its corporate image. Corporate identity, as a representation of the corporation, is a means of presenting a tangible entity. In this context, it is the main element that the consumer can look at during the formation of the image. Besides, corporate culture is a prerequisite for differentiation, in other words, being unique.

It is said that the concept of corporate identity should now also be considered in the context of the real characteristics that give the corporation its originality, stability, and consistency, or in other words, the characteristics of the corporation. The rationale underlying this orientation is considered as not only an appearance reflected in visual design and communication but also as an interest in the importance of "what or who the corporation is", which mainly covers the corporation's specific strategies and culture (Cornelissen et al, 2007: 6-7).

Corporate image

When we look at the concept of corporate image, we see that this concept is related to the judgments in the consumer's mind that result from the behavior and discourses of the corporation. For example, Marken (1990: 21) defines the corporate image as the perception of the goals and plans of the whole corporation. According to Richard and Zhang (2012: 572), the corporate image is the general impression left in the mind of the customer.

According to Vos (1992: 28), the corporate image is the general view of the corporation experienced by various stakeholders. It is based on people's minds, it is personal and also linked to time. Since the corporate image is variable, it may vary from person to person. Corporate identity is all messages conveyed by the corporation, and the corporate image is the perception that these messages reveal to stakeholders. These perceptions include interpretation, in other words, this interpretation state forms the image. Therefore, while corporate identity is a means of self-promotion, the image is the picture of the corporation drawn by stakeholders (Baskan Karsak, 2009: 115). Consumers perceive the corporate identity and form their own image of corporate identity as a result of their experiences and expectations with the corporation (Karadoğan Doruk and Savaş, 2017: 105).

Study

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this article is to discuss how corporations project their corporate identity through digital media, whether the images of corporations are formed in the minds of the consumers in the desired direction after the presentation of identity, and the level of dependence of the image formation process on digital media through examples of sectoral competitors.

Originality of the study

Similar to the design of this study, Page (2014) counted *Twitter* posts, focusing on whether corporations use *Twitter* as a tool to apologize. Özgen and Elmasoğlu (2016), on the other hand, examined the *tweets* of three airline companies in terms of the topics and message direction. Similar to a certain part of this study, the researchers in question counted *tweets*. Instead of focusing on only one digital media channel, this study focuses on the most popular digital media channels, corporate websites, press releases and news that corporations use as a tool to express themselves.

Research hypothesis

In this study, in order to compare the perception of the consumer with the perception of the corporations, the following hypotheses were created.

Table 1. Research hypotheses

H0	Visiting digital media pages of corporations/brands and perception of corporations/brands are independent.				
H1	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of *Eti* are interdependent.	H2	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Torku* are interdependent.	H3	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and perception of *Ülker* are interdependent.
H1.1	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of *Eti*'s mood are interdependent.	H2.1	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and perceiving what flavors/tastes *Torku* likes the most are interdependent.	H3.1	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Ülker*'s mood are interdependent.
H1.2	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and the perception of the means of transportation that *Eti* brings forward are interdependent.	H2.2	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of which city *Torku* is from are interdependent.	H3.2	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of the age group that *Ülker* is in most accord with are interdependent.
H1.3	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of what *Eti* would pay attention to in terms of food are interdependent.	H2.3	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Torku*'s occupation are interdependent.	H3.3	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of the snack that *Ülker* would consume the most are interdependent.
H1.4	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of *Eti*'s lifestyle are interdependent.	H2.4	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and perceiving the act that makes *Torku* the happiest are interdependent.	H3.4	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of which sports *Ülker* would engage in most are interdependent.
H1.5	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and the perception of the age group that *Eti* is in most accord with are interdependent.	H2.5	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of what *Torku* thinks is important to succeed in business are interdependent.	H3.5	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Ülker*'s view of innovations are interdependent.
H1.6	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Eti*'s attitude in friendship relations are interdependent.	H2.6	Visiting *Torku*'sdigital media pages and the perception of which country *Torku* is a citizen of are interdependent.	H3.6	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of the subject that *Ülker* is most interested in are interdependent.

H1.7	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of *Eti*'s attitude towards the surrounding problems are interdependent.	H2.7	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of what *Torku* would pay attention to most in a meal are interdependent.	H3.7	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of which country *Ülker* is a citizen of are interdependent.
H1.8	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perceiving which snack *Eti* would consume the most are interdependent.	H2.8	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of which drink *Torku* would enjoy drinking the most are interdependent.	H3.8	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Ülker*'s attitude towards the game when a game is being played are interdependent.
H1.9	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of *Eti*'s favorite color are interdependent.	H2.9	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of what *Torku* would pay attention to most when buying a food product are interdependent.	H3.9	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Ülker*'s general attitude towards the work it does are interdependent.
H1.10	Visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and the perception of which country the citizen of *Eti* is interdependent.	H2.10	Visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages and the perception of whether *Torku* would pay attention to domestic production are interdependent.	H3.10	Visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of what *Ülker* thinks other people need the most to gain are interdependent.

Limitations of the study

The first limitation of the study is that it focuses only on corporations producing products such as biscuits, confectionery, chocolate, and wafers among food products within the non-durable consumer goods sector. The second limitation of the study is that, as mentioned earlier, it focuses only on digital media such as digital media activities, social responsibility projects, press releases, advertisements, and sponsorships among activities that can be reviewed to identify the image. The third limitation of the study is that it focuses only on the consumer in the context of the stakeholders.

Sampling

Corporations/brands producing products such as biscuits, confectionery, chocolate, wafers in Turkey constitute the universe of the study. The sampling is composed of the top three leading companies in the sector with the high-

est net sales figures through the "Purposeful Sampling" method, which is not based on probability calculations. The three leading corporations in the relevant sector were identified using the numbers in the *Fortune 500 Turkey* list. According to the net sales category in the *Fortune 500* list, *Ülker* is 37th, *Eti* is 59th and *Konya* Şeker is 65th. When the list in question is evaluated in terms of corporations producing foods such as biscuits, wafers, and chocolate, we see that *Ülker* ranks the first, *Eti* ranks the second and *Konya* Şeker ranks the third (Fortune Türkiye, 2018).

Table 2. Fortune 500 Turkey List

Ranking	Corporation Name	Net Sales
37	*Ülker*	3.921,686,855
59	*Eti*	2.760,613,206
65	*Konya* Şeker (*Torku*)	2.516,549,435

The universe of the questionnaire to be carried out in the second phase of the study consists of people who buy products such as biscuits, confectionery, chocolate, wafers. In the process of sampling from the relevant universe, whether the three corporations mentioned are recognized or not is taken as reference. Sample selection was made in the form of "voluntary sampling": "In the voluntary sampling technique, the elements that make up the sample consist of people whom the researcher believes will find answers to their research problems or that they can reach most easily" (Kara and Kızılkaya, 2015: 11).

Given that Turkey's population is approximately 81 million (Kemp, 2018), the use of the relevant brands can reach up to millions. Since it is estimated that reaching 384 people in a universe above 1 million people will enable measurement with a sampling error of 0.05 (5%) (Harper and Row, as cited in Sarantakos, 1993: 148), it can be said that the research is competent in terms of the number of samples.

Method

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used together in the study. While using content analysis for digital media activities within the scope of the qualitative research method; a questionnaire was used as a data collection tool as part of the quantitative research method. The reason why the mixed method is preferred is that the appropriate data collection tool changes at different stages of the research.

In the first step, the activities, actions, and discourses performed by the relevant corporation through digital media platforms were reviewed and a content analysis was made. In this context, these five categories were determined: press releases and news published by the corporations on corporate websites, all contents of corporate websites, *Twitter* and *Facebook* accounts.

All the contents of the related categories were subjected to content analysis with the help of the *Nvivo* software and the ten most used concepts in the related content were determined. Then, concepts with the same word root and meaning are combined (e.g. farm, agriculture, etc.). All published content up to June 19, 2018, in press releases, news, and corporate website content, and all posts from the opening dates of pages until June 19, 2018, on *Twitter* and *Facebook* pages were received. The press releases category was not used for *Ülker* as *Ülker*'s website did not have such a section.

Later on, 10 concepts that stand out in each category were combined and the total usage amount was reached. Although the concept "share" seems to be the 7th concept used by *Torku* with 1734 use, it has been determined that the concept "share" amounted to such high numbers due to the "share" button on the website. In this context, the concept was excluded from the scope of analysis since it is not a concept that the corporation uses consciously, and therefore the 10th most used concept became "domestic/local." The resulting table was taken as a reference for the formation of the survey questions.

Table 3. Top 10 concepts used the most by the corporations/brands that are subject to the study

ETİ		TORKU		ÜLKER	
Repetition	*Concept*	*Repetition*	*Concept*	*Repetition*	*Concept*
933	Happy	6274	Candy/Sugar	2242	Happy
758	Bicycle	5917	Konya	631	Child
309	Taste	4180	Farmer, farm, agriculture, field, etc.	542	Chocolate
262	Mobile, active, etc.	3851	Production, producer, etc.	377	Soccer
218	Child	2224	We	371	New
202	Social	2115	Turkish, Turkey, etc.	340	Art
177	Responsibility	1048	Taste	287	Turkish, Turkey, etc.
171	Chocolate	901	Milk	262	To win
163	Yellow	862	Natural	225	Sustainability, continuity, etc.
160	Turkish, Turkey, etc.	846	Domestic/Local	169	Chance

In the second stage, a personification questionnaire for the customers of the corporations was designed by using the key concepts determined in the

first step. Survey questions were prepared based on symbolic analogy (simulation). Symbolic analogy focuses on what the products or brands represent by considering the products or brands as individuals or objects. This technique can provide free answers as it stimulates the imagination (Tığlı, 2003: 250). The study was not restricted to any criteria such as demographic, education, gender, and participants were reached face to face and via the internet.

The pilot implementation of the survey was carried out on thirty people between 07.15.2018 and 07.31.2018. Later, 433 people were surveyed between September 15 and November 15, and the profiles of the corporations in the consumer's mind were identified.

In the third stage, in the light of the data obtained in the first and second steps, comparisons were made on the profiles that were personified by the corporations and consumers. The comparison focused on the matching rate of the image the corporation tried to form with the image formed in the consumer's mind about the corporation in question.

In the fourth and last stage, whether image formation is dependent on digital media was determined. By examining the research hypotheses, both a contextual and a general picture were drawn, and the connection between digital media and image formation was examined.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Questions
.898	54

Within the scope of the research, the Cronbach Alpha value was observed as 0.898. Based on the condition that the Cronbach Alpha value is higher than 0.70 in terms of reliability (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016: 325), it can be said that the survey conducted as part of the study has reliability.

Findings

Demographic data

A total of 433 people participated in the survey. Participants were asked a total of five questions constituting demographic elements.

Table 5. Demographic data of research participants

Gender	Freq.	Perc. (%)
Female	285	65.8
Male	148	34.2
Total	433	100

Age	Freq.	Perc. (%)	Education Status	Freq.	Perc. (%)
17-20	87	20.1	Primary School	15	3.5
21-25	111	25.6	Middle School	6	1.4
26-30	92	21.2	High school	75	17.3
31-35	48	11.1	Associate Degree	29	6.7
36-40	26	6	Bachelor's Degree	100	23.1
41-45	27	6.2	Master's Degree	82	18.9
46-50	18	4.2	Doctorate	37	8.5
51+	24	5.5	Undergraduate Student	89	20.6
Total	433	100	Total	433	100

Marital Status	Freq.	Perc. (%)	Revenue	Freq.	Perc. (%)
Married	141	32.6	0-499	94	21.7
Single	280	64.7	500-999 TL	45	10.4
Divorced	7	1.6	1000-1499 TL	33	7.6
Has a deceased spouse	5	1.2	1500-2499 TL	74	17.1
Total	433	100	2500-4000 TL	91	21
			4000+	96	22.2
			Total	433	100

When the demographic data of the research participants are analyzed, it is seen that women (65.8%), singles (64.7%) and people in the 21-25 age group (25.6%) mostly participated in the study. It is also observed that 23.1% of the participants have a bachelor's degree and 22.2% of them have an income of 4000 TL and above.

Questions regarding the use of digital media

The survey participants were asked a total of 6 questions aiming to reveal the general digital media usage practices and practices of visiting the digital media pages of the corporations addressed in the study.

Table 6. Data on research participants' use of digital media

D.M. Use	Freq.	Perc. (%)	Paying attention to D.M. concepts	Freq.	Perc. (%)
Yes	390	90.1	Yes	88	20.3
No	43	9.9	No	27	6.2
Total	433	100	NUDM& NVRDMP [1]	318	73.4
			Total	433	100

Eti's DM Visit	Freq.	Perc. (%)	*Torku*'s DM Visit	Freq.	Pct (%)	*Ülker's* DM Visit	Freq.	Perc. (%)
Yes	65	15	Yes	59	13.6	Yes	56	12.9
No	325	75.1	No	327	75.5	No	330	76.2
Not using D.M.	43	9.9	Not using D.M	47	10.9	Not using D.M.	47	10.9
Total	433	100	Total	433	100	Total	433	100
Eti's Frequency of DM Visit	Freq.	Perc. (%)	*Torku*'s Frequency of DM Visit	Freq.	Perc. (%)	*Ülker's* Frequency of DM Visit	Freq	Perc. (%)
More than once a day	2	0.5	More than once a day	3	0.7	More than once a day	1	0.2
Once a week on average	4	0.9	Once a week on average	5	1.2	Once a week on average	2	0.5
Once a month on average	8	1.8	Once a month on average	8	1.8	Once a month on average	10	2.3
Only once	51	11.8	Only once	43	9.9	Only once	43	9.9
NUDM& NVRDMP	368	85	NUDM& NVRDMP	374	86.4	NUDM& NVRDMP	377	87.1
Total	433	100	Total	433	100	Total	433	100

As seen in *Table 5*, 90.1% of the participants use digital media. However, the identified rates of digital media page visits to the three corporations were as follows: *Eti* 15%, *Torku* 13.6%, and *Ülker* 12.9%. Looking at the visit frequency of digital media pages, we see a rate of 11.8% for *Eti*, 9.9% for *Torku* and 9.9% for *Ülker* within the scope of the "only once" option.

If we look at the ratio of participants paying attention to the concepts

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[1]   Those who do not use digital media and do not visit the relevant digital media page.

when they visit the relevant digital media pages, we see that 76.52% of the people who visited digital media pages (115 individuals)[2] take note of the concepts that are used in the posts.

Evaluation of frequency tables

This section evaluates how often the concepts that refer to the survey questions are given as answers by the survey participants, in other words, what percentage of the most used concepts in the digital media is the answer that comes first to the consumer's mind in the relevant context.

Table 7. Eti - comparison of concepts and general survey answers

Concept	The Corporation's Self-Definition	The Definition Made by the Consumers about the Corporation	Consumer Response Rate	
Happy	Happy	Happy	54.30%	
Bicycle	Bicycle	Bicycle	52.00%	
Taste	Taste	Taste	50.10%	
Mobile, active, etc.	Mobile-Active	Mobile-Active	85.90%	
Child	Child	**Young**	43.20%	Child 37.4% (2nd answer)
Social	Social, extrovert	Social, extrovert	82.90%	
Responsibility	Realizes the problems and takes responsibility for the solution	Realizes the problems and takes responsibility for the solution	72.50%	
Chocolate	Chocolate	**Biscuit**	55.40%	Chocolate 25.6% (2nd answer)
Yellow	Yellow	**Red**	34.20%	Yellow 22.6% (2nd answer)
Turkish, Turkey, etc.	Turkey	Turkey	58.40%	

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[2] The number of participants who have visited at least one digital media page of the relevant corporations is 115. Since participants can specify that they have visited more than one corporation's page, the manual summation of the figures in *Table 8* may give erroneous results.

When *Eti*'s questions are analyzed, it is seen that the answers of the participants match up with the most used concepts by *Eti* in digital media by a ratio of 7 out of 10 (70%). Therefore, it can be seen that the concepts used by *Eti* on digital media significantly overlap with the consumer's perception of *Eti*. As an exception, it is seen that consumers give different answers in the 5th, 8th and 9th questions. Especially in the color question, it is seen that consumers marked the "red" option even though *Eti* emphasized the "yellow" color in digital media. It can be thought that the fact that *Eti*'s logo is red might have an important effect on the foundation of this marking.

Table 8. Torku- comparison of concepts and general survey answers

Concept	The Corporation's Self-Definition	The Definition Made by the Consumers about the Corporation	Consumer Response Rate
Candy/Sugar	Sweet	Sweet	61.90%
Konya	Konya	Konya	56.40%
Farmer, farm, agriculture, field, etc.	Farmer	Farmer	64.40%
Production, producer, etc.	To produce	To produce	69.10%
We	Acting as a team and bringing the "we/us" feeling to the fore	Acting as a team and bringing the "we/us" feeling to the fore	84.30%
Turkish, Turkey, etc.	Turkey	Turkey	75.50%
Taste	Taste	Taste	47.30%
Milk	Milk	Milk	37.20%
Natural	The naturalness of the product content	The naturalness of the product content	64.90%
Domestic/Local	Yes	Yes	88.50%

When *Torku*'s questions are analyzed, it is seen that the answers of the survey participants match up with the most used concepts by *Torku* in digital media by a ratio of 10 out of 10 (100%). Therefore, it can be seen that the concepts used by *Torku* through digital media highly overlap with the consumer's perception of *Torku*.

Table 9. Ülker - comparison of concepts and general survey answers

Concept	The Corporation's Self-Definition	The Definition Made by the Consumers about the Corporation	Consumer Response Rate	
Happy	Happy	Happy	33.00%	
Child	Child	**Young**	32.80%	Child 26.8% (2nd answer)
Chocolate	Chocolate	Chocolate	38.60%	
Soccer	Soccer	**Basketball**	49.90%	Soccer 24.7% (2nd answer)
New	It would pioneer innovations	It would pioneer innovations	40.00%	
Art	Art	**Sports**	49.40%	Art 14.3% (2nd answer)
Turkish, Turkey, etc.	Turkey	Turkey	61.70%	
To win	It would focus on winning the game	It would focus on winning the game	55.00%	
Sustainability, continuity, etc.	It would continue the work it started, it would finish it	It would continue the work it started, it would finish it	79.40%	
Chance	The Chance to	**Diligence**	35.10%	7.9% the chance to (5th answer)

Analyzing *Ülker*'s questions, we can see that the answers of the participants match up with the most used concepts by *Ülker* in digital media by a ratio of 6 in 10 (60%). And it is observed that consumers gave different answers in questions 2, 4, 6 and 10. While *Ülker* emphasized "soccer" through digital media, consumers identified *Ülker* with "basketball" as a sport. Likewise, while *Ülker* emphasized "art", consumers emphasized "sports", and consumers emphasized "diligence" whereas *Ülker* emphasized "luck." It seems safe to make a judgment and say that independent of digital media, especially in sports-related questions, sports sponsorships of *Ülker* are effective based on these markings. As to the concept of chance, it can be said that *Ülker* organizes competitions intensely on its digital media pages, using expressions such as "seize a chance to win", etc. intensively and therefore involuntarily emphasizes "luck" for success and creates a match between winning and luck, while consumers make an assessment based on *Ülker*'s overall life success.

The effect of concepts used in digital media on consumer perception

As seen in the previous section, a significant overlap is observed in the perceptions of corporations in the eyes of general consumers in the given issues and contexts, and the concepts used by the corporations through digital media. There is a possibility that this outcome will be compromised from other activities of the institution such as sponsorships and advertisements. Accordingly, in this section, the Chi-Square analysis was conducted to compare the answers of consumers who visited the digital media pages of the corporations that were the subject of the research and those who did not. The reason for choosing the Chi-square independence test within the research is that the questionnaire form has a nominal scale (Erdoğan, 2012: 298).

Table 10. Chi-Square Analysis Results

Visiting *Eti*'s Digital Media Pages		Visiting *Torku*'s Digital Media Pages		Visiting *Ülker*'s Digital Media Pages	
Question	*P and V value*	*Question*	*P and V value*	*Question*	*P and V value*
Eti's Mood	p=0.598	What Tastes/Flavors *Torku* Likes Most	p=0.730	*Ülker*'s Mood	p=0.480
Eti's Transportation Vehicle	p=0.473	Which City *Torku* is from	p=0.310	The Age Group that *Ülker* Gets along with the Best	p=0.179
What *Eti* would Pay Attention to in terms of Food	p=0.468	*Torku*'s Occupation	p=0.238	The Snack that *Ülker* would Consume Most	p=0.890
Eti's Lifestyle	p=0.108	The Action That Makes *Torku* Happiest	p=0.668	The Sports *Ülker* Will be Most Engaged In	p=0.383
The Age Group that *Eti* Gets along with the Best	p=0.707	What *Torku* would Think is Important to Succeed in a Job	p=0.101	*Ülker*'s Perspective on Innovations	p=0.915
Eti's Attitude towards Friendships	p=0.309	Which Country *Torku* is a Citizen of	p=0.188	The Topic that *Ülker* is Most Interested in	p=0.997

Eti's Attitude toward Problems Around It	p=0.152	What Torku would Pay Attention Most in a Meal	p=0.754	Which Country Ülker is a Citizen of	p=0.090
Which Snack Eti Would Consume Most	p=0.365	What Drink Would Torku Enjoy Most	p=0.460	Ülker's Attitude towards the Game when Playing a Game	p=0.835
Eti's Favorite Color	p=0.315	What Torku would Pay Attention to Most when Buying a Food Product	p=0.006 V=0.183	Ülker's General Attitude towards Its Job	p=0.670
Which Country Eti is a Citizen of	p=0.472	Whether Torku would Pay Attention to Domestic Production	p=0.035 V=0.101	What Ülker Thinks Other People Need Most to Gain Something	p=0.376

Firstly, as seen in the table, visiting *Eti*'s digital media pages and perception of *Eti*'s mood are independent (P-value = 0.598; P value>0.05). In this context, it was found that the H1.1 hypothesis of the research was not supported. Similarly, independence was also detected for all other sub-hypotheses. Within the scope of the research, H1.2 hypothesis (P value=0.473; P value>0.05), H1.3 hypothesis (P=0.468; P>0.05), H1.4 hypothesis (P=0.108; P>0.05), H1.5 hypothesis (P=0.707; P>0.05), H1.6 hypothesis (P=0.309; P>0.05), H1.7 hypothesis (P=0.152; P>0.05), H1.8 hypothesis (P=0.365; P>0.05), H1.9 hypothesis (P=0.315; P>0.05), and H1.10 hypothesis (P=0.472; P>0.05) were not supported.

Secondly, as seen in the table, visiting *Torku*'s digital media pages is independent of the perception of what flavors *Torku* likes the most (P value= 0.730; P value>0.05). In this context, it was observed that the H2.1 hypothesis of the research was not supported. Similarly, independence was determined for all other sub-hypotheses with two exceptions. Within the scope of the research, H2.2 hypothesis (P=0.310; P>0.05), H2.3 hypothesis (P=0.238; P>0.05), H2.4 hypothesis (P=0.668; P>0.05) H2.5 hypothesis (P = 0.101; P>0.05), H2.6 hypothesis (P=0.188; P>0.05), H2.7 hypothesis (P=0.754; P>0.05), H2.8 hypothesis (P=0.460; P>0.05) were not supported. However, the H2.9 hypothesis (P=0.006; P<0.05) and the H2.10 hypothesis (P=0.035; P<0.05) were supported. The dependency level was found to be weak for both hypotheses (V=0.183; V<0.30 - V=0.101; V<0.30).

Thirdly, as seen in the table, visiting *Ülker*'s digital media pages and the perception of *Ülker*'s mood are independent (P=0.480; P>0.05). In this context, it was observed that the H3.1 hypothesis of the research was not supported. Within the scope of the research, H3.2 hypothesis (P=0.179; P>0.05), H3.3 hypothesis (P=0.890; P>0.05), H3.4 hypothesis (P=0.383; P>0.05), H3.5 hypothesis (P=0.915; P>0.05), H3.6 hypothesis (P=0.997; P>0.05), H3.7 hypothesis (P=0.090; P>0.05), H3.8 hypothesis (P=0.835; P>0.05), H3.9 hypothesis (P=0.670; P>0.05) and H3.10 hypothesis (P=0.376; P>0.05) were not supported.

Within the scope of the research, 3 of the hypotheses were supported while 31 were not. The test results of H0, H1, H2 and H3 hypothesis, which are the main hypotheses of the study attempting to reveal the role of digital media channels in the stage of corporations/brands self-definition and consumers' perception of corporations/brands, revealed that the perception of the corporation/brand is not dependent on digital media. In this context, a valuable result has emerged that the concepts are not strong enough.

It can be said that the perception consistency between the corporation/brand and the consumer is formed by the general activities of the corporations, and the corporations are consciously using these themes in their digital media activities. While the question of which activity on which media was the most important factor in the perception of the corporation remains ambiguous, the data of this study only revealed the importance of digital media and the concepts used in digital media.

Discussion

Image formation or, determining which elements are effective in the image formation process is challenging. While corporations present an identity to form an image in line with their own wishes, whether consumers perceive the identity presentation in question or how much of it they perceive represents an important point.

With the results of this study, it was seen that all three corporations/brands were able to achieve significant consistency at the stage of defining themselves and being defined by the consumers, and they were successful in ensuring that consumers understand their corporations/brands. Within the study, the relevant corporations/brands have provided consistency between introducing themselves and defined by the consumers at a rate of 70%, 100%, and 60% respectively. This data proves the success of the relevant corporations/brands in image formation and maintenance.

Another result of the research findings is that it provides inferences about the function of digital media, which is thought to be an important medium in image formation. The research results revealed that digital media can only be used as a supportive medium, and digital media does not have enough pow-

er to form and maintain images. Within the study, there was an attempt to identify whether the answers given to the questions are dependent on digital media or not, and the test results of the hypotheses have revealed the inadequacy of the power of digital media except for two sub-hypotheses. This result prepares an infrastructure for the inference that traditional methods still have a more important place in the image formation process than digital media.

While 90.1% of the participants in the study uses digital media, only 26.5% of these participants visit the digital media channels of the relevant brands/corporations. In this context, one can argue that the main medium used by digital media users to search for information about products such as biscuits within the non-durable consumer goods sector is not digital media. Although a considerable part of the participants, approximately one fourth, visited the digital media channels of the relevant corporations/brands, the visit frequency of the participants was significantly low. In the survey, 51 (78%) of *Eti*'s visitors, 43 (72%) of *Torku*'s visitors, and 43 (76%) of *Ülker*'s visitors stated that they visited the relevant digital media "only once." Therefore, a "continuous" visit situation seems to be very limited and is possible only at a monthly level rather than daily or weekly use. Corporations need to follow this issue closely. Accordingly, it can be said that, as a priority, studies should be carried out to increase the interest in digital media channels in addition to somehow updating the pages continuously.

The fact that 88 of the 115 (26.5%) people who visited the digital media channels stated that they pay attention to the concepts reveals how important the concepts actually are. Since consumers note paying attention to the concepts used, it can be said that corporations/brands should pay attention when choosing concepts. Although it has been determined in this research that the concepts do not have a dramatic effect, it should also be remembered that a sentence or word used at the wrong time may cause great problems for corporations/brands.

It should not be forgotten that image formation refers to a two-way process. Besides the importance of how consumers define a corporation, it is also important how the corporation wants to project itself and how it desires to be perceived by consumers. It is no longer sufficient to be perceived positively by the consumer; a new period has emerged and now corporations need to differentiate themselves. In this period, rather than having random good qualities, it is important to have strategically planned qualities in essence, not just in words, and also to get these qualities perceived as desired by the consumer. Meeting of the consumer perceptions with the corporate identity, which is based on reality and planned by the corporation, and turning into an image as desired, directly affects the success of the corporation. Therefore, new approaches are needed in the repetitive image literature. At this point, separating the elements in the image formation process and the effects of these

elements to the finest details, and using different methods to go beyond the usual limits can be considered as an important starting point.

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