

**An empirical investigation of corporate identity communication on
Hong Kong hotels' websites**

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Abstract

Corporate websites offer hotels ample space and opportunity to express their identities to their stakeholders but for lack of empirical research in this area, it is yet to be known the extent to which hotels utilize this platform for corporate identity (CI) communication. Aiming to fill this void, this study analyzed the website contents of 123 hotels in Hong Kong to determine the extent to which the hotels utilize their own websites to transmit information about their identities. The results indicated that CI elements relating to corporate design such as logo and slogan were commonly communicated by all the sampled hotels. However, CI information relating to corporate structure, strategy, culture, and behavior was communicated by less than 60% of the hotels. In addition, the findings demonstrated a relationship between CI communication and the type of hotel operation, with chain-affiliated hotels communicating more CI-related information than independent hotels. From a practical standpoint, these findings can be used to enrich the information contents of hotels' websites so that the benefits of CI communication can be realized.

Keywords: organizational identity; corporate communication; hotel websites; corporate marketing.

1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, the hospitality industry has become increasingly globalized, with corporate concepts and franchise formulas spreading from west to east and new forms of hospitality from east to west (Yu, Byun, & Lee, 2014; Tse, 2012; Littlejohn, 1997). Within this period, the industry has also witnessed a growing level of competition (Matovic, 2002;

Mathews, 2000) and adoption of Internet-based technologies to market, sell and distribute hotel products (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Facing intense competition, hospitality and tourism marketers are driven by the need to stay competitive to transmit information about their organizations and business activities to their stakeholders that will enable them to recognize the attributes or elements that differentiate one hotel from another. Consequently, these developments have brought to the front burner keen interests in corporate identity (CI) communication, which is broadly understood as a way a corporate entity expresses itself to the outside world (Kedidi & Torfve, 2005; Balmer, 1998; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Prior studies have suggested that CI communication can enable organizations to obtain a positive image among its stakeholders which in turn can generate a number of benefits including strong appeal to investors, better acceptance of products by consumers, and enhanced employee motivation (Bravo, Pina & Matute, 2012b; Melewar, 2003; Balmer, 2001).

In the identity-based literature, a number of definitions have been advanced to explain the concept of CI (Argenti, 2007; Cornelissen, Haslam & Balmer, 2007; Balmer, 1998; Moingeon & Ramanantsoa, 1997; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Argenti (2007), for example, highlights the graphic design perspective of CI by defining it as the visual manifestation of an organization's reality conveyed through the organization's name, logo, motto, products, services, buildings, uniforms and all other tangible evidences created by the organization and communicated to its stakeholders. Other scholars (e.g. Bartholmé & Melewar, 2009; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Melewar, 2003; Melewar & Saunders, 1999; Balmer, 1998; van Riel & Balmer, 1997) have emphasized the multi-dimensions of the concept with a common understanding that CI defines "what an organization is," "what it stands for," "what it does," "how it does it" and "where it is going". To differentiate CI from brand identity and other closely-related concepts, it is important to recognize that the core ideas behind CI are based

on: a) a firm's reality and corporate personality; and b) the presentation and expression of these personalities to stakeholders (Otubanjo, Amujo, Muzellec & Cornelius, 2009; Balmer, 1998).

With the rising importance of CI communication among businesses and the growing reliance on websites for information searches and communication (Bravo et al., 2012b; European Commission, 2009), a budding research interest in CI communication on corporate websites is evolving. To date, existing studies on CI communication on websites have been conducted in the banking industry (Bravo et al., 2012b), institutions of higher learning and education (Ozturk, 2011; Opoku, Abratt & Pitt, 2006), the automotive business (Rolland & O'Keefe-Bazzoni, 2009) and the aviation industry (Driver, 1999). However, there is no single study in the hotel industry that specifically examines CI communication on hotels' websites. Meanwhile, like the studies in the banking industry and institutions of higher learning, the hotel industry is heavily dependent on corporate websites to reach out to its stakeholders and in need of similar studies to identify areas of deficiencies in CI communication on hotels' websites.

So far, the studies on CI relating to the hotel industry have emphasized the importance of using corporate websites for CI communication and the need to pay close attention to the CI-related information on these websites (Kedidi & Torfve, 2005). Other studies have argued that CI communication in the hotel industry can enhance the reputation of product quality and help to minimize unfavorable country-of-origin stereotypes (Zhou, Murray & Zhang, 2002). In more recent studies (e.g. Jenkins & Karanikola, 2014; Hsieh, 2012; Holcomb, Upchurch & Okumus, 2007), the attention has been on examining the use of hotels' websites to report corporate social responsibilities, environmental policies and practices; which albeit not fully CI-focused, are nonetheless related to some dimension(s) of CI (Martínez, Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014; Bravo, Matute & Pina, 2012a; Nielsen & Johansen, 2010). With the goal to close the identified research gap, this study aimed to provide the first empirical evidence on CI

communication on hotels' websites by seeking answers to the following research questions using Hong Kong hotel market as the reference point:

- a) What are the recognizable elements of CI that are communicated by Hong Kong hotels on their websites?
- b) Are there any significant differences in the CI elements communicated by hotels in different segments? In other words, are the types of CI information communicated by different hotels related to their characteristics such as chain-/group-affiliation and class of operation (luxury, midscale or lower tier)?

Although there are many channels through which CI can be communicated, this study focused on hotels' websites (property and corporate levels as the case may be) for three main reasons. First, corporate websites are increasingly becoming important channels for communications and extensively relied upon by customers and stakeholders to search for information. Second, corporate websites are chiefly maintained by companies for the purpose of presenting the organization to external stakeholder groups, such as customers, investors or the press. As such, the information disseminated on these platforms can be regarded as the intended information that companies wish to express to their stakeholders. Lastly, because companies usually have direct control over their own websites, it is less likely that the information transmitted through this channel will be manipulated or filtered by gatekeepers (White & Raman, 2000).

By focusing on the Hong Kong hotel market, the limited scope of this study is recognizable. This notwithstanding, the nature of the Hong Kong hotel industry as a market with international chains and independent hotels adhering to global best practices makes it a good case study, the findings of which can be valuable to other markets. Especially for corporate marketers and hotel website developers, the findings can be used to enrich corporate

websites contents regarding CI communication. As a pioneering study in the hotel industry, this study adopted an exploratory research design to address the research questions. Data were mainly obtained from the websites of 123 hotels and their affiliates. Qualitative techniques of data coding were used to reduce the data after which quantitative analyses involving non-parametric statistics were employed to determine any significant differences in the CI elements that were communicated.

Overall, the findings revealed that CI information relating to corporate design elements such as logo and slogan was communicated by all the hotels. However, information relating to the other dimensions of CI such as corporate structure, strategy, culture, and behavior was communicated by less than 60% of the hotels. Furthermore, a relationship was found between CI communication and the type of hotel operation. That is, significantly higher proportions of chain-affiliated hotels were more communicative of their CI elements than their counterpart hotels which were independent. Also, among the classes of hotels, midscale hotels were the least communicative of their CIs. The implications of these findings are manifold. The overarching one is that in order to fully demonstrate their identities, hotels in Hong Kong, and their affiliates worldwide, need to provide additional information in the areas of CI elements that they were found to be deficient (i.e. corporate structure, strategy, culture, and behavior).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 addresses the theoretical and empirical literature, highlighting the concept of CI and its embeddedness in the broader literature on corporate marketing. Section 3 explains the fine details of the methodology with emphasis on content analysis and the statistical techniques used. Section 4 reports the findings and discussion, where a considerable part of the discussion is devoted to highlighting the major implications of the findings to practice and theory. The final section provides the conclusion and suggestions for future research based on the inherent limitations of this study.

2 Theoretical foundations and empirical literature

Although there is a substantial literature on Internet-based communications and the role of websites as a platform for disseminating information, there has been limited research focusing on CI communication on corporate website. To close this gap, this study draws on the broader literature on corporate marketing and zeros in on the concept of CI and how it can be made manifest on hotel websites by deducing empirical references from similar studies in other industries.

2.1 Corporate marketing – an embeddedness of corporate identity

Traditionally, the concern of marketing activities had centered on the product level, rather than on the corporate level. In more recent years however, there has been a gradual shift toward the emphasis on corporate marketing (He & Balmer, 2013) which is based on the principle that holistic marketing activities need to pay attention to the institution as a whole and all its stakeholders, and not just customers and products. In line with this thinking, the traditional 4Ps of marketing (i.e. product, price, promotion and place) which guided the activities of marketers at the product level were extended to 10Ps (including philosophy, personality, positioning, performance, people and perception) to embrace corporate-level marketing activities (Balmer, 1998). Later on, Balmer and Greyser (2006) added the 11th dimension, promise. As a further contribution to the understanding of the core ideas behind corporate marketing, Balmer (2011; 2001) streamlined the marketing mix (the 11Ps) into a seven-part mnemonic known as HE²ADS² (where, H stands for what the organization *has*; E – what the organization *expresses*; E – the *environmental* context of the organization; A – what are the dominant/mix of *affinities* by employee group; D – what the organization *does*; S – how the organization is *seen* by key *stakeholder* groups and networks).

In explaining the seven constituents of corporate marketing, Balmer (2011; 2001) intimated that the underlining concept applicable to the definition of “what the organization has (the H)” and “what it does (the D)” is corporate identity, implying that embedded in the concept of corporate marketing is the notion of corporate identity. As a further reflection of the embeddedness of identity-based views of the firm in corporate marketing, Balmer and Greyser (2006) proposed the 6Cs of corporate marketing mix by which marketers can foster the corporate marketing ethos and culture of their organizations. These 6Cs are character (which defines what the organization is), culture (which defines what the organization feels it is), communication (which defines what the organization says it is), constituencies (which defines the stakeholders the organization seeks to serve), conceptualization (which defines how the organization is seen to be) and covenant (which defines the organization’s promise and expectation). Subsequently, Balmer (2009) has extended the 6C to include additional two dimensions: context (which refers to the supra and subordinate elements that impinge on organization) and custodianship (which refers to the key role of senior management in relation to the mix).

Building on the legacy of Levitt’s (1960) celebrated “marketing myopia”; Balmer (2011) has also argued that corporate marketing myopia can occur when an organization fails to embrace an encompassing view of its marketing activities. Therefore, as an essential bedrock of corporate marketing, the effective communication of corporate identity is inevitably part of the broader enterprise of corporate marketing which must be monitored. By implication, this means that the theoretical foundations of corporate marketing can be extended to corporate identity.

2.2 Conceptualization of CI and its relevance

Similar to human identity, every organization has an identity by which it can be recognized and differentiated (Bernstein, 1986). This identity is based on a set of features that remain relatively stable and contribute to making an organization unique (Balmer, 2008; Albert & Whetten, 1985). For many years, the understanding on the notion of CI was related to its origin in graphic design where it was perceived as the visual expression of the organization (Dowling, 1994). Although still important, there has been a gradual shift toward looking at the concept as multidimensional with constituents such as corporate culture, structure, strategy, behavior and communication (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Melewar, 2003). Given the multi-dimensions of CI, many corporate identity scholars and practitioners are of the view that the concept cannot have a single common definition. This opinion seems to be supported by the International Corporate Identity Group; which, in 1995, issued a statement (known as the Strathclyde Statement) to guide the conceptualization of CI and identify the potential benefits of its communication to corporate entities. To delineate the scope and objectives of CI, the Strathclyde Statement, in its revised form, as cited in Balmer (2001) and Balmer and Gray (1999) is reproduced here as Fig. 1.

*** Please insert Figure 1 about here. ***

From the Strathclyde Statement, the objectives (or benefits) of CI as highlighted by Blamer (2001) include: fostering a sense of individuality, achieving differentiation in a competitive environment, providing disciplinary integration, providing a platform for coherent corporate communication, nurturing an image that is consistent with the organization's defining ethos and character, nurturing understanding and commitment among stakeholders, attracting and retaining customers and employees, achieving strategic alliances and gaining the support of financial markets. Furthermore, through CI communication, an organization can

send a clear message about its characteristics to its stakeholders and generate a sense of corporate direction and purpose.

To provide an operational definition of CI for this study, the recommendations by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) on the generally-accepted features of CI definitions are adhered to. First, the term CI is used to identify the essence of what the firm is and thus incorporates the many unique attributes of the firms such as history, philosophy, culture and communication. Second, the term CI is not isolable from the corporate personality of the organization. Lastly, corporate identity is multidimensional. In compliance with these generally accepted features, this study proceeds to conceptualize CI as a concept based on a set of features that are relatively stable over time and embody all of the distinctive traits of an entity that sufficiently project “what the organization is,” “what it stands for,” “what it does,” “how it does it” and “where it is going” (Melewar & Saunders, 1999; Melewar, 2003; Balmer, 1998).

In the evolution of the concept, Balmer and Gray (1999) have reported that CI has become more prominent due to the emergent environmental factors such as deregulation, privatization, increased competition in the public and non-profit sectors, increased competition in the service sector, globalization and the establishment of free trade areas, acceleration of product life cycles, mergers, acquisitions and divestitures as well as shortage of high-caliber personnel, public expectations of corporate social responsibility, and breakdown of the boundaries between the internal and external aspects of organizations. As these factors continue to persist, it is envisaged that interest in CI will continue to grow prominently leading to further academic research in this area.

2.3 Dimensions of CI

There are numerous perspectives on the conceptualization of CI which can be categorized into practitioners' view or academics'. Although these perspectives are not necessarily inconsistent, their distinction lies in how each group views the components and processes of CI (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). According to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), the academics' perspective tends to take a structural approach and addresses a variety of components, whereas the practitioners' viewpoints are more process-oriented and tend to be more focused on the tangible elements of identity and the aspects that can be manipulated. Incorporating both perspectives, Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) presented a modified version of an earlier framework that was developed by Melewar (2003) based on previous literature which highlights the dimensions of CI. Table 1 summarizes the updated framework of CI, highlighting the various dimensions and elements of the concepts that are considered in this study.

*** Please insert Table 1 about here. ***

As shown in Table 1, the main dimensions of CI consist of corporate design, structure, strategy, culture, behavior and communication. Consistent with Bravo, de Chernatony, Matute and Pina (2013) and Bravo et al. (2012b) who applied these dimensions to empirically evaluate banks' websites, the concepts are hereafter defined as follows. Corporate design refers to the visual and aesthetic elements associated with an organization. Communication refers to the aggregate of information an organization transmits to its stakeholders. Corporate culture refers to the collective values and norms shared by the members of an organization. Behavior refers to the actions taken by an organization according to its strategy and culture. Strategy refers to the scope and directions that organizations set for the long term to meet the expectations of their stakeholders. Structure refers to the rules guiding the day-to-day activities of an

organization and includes corporate and brand structure. The sub-dimension of corporate strategy referred to as differentiation is defined as a set of meaningful statements or claims that can distinguish a hotel from others by highlighting its specialty products, services and unique selling points.

2.4 CI in the hotel industry

From the discussion on CI conceptualization in Section 2.2, it is quite apparent that the concept of CI is not new to the hotel industry. Its application and importance to the industry have long been recognized. For example, Schmitt and Pan (1994) highlighted the significance of CI two decades ago, stressing its importance for U.S. firms moving or intending to move into the Asia-Pacific region. According to the authors, it was needful for such firms to develop more sophisticated techniques for building and managing the identities of their companies. In another study, Zhou et al. (2002) investigated how foreign hotel chains in China were perceived. The authors suggested that providing background information on CI could be an effective way of minimizing unfavorable stereotypes associated with the country of origin, especially for hotels and chains that were not well-known in China.

Using a case study approach, Kedidi and Torfve (2005) examined CI management in two international hospitality organizations. They found that corporate brand name was the most important visual identity for these organizations and that CI communication was needed to ensure that the correct messages were consistently transmitted through the various channels. In another study, Herstein, Mitki and Jaffe (2007) described the process of CI communication in a leading hotel management group in Israel, from conception to implementation, and offered a strategic framework for the implementation of CI in the hotel industry. The authors noted that CI communication could occur at different levels and could be communicated through formal channels such as corporate websites. More recently, Mohammed, Guillet and Law (2014)

conducted a case study on a full-service hotel in Hong Kong and suggested that adequate definition of CI could be used to identify competitors.

Besides the studies that have centered directly on CI, there have been several other studies that have examined the communication or reporting of information relating to some aspects of CI such as corporate behavior regarding CSR and environmental activities. Examples of these studies include Jenkins and Karanikola (2014), Hsieh (2012), Holcomb et al. (2007), and Baloglu and Pekcan (2006), which are reviewed in the next section (Section 2.5).

2.5 Role of websites in corporate communication

In today's digital age, companies have developed corporate websites and homepages as an instant channel of reaching out to their target audiences across the globe. In the context of hospitality and tourism, the role of the Internet in general, and specifically corporate websites, has been well-documented (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Wei, Ruys, van Hoof & Combrink, 2001). Importantly, corporate websites in the hotel industry are considered to be direct channels of distribution and platforms for room reservations. In addition, they serve as valuable sources of information and effective channels for communication (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In particular, the use of corporate websites as communication channels for hotels' corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and environmental policies has been investigated extensively in the recent decade (e.g. Jenkins & Karanikola, 2014; Hsieh, 2012; Holcomb, et al., 2007). However, as a source of CI communication, very limited research efforts have been made in this regard (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006). Table 2 summarizes some of the previous studies to highlight the major areas of foci in website-related content analysis and to expose the gap identified for this study.

*** Please insert Table 2 about here. ***

As shown in Table 2, there are very few studies that have evaluated corporate websites for CI information. These limited studies have largely centered on higher institutions of learning, such as mega universities (Ozturk, 2011; Opoku et al., 2006), and financial institutions, such as banks (Bravo et al., 2013; 2012b), with no studies focusing on hotels. For the CI studies on banks and universities, the authors have argued that these institutions are becoming increasingly internationalized and competitive, and therefore must present their identities on their websites with great care. This argument can equally be extended to the hotel industry, which has also become more internationalized and competitive (Yu et al., 2014; Matovic, 2002; Mathews, 2000; Littlejohn, 1997) and must therefore justify the need for similar studies in the hotel industry.

Currently, the closest study to this area in the hotel industry is that of Baloglu and Pekcan (2006). Analyzing the website contents of upscale and luxury hotels in Turkey, Baloglu and Pekcan (2006) reported that unlike the 4-star hotels in their sample, the 5-star hotels displayed additional CI information on their websites. Understandably, their study did not indicate which CI components were presented on the websites, because this was not their focus. Neither did it analyze the CI information in relation to other characteristics of hotels such as the class or scale of operation which are equally important. Apart from noting that their study is dated, which should require an up-to-date study, the lack of a hotel-specific study centered on CI communication on corporate websites also establishes the need for an in-depth study that will provide an updated information on CI communication on hotel websites. This study therefore sought to fill this knowledge gap.

3 Methodology

The main objective of this study was to determine the extent to which hotels utilize their websites to communicate their identities. Given the exploratory nature of this objective, a

website-based content analysis procedure was adopted as the appropriate method. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis can be used for exploratory research and it involves a systematic process of data collection and reduction that can be used to identify emergent themes and categories from a huge data set. In most applications of this method, the contents analyzed are in the form of text or words, pictures or paintings, symbols, audios, videos, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated (Neuman, 2005). For this study, the contents were limited to text from the webpages of the selected hotels' websites. More specifically, the study considered any text relating to the six dimensions of CI identified in the literature, namely, design, strategy, culture, structure, behavior and communication (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Melewar, 2003).

Within the hospitality and tourism literature, content analysis has been widely applied in similar studies involving website evaluation and information communication. For example, Murphy, Wotring and Brymer (1996) examined the websites of 36 hotels to identify the features that rendered the websites effective. Similarly, Law and Leung (2000) examined airline websites and found that North American websites were the richest in terms of content and Asian websites the weakest. Applying content analysis to data from TripAdvisor, O'Connor (2010) identified the common causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among online reviewers. More recently, the method has also been applied to examine website contents of hotel companies regarding corporate social responsibility and environmental practices (Jenkins & Karanikola, 2014; Hsieh, 2012). Among other advantages, content analysis is usually preferred in website studies because the contents can be revisited and re-examined; its application does not typically involve questioning or observation yet provides a high degree of validity and reliability (Halliburton & Ziegfeld; 2009; Collis & Hussey, 2003). In addition, it allows the conversion of qualitative items to numbers for the purpose of quantitative analysis (Halliburton & Ziegfeld; 2009).

As the first empirical investigation into CI communication on hotel websites, this study followed a structured process to ensure validity and reliability. The process mainly involved: a thorough review of several literature and electronic media contents; a rigorous search for CI-related data on the websites of selected hotels; a reduction of the data into categories; and a statistical analysis of the data to derive the findings. The literature review facilitated the compilation of an initial set of identifiable attributes that define the various dimensions and sub-dimensions of CI. The main source of the compilation was Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), who integrated practitioners' views into the perspectives of academics (Melewar, 2003) to offer a comprehensive framework.

As summarized in Table 1, the identified dimensions were corporate design, structure, strategy, culture, behavior and communication. These dimensions and their corresponding sub-dimensions were adopted for the following three important reasons. First, they were developed from existing literature by Melewar (2003) and validated by practitioners according to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006). Thus, they could be regarded as the outcome of a rigorous process and a reasonable set of items to start with. Second, they were not generated for a specific industry and therefore could be applied to the hotel industry. The basis for this belief was that the same elements have been applied to different industries in previous studies and were found to be valid and relevant. Last but not least, because CI is based on features that seldom change over time, the dimension and sub-dimension of the concept were not reasonably expected to change within a short period. Notwithstanding these reasons, to confirm that the components of the identified CI dimensions were also applicable to the hotel industry, the expert opinions of hospitality specialists were sought regarding their appropriateness and comprehensiveness. A positive confirmation was obtained in this regard. Thus, the final items presented in Table 1 were the commonly agreed ones among the experts as appropriate and comprehensive.

The actual data collection for this study was carried out in Hong Kong from June 26 to July 9, 2014. Similar to other website evaluation studies in Hong Kong (e.g., Law & Wong, 2010), the membership list of the Hong Kong Hotels Association (HKHA) was used as the target population. This list is known to be one of the credible sources for obtaining information on properties that are officially registered as hotels in Hong Kong. As at the time of the data collection, there were 124 members on this list, but only 123 could be used. The hotel that could not be included in the sample was classified as “yet-to-commence operations” according to the HKHA. Although membership to the HKHA is voluntary, the list has been regarded as fairly representative of the Hong Kong hotel market especially with regard to room supply (Law & Wong, 2010). An alternative source of obtaining the list of hotels from an online search results was considered but not relied upon. This list was discounted because a preliminary check of some of the results against the records of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (2014) revealed that they were not officially registered as hotels but as tourist guesthouses which meant that they could not be reasonably expected to have major concerns for CI communication.

The search for CI-related information on the websites of the selected hotels was carried out independently by two researchers simultaneously, following a clear approach and procedure. For chain-affiliated hotels, the search was carried out on both the hotels’ own websites and, if available, through a link to the corporate website. A system of control was implemented to ensure that valid and reliable data would be obtained before the search commenced. This control system involved briefing and debriefing, training, pilot testing to compare preliminary search results and determining the degree of concordance between the data collectors and the pilot test and main data. Taking into account the complexity of the websites and potential difficulties that could be encountered, 10 hotels’ websites were selected for the pilot test. All discrepancies or discordances arising from the pilot test were reviewed

and discussed to arrive at a group consensus. Problem areas were also identified and clarified by the principal researchers before the main data collection.

After the main search was conducted to obtain the relevant information, each hotel's information was coded following Stemler's (2001) recommendations on coding protocols. The coding units were designed in line with the elements identified from the previous studies (Bravo et al., 2013; Bravo et al., 2012b; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006) and corroborated by the expert panel (see Table 4 in the Appendix for the list of the codes). The codes were clearly defined to ensure that different coders or researcher will likely come to the same results. For each unit, the CI elements were examined using a nominal scale, with 0 indicating the absence of a particular element and 1 indicating its presence. Before launching the analysis, inter-rater reliability was computed to ascertain the reliability of the coding by applying Cohen's Kappa which is a function of the ratio of agreements to disagreements in relation to the expected frequencies (Cohen, 1968; 1960). Compared to other methods such as percent count of agreement, the Cohen's Kappa is regarded as a more robust formula since it accounts for chance agreement (Hsieh, 2012). The result of this index was 0.96, higher than the acceptable level of 0.7 (Perreault & Leigh, 1989; Bravo et al., 2013) and a good indication of reliability (Hsieh, 2012). To utilize the full sample, all remaining disagreements were resolved by consensus and involvement of a third researcher.

Considering the categorical nature of the data collected, limited statistical techniques could be used for the analysis. In particular, descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests were the most suitable analytical techniques. That is, frequencies and percentages were used to report the proportions of hotels communicating information on the various dimensions of CI while the non-parametric test of independent samples was used to determine if the information communicated was different between chain-affiliated and independent hotels and/or amongst the type of hotel operation (luxury, upper upscale, upscale, upper midscale and midscale).

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Sample profile

As a precursor to the main results, the profile of the hotels in terms of age, size, class, type of operation and location are presented in Fig. 2. The primary source of the data was from the hotels' own websites and corporate websites, where applicable. The information on class and type of operation was obtained from the Smith Travel Research (STR) database. The STR uses the average daily rate (ADR) of hotels as a basis for classifying them. In the order of highest ADR to lowest ADR, hotels that have the highest ADR are categorized as luxury, followed by upper upscale, upscale, upper midscale and midscale.

*** Please insert Figure 2 about here. ***

Fig. 2 shows that the sample of 123 hotels included 16 upper upscale hotels (the least dominant group) and 32 midscale hotels (the most dominant group). Most of the hotels (58.5%) had been in existence for more than ten years. Approximately 43% were independently managed, while the remaining 57% were either chain or franchise-managed.

4.2 CI communication

Table 3 shows the dimensions and sub-dimensions of CI that were communicated by the selected hotels in Hong Kong. These results show that CI elements relating to design were the most commonly communicated dimension on corporate websites, with elements relating to strategy being the least communicated. Except for slogan and description of architectural design, which were communicated by approximately 23% and 27% of the hotels respectively, the remaining visual elements of identity, such as name, logo and location, were communicated by all of the hotels. Surprisingly, fewer hotels communicated culture-related elements such as vision (6.5%), mission (17.9%) and values (11.4%). Approximately 31% of the hotels also

offered information on their founder(s), with 38.2% indicating their originating country. The findings on strategy did not differ from previous studies. Similar to the work by Bravo et al. (2013) on Spanish and U.K. banks, approximately 22% of the hotels in Hong Kong provided information on their strategic plan. Regarding corporate behavior, approximately 20% of the hotels presented management reports and nearly 24% had copies of their annual reports presented on their websites. CSR activities and policies were also communicated by almost 44% of the hotels.

4.3 Differences in CI communication by hotel class and operation

The results in Table 3 (columns 1 and 2) show the relationship between the communication of CI elements and hotel groups by class and type of operation. Using non-parametric tests, significant differences were found in terms of the reported CI elements. For most of the communicated elements of CI, luxury hotels compared favorably to the other hotel classes, particularly, with respect to midscale and upper midscale hotels. Noticeably, the proportion of luxury hotels (13.8%) communicating CSR as a sub-dimension of corporate behavior was statistically higher than upper upscale (4.9%), upper midscale (11.4%) and midscale (1.6%) hotels. Considering that luxury hotels are in the highest category of ADR, it is reasoned that they may be duty-bound to offer more information on their CI so as to distinguish themselves from other hotels and justify their higher rates.

*** Please insert Table 3 about here. ***

The results in Table 3 (columns under “Operation”) further revealed that chain-affiliated hotels, including franchises, performed better in terms of CI communication than independent hotels. In all cases where statistical differences existed between independent hotels and chain-affiliated, the proportion of independent hotels reporting on the CI element was significantly lower than the corresponding proportions for chain and franchised hotels

(refer to last column of Table 3). These findings suggest that being part of a chain or franchise is somehow advantageous in terms of providing CI information. In the process of the data collection, it was observed that the CI information of some chain-affiliated hotels was traceable to the affiliated company's websites. Thirty-five of the 64 chain-affiliated hotels had a link to their affiliated company's website, through which additional CI information could be obtained.

4.4 Discussion and implications

Previous research on online communication of information by companies has indicated that larger firms tend to communicate more detailed information on their websites than smaller firms (Hsieh, 2012). One reason that has been adduced for this finding is that larger-sized firms may have more resources to be able to provide more information than smaller-sized firms. Another reason that has been put forward is that perhaps there exists economies of scale for larger-sized firms when it comes to online communication since the unit cost of creating and hosting content may be a decreasing function of the amount of information created. With regard to reporting environmental policies and practices on hotel websites, Hsieh (2012) argued that larger hotel companies might be engaged in disseminating more information on their websites because they see competitive advantage in having sound environmental policies and practices, and thus are more likely to be communicative of those policies and practices than their counterpart small firms who may ignore the dissemination of those information because they perceive their impact to be low.

Other studies have examined the communication of CSR-related activities on hotel websites and found a link between whether a hotel is independent or chain-affiliated and the extent of the related CSR information they disclose (Jenkins & Karanikola, 2014; Hsieh, 2012; Holcomb, et al., 2007). Essentially, the findings of these studies have demonstrated that independent hotels tend to be less communicative about their policies and activities than hotels

that are chain-affiliated or belong to a group. Relating the findings of this study to the aforementioned ones, it is instructive to note the consistency in the relationship between hotel operation (independent versus chain) and the extent of CI communication. As reported in Table 3, the results of this study has added fresh evidence to the existing literature that, as far as website communication of CI information is also concerned, chain- or group-affiliated hotels in Hong Kong are more communicative of their identities than independent hotels do.

Rationalizing this finding, the justification given by the earlier researchers to support the link between CSR- or environmental-related activities reporting and hotel operation can also be invoked in this study. However, in addition to that, it is suggested that this finding might also be a reflection of the presumption that belonging to a chain or group may perhaps relieve an affiliate hotel of the responsibility of communicating CI, as the head office or corporate department of the company might facilitate this responsibility by providing a general communication framework and/or templates, from which each hotel can add and complete their individual information to comply with the corporate guidelines. The grounds for this belief is that, as it turned out during the data collection for this study, more than half of the chain hotels had a web link to their affiliated company from which additional CI information could be obtained.

Regarding the results on the components or dimensions of CI which are communicated at varying degrees, the findings affirm the conclusion of the previous studies in other industries (banking and higher education) conducted by Bravo et al. (2012b), Ozturk (2011) and Opoku et al. (2006). That is, the visual elements of CI are the most communicated. This finding could imply the following. First, it could imply that, indeed practitioners consider the visual elements of identity to be the most important (Kedidi & Torfve, 2005). Second, it could simply be the case that the visual elements are easier to communicate or express while the other elements are complex or sensitive to express. Regardless of the reason(s), a point worth emphasizing is that

all the components of CI sum up to adequately define the identities of hotels. Therefore, it should not be considered as enough not to provide information on the other aspects of CI and yet still realize the full benefits of CI communication.

The major practical implication from this study is that, an overwhelming majority of the hotels including some of the international brands, are not communicating information on all the components of CI that are required to fully establish their identities. This goes to suggest that by failing to fully communicate CI information, Hong Kong hotels might not be creating the needed awareness amongst their stakeholders that will generate the needed benefits of CI communication such as gaining competitive advantage, building customer loyalty and trust, and attracting quality employees. In this sense, the findings suggest that, irrespective of hotel type or classification, corporate identity communication on corporate websites has some significant room for improvement. Failing to address these shortcomings, it can be inferred from the findings of existing studies that the concerned hotels stand the risk of not gaining competitive advantage, customer loyalty, trust and a positive reputation (Balmer, 2008).

To further underscore the importance of this study, the insights offered about which CI information is communicate or not can be used to the benefit of the hotel industry in Hong Kong in particular and the affiliates of the chain-operated hotels globally. Specifically, the findings can be used in three major respects. First, by identifying the elements of CI that are least communicated on hotel websites (e.g. annual reports, values, principles and philosophies), existing hotels in Hong Kong and prospective ones can incorporate this information gap into their website design to provide a richer content to their stakeholders. Second, because a significantly higher proportion of chain- or group-affiliated hotels exhibited more CI information than independent hotels, it will not be out of place for independent hotels seeking to enrich their website content to refer to the chain-affiliated ones for insights, best practices and direction. Lastly, as it emerged, some of the chain- or group-affiliated hotels provided their

CI information through a link to their affiliated company's website. This practice may obviously increase the number of mouse clicks to access the information and may therefore increase search time. Hence, to reduce the time it might take users to search and retrieve CI information, it may be worthwhile for those hotels to display the information directly on their own websites or at least provide a summary of it on their websites.

Besides the practical implications, the results also have some academic contributions and theoretical implications. As one of the academic contributions, the findings reinforce the conceptual viewpoint that CI is a multidimensional concept encompassing the six dimensions - corporate design, structure, strategy, culture, behavior, and communication - proposed by Melewar (2003) and further developed by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006). To the broader literature on corporate marketing, the findings reveal that although the concept of CI is fundamental to corporate marketing, the evidence gathered in this study does not appear to evince that hotel operators in Hong Kong are using their own website to address the needs of all their stakeholders. As it turned out, the information required under the different dimensions of CI was communicated disproportionately, an indication that CI communication on hotels' websites in Hong Kong is unbalanced. Another contribution to the literature is that, the findings demonstrate the applicability of the concepts of CI to the hotel industry and offer evidence that is comparable to other industries. To an extent, this contribution improves the understanding of CI in the hotel industry. The major theoretical implication of these findings is that since the different components of CI were communicated at varying degrees, it may well be the case that the contributions of these elements to the benefits of CI communication, as identified in the literature, are different, or at least perceived to be different by hotel operators. Thus, a viable theoretical pursuit could be to examine the various components of CI in light of the benefits of CI communication so as to offer explanations on why CI disclosure is limited. This theoretical extension can help to fashion out a more rewarding CI communication strategy which can be

adopted by different hotels, especially when there are legitimate concerns for information overload.

5 Conclusion, limitations and directions for future research

This study examined the website contents of hotels in Hong Kong to identify the elements of CI that are communicated to stakeholders. In summary, the findings revealed that all of the studied hotels communicated information on the design elements of their identities which goes to confirm the long-standing notion among practitioners that CI communication is mainly a depiction of corporate visuals. However, information on corporate structure, culture, strategy and behavior which are the other important dimensions of CI was communicated by less than 60% of the sampled hotels. Furthermore, the analyses focusing on the relationship between CI communication and, the class of hotel (luxury, upper upscale, upscale, upper midscale or midscale) and the type of hotel operation (independent versus chain, group and franchised) revealed significant differences. The differences showed that significantly higher proportions of chain-affiliated hotels were more communicative of their CI elements than their counterparts which are independent hotels. Also, among the hotel classes, midscale hotels were found to be the least communicative of their CIs.

On the basis of these findings, this study concludes that the selected hotels in Hong Kong do not make full use of their corporate websites to communicate their CIs, especially independent and lower-ranking hotels. Surprisingly, the hotels that communicated their CIs on their websites did so by typically reporting the corporate design elements such as logos, slogans, quality and location, while often neglecting other equally important elements such as corporate culture, structure and strategy, which can distinguish one hotel from another. Based on these findings, it is recommended that Hong Kong hotels and their affiliates should enrich the CI contents on their websites, since previous studies have shown the importance of a

balanced CI communication. Particularly for the independent and lower-ranking hotels, this may be an effective strategy to overcome the stuck-in-the-middle syndrome which often bedevils small and medium sized enterprises in hospitality and tourism (Weiermair & Kronenberg, 2004). This recommendation is given on the grounds that the findings clearly demonstrated that relative to chain-affiliated hotels, independent hotels may not be recognizing the power of CI communication which can achieve them competitive advantage at a minimal cost.

Although this study did not directly investigate the benefits of CI communication, other studies have suggested that companies which express their identities are able to achieve internal and external benefits (Balmer, 2001). Internally, they are able to nurture understanding and commitment among their stakeholders, enhance employee motivation; retain qualified employees, and develop an image that is consistent with the organization's ethos and character. At the external level, companies with well-expressed identities may be able to foster a sense of individuality and differentiate themselves in a competitive environment, achieve strategic alliances and gain the support of financial markets, attract qualified personnel, influence the perceptions of its customers positively, and generate strong corporate reputation which in the long term may translate into premium prices, higher revenue per available room, and higher market shares and values (Martínez et al., 2014). By extrapolating these arguments to the context of this study, it can be predicted that if hotels are able to ensure a balanced communication of their identities on their websites, they can achieve the aforementioned benefits.

Through the findings of this study, the following contributions are noteworthy. Firstly, the study draws attention to the fact that; important as CI communication may be in helping to differentiate a firm's services from its competitors, limited attempts have been made by hotel operators to take full advantage of these benefits by communicating scant information about

their CIs on their own websites. Thus, this revelation, in no less-important way, constitutes a foremost evidence in the hotel industry which adds to the existing studies and literature in other industries (e.g. banking and institutions of higher learning) where similar discoveries have been made. Second, the study's findings enhance the understanding on the conceptualization of corporate identity in the hotel context by adapting literature from other industries to suit the hotel industry. In other words, by adopting the dimensions of CI from past literature (which were not conducted in the hotel industry) and adapting them to reflect the operations of hotels, an industry-specific understanding can be said to have been realized. Lastly, the findings have exposed new opportunities for further research which are explained in the subsequent paragraph.

Like most empirical studies, this study has limitations, which can serve as directions for future research. First, the study is a snapshot evaluation of the content of hotel websites; as such, it does not capture the possible updated website contents after the data collection period. In view of this, a longitudinal study which will allow for an across-time comparison will be interesting to explore. Second, the study solely examined CI communication on hotel websites, but not on other known platforms of online communication such as social media sites, blogs, microblogs or third-party content providers. Therefore, to extend this study, future research may investigate CI communication on the other platforms, and examine whether there are any differences in the way CI is communicated on the various platforms. In relation to this, it may also be interesting to compare CI communication across different channels to determine if there are any inconsistencies in the communication of CI which can potentially harm the reputation or image of the concerned hotels.

Additionally, it is acknowledged that CI communication can occur through unplanned or informal mechanisms. Clearly, such unplanned communications were considered to be outside the scope of this study, but could be investigated in future studies. Further, the focus

on Hong Kong market provided a limited sample. Although the findings are still illuminating due to the composition of the sample (which includes significant number of international chains), it is possible that the international chains may not be following a standardized global approach to CI communication. Such cross-country standardization or localization of CI communication on hotel websites has not yet been investigated. Therefore, this could be a valuable direction for future research which will add to the globalization versus standardization debate. For instance, it would be enlightening to examine whether hotels of the same chain or group apply globalized or localized CI communication. Finally, having identified the elements of CI that are communicated on hotel websites, it would be worthwhile to carry out a follow-up study on how these elements contribute to the benefits of CI communication and whether or not the communicated CI information influences other aspects of consumer behavior such as online booking intentions and purchase decisions.

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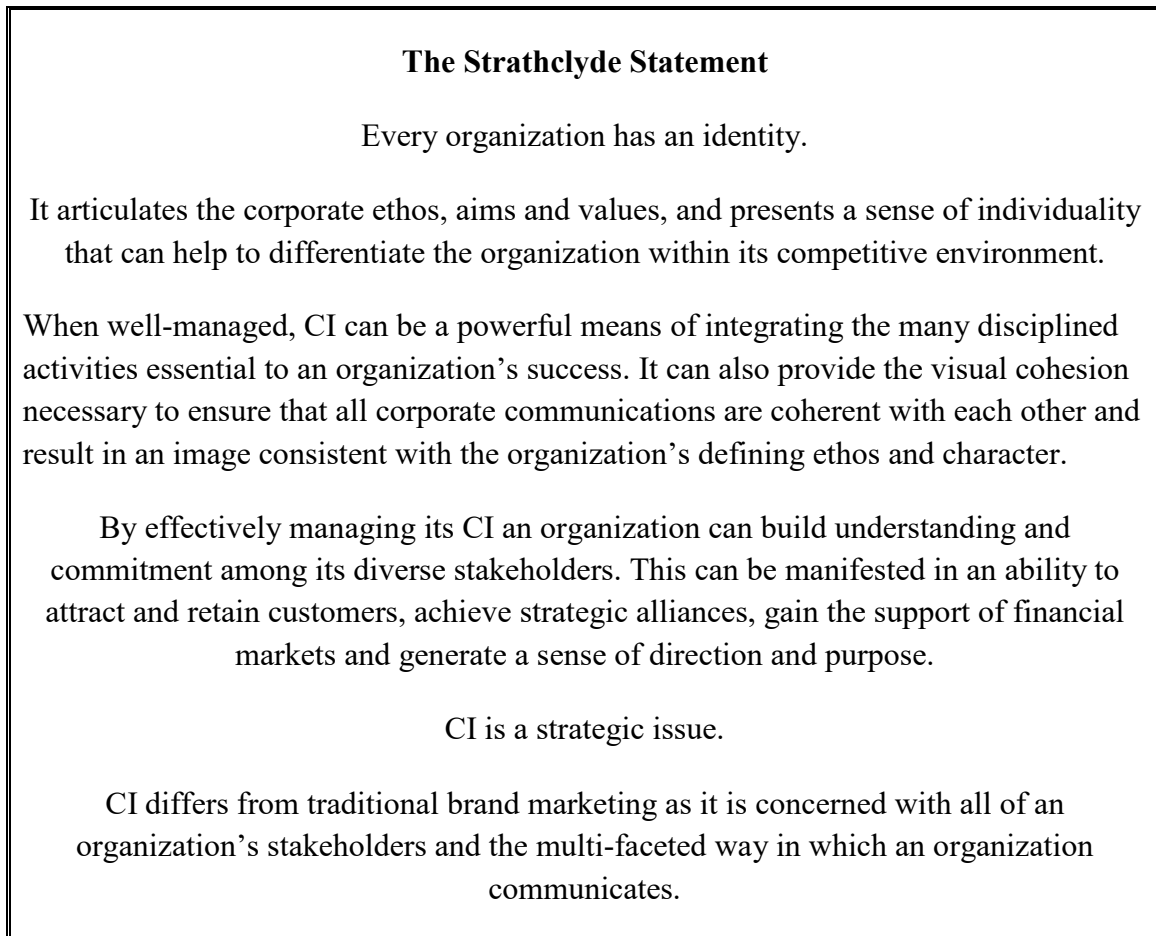
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Appendix

*** Please insert Table 4 about here. ***

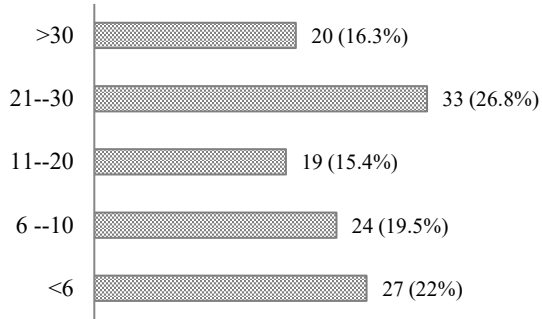
Figure 1: The Strathclyde statement on CI



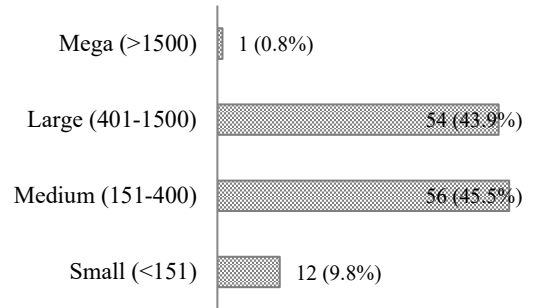
Source: ICIG in Balmer (2001), Balmer and Gray (1999).

Figure 2: Profile of hotels sampled

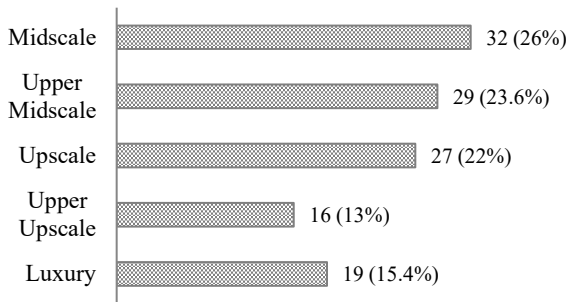
Compositon of hotels by age - years



Composition of hotels by size, rooms



Composition of hotels by class



Composition of hotels by operation

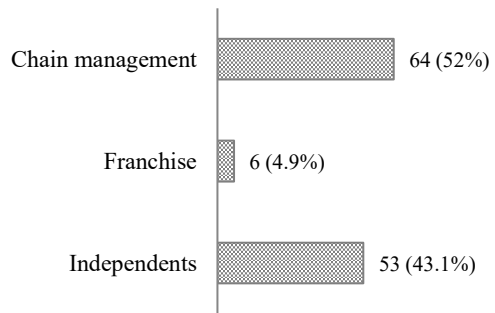


Table 1: CI dimensions, sub-dimensions and elements

| Dimension | Sub-dimension | Elements to consider |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Design | Visual | Name, slogan, logo, location, typography and color |
| | Aesthetics | Architecture, office design, staff appearance, etc. |
| Communication | Marketing | In-house newsletters, manuals, videos, social media link etc. |
| | Management | Public relations (PR) contact, direct marketing, etc. |
| | Organizational | Media/press releases |
| Behavior | Corporate behavior | Annual reports, corporate social responsibility reports, etc. |
| | Staff behavior | Hiring policy, statements of staff friendliness or behavior, etc. |
| | Management behavior | Management reports, profile of managers, etc. |
| Culture | Corporate culture | Objectives, mission, vision, values, principles, philosophies, history, founder, country of origin, self-image (imagery) etc. |
| Strategy | Positioning | Leader/follower, growth, product/market development, etc. |
| | Differentiation | Specialty products, cost leadership, etc. |
| Structure | Organizational structure | Organogram and standard operating procedures |
| | Brand structure | Brand expression, endorsements, etc. |

Source: Compiled from Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006)

Table 2: Summary of empirical studies on corporate communications

| Author(s)(year) | Industry | Study area | Scope or topical focus | Channel(s) of communication | Method of analysis | Summary of major findings |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Jenkins and Karanikola (2014) | Hotel | Dubai, UAE | Environmental policies and practices | Companies website | Content analysis | Among the hotels in Dubai, UAE, environmental reporting online was not effectively done; practices and policies that were cheapest and easiest to implement were the most commonly reported ones on hotels' websites |
| Martínez et al. (2014) | Hotel | Spain | CSR and organizational identity | CSR reports, Stock market indices, corporate communications and media publications | Content analysis | Findings demonstrate that the concept of organization identity consists of several elements of the firm; however the analysis of Meliá Hotels International's identity, which was the main focus of the study, proved to be consistent with the vision-driven approach, reflecting the company's mission, vision, philosophy, and core values. |
| Bravo et al. (2013) | Bank | Spain and UK | Corporate identity | Corporate website | Content analysis | The paper analyzed the similarities and differences in corporate identity communication by UK and Spanish banks, showing that, overall, banks in UK relied on social and strategic aspects to project their brands while their counterparts in Spain were more inclined to exhibit identity information relating to communications. |
| Bravo et al. (2012a) | Financial entities (Banks and savings banks) | Spain | CSR and corporate identity | Companies websites | Content analysis | Findings revealed the multidimensionality of CSR and how different banks were communicating them. Most banks disclosed CSR information to construct communicated identities and legitimate behaviors. |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|--------|---|---|------------------|--|
| Bravo et al. (2012b) | Bank | Spain | Corporate identity | Corporate websites | Content analysis | A total of 230 categories relating to visual identity, communication, culture, behavior, strategy and structure were identified. Compared to savings banks, banks offered more information on all the categories of identities. Furthermore, listed banks offered more information than non-listed banks in terms of aesthetics, management and employee behavior. |
| Hsieh (2012) | Hotel | Global | Environmental policies and practices | Corporate web sites | Content analysis | Less than half of the hotel companies (23 out of 50) posted information about environmental issues on their websites. The main environmental components that were frequently reported were policy, programs, monitoring and tracking system, report documentation, and awards and recognition. |
| Rolland and O'Keefe-Bazzoni (2009) | Automotive | Global | Corporate social responsibility reporting | Corporate websites | Content analysis | The automotive industry has demonstrated its recognition of the growing need for socially-responsible businesses to report on their CSR activities by implementing accessible communication strategy on their websites that is aimed at greening their corporate identities to their stakeholders. |
| Holcomb et al. (2007) | Hotel | Global | Corporate social responsibility | Corporate websites, Annual reports, CSR reports | Content analysis | Most of the hotel companies (8 out of 10) reported socially responsible activities relating to charitable donations; but the areas that were inadequately reported were environmental, and vision and values. |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|--------|--|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Baloglu and Pekcan (2006) | Hotel | Turkey | Website design features and Internet marketing practices | Companies websites | Content analysis | The Internet site marketing practices of the upscale and luxury hotels indicated that hotels in Turkey were not utilizing their websites to its full potential. With regards to providing information on corporate identity, only 5-star hotels had additional Internet link for corporate identity. |
|---------------------------|-------|--------|--|--------------------|------------------|--|

Table 3: Profile of CI presentation

| CI elements | % of N=123 | Class (%) | | | | | Sig. (1) | Statistical comparison | Operation (%) | | Sig. (2) | Statistical comparison |
|---------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|------------------------|
| | | Luxury (A) | Upper upscale (B) | Upscale (C) | Upper midscale (D) | Midscale (E) | | | Ind. (a) | Chain (b) | | |
| Corporate design | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Name | 100.0 | 15.4 | 13.0 | 22.0 | 23.6 | 26.0 | nc | | 43.1 | 56.9 | 0.00* | |
| Logo | 100.0 | 15.4 | 13.0 | 22.0 | 23.6 | 26.0 | nc | | 43.1 | 56.9 | | |
| Slogan | 22.8 | 8.9 | 0.8 | 2.4 | 4.9 | 5.7 | 0.001* | B < A C < A | 10.6 | 12.2 | 0.685 | |
| Architecture | 26.8 | 6.5 | 1.6 | 6.5 | 4.9 | 7.3 | 0.328 | | 8.9 | 17.9 | 0.186* | |
| Location | 100.0 | 15.4 | 13.0 | 22.0 | 23.6 | 26.0 | | | 43.1 | 56.9 | | |
| Corporate structure | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organogram | 13.8 | 0.8 | 2.4 | 4.9 | 5.7 | 0.0 | 0.029* | | 0.0 | 13.8 | 0.000* | |
| Corporate strategy | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Quality statement | 25.2 | 8.9 | 2.4 | 8.1 | 5.7 | 0.0 | 0.000* | | 2.4 | 22.8 | 0.000* | a < b |
| Positioning | 10.6 | 8.1 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.000* | B < A C < A | 4.1 | 6.5 | 0.722 | |
| Differentiation | 9.8 | 6.5 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 0.000* | D < A | 3.3 | 6.5 | 0.473 | |
| A & R | 60.2 | 13.8 | 9.8 | 16.3 | 13.8 | 6.5 | 0.000* | E < A E < B E < C | 24.4 | 35.8 | 0.483 | |
| Master plan | 22.0 | 4.90 | 2.4 | 8.9 | 4.9 | 0.8 | 0.010* | E < A E < C | 3.3 | 18.7 | 0.001* | a < b |
| Corporate culture | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| History | 41.5 | 12.2 | 7.3 | 9.8 | 6.5 | 5.7 | 0.001* | D < A E < A | 5.7 | 35.8 | 0.000* | a < b |
| Founder(s) | 30.9 | 9.80 | 4.9 | 8.1 | 5.7 | 2.4 | 0.001* | E < A | 0.8 | 30.1 | 0.000* | a < b |
| Origin | 38.2 | 12.2 | 6.5 | 9.8 | 8.9 | 0.8 | 0.000* | E < A E < B E < C E < D | 8.1 | 30.1 | 0.000* | a < b |
| Vision | 6.5 | 4.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.4 | | | 3.3 | 3.3 | | |
| Mission | 17.9 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 3.3 | 1.6 | 0.105 | | 2.4 | 15.4 | 0.002* | a < b |
| Values | 11.4 | 5.7 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 1.6 | 0.004* | D < A | 1.6 | 9.8 | 0.021* | a < b |
| Principles | 4.1 | 3.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 0.002* | E < A | 0.8 | 3.3 | 0.287 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|---|------|------|--------|-------|
| Philosophies | 9.8 | 4.1 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 0.096 | | 4.1 | 5.7 | 0.917 | |
| Corporate behavior | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annual report | 23.6 | 7.3 | 5.7 | 2.4 | 8.1 | 0.0 | 0.000* | C < A | 3.3 | 20.3 | 0.000* | a < b |
| Management | 20.3 | 5.7 | 4.1 | 2.4 | 8.1 | 0.0 | 0.002* | | 3.3 | 17.1 | 0.002* | |
| report | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSR information | 43.9 | 13.8 | 4.9 | 12.2 | 11.4 | 1.6 | 0.000* | B < A D < A E < A E < C E < D | 11.4 | 32.5 | 0.001* | a < b |
| Employment | 55.3 | 14.6 | 5.7 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 8.9 | 0.001* | B < A D < A E < A | 16.3 | 39.0 | 0.001* | a < b |
| policy | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Corporate communication | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Media/Press | 74.0 | 15.4 | 13.0 | 21.1 | 16.3 | 8.10 | 0.000* | D < C E < C E < D | 26.0 | 48.0 | 0.003* | a < b |
| PR contact | 55.3 | 13.0 | 9.80 | 16.3 | 10.6 | 5.7 | 0.000* | E < A E < B E < C | 15.4 | 39.8 | 0.000* | a < b |
| Social media link | 78.9 | 14.6 | 12.2 | 18.7 | 19.5 | 13.8 | 0.000* | E < A E < B | 30.1 | 48.8 | 0.032* | a < b |

Notes: The results are based on two-sided tests with significance level .05. * = significant; A & R = Awards and recognitions; CSR = corporate social responsibility; PR = Public Relations; nc = not compared because the column proportions were either zero or one.

Table 4: Components of CI and codes used for the study

| Corporate design | Corporate culture | Corporate strategy | Corporate behavior | Corporate structure | Corporate communication |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Name | History | Master plan | Annual reports | Organogram | Media/press releases |
| Slogan | Founder(s) | Quality statement | CSR reports | Brand expression | Social media link |
| Logo | Mission | Differentiation | Employment policy | | PR contact |
| location | Vision | Positioning | Management reports | | |
| Architecture | Values | Awards & Recognitions | | | |
| | principles | | | | |
| | philosophies | | | | |
| | Origin | | | | |

Coding

Nominal scale with
0 = No and 1 = Yes