

Perception Management in Businesses: The Role of Strategic Communication in Building Corporate Image

Burak PEKÜN¹

Abstract

This study examines how strategic communication contributes to the corporate image of companies that operate in the current business environment. In this study, using the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm as a theoretical framework, the research engages in thematic analysis of 21 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025. The findings highlight several interconnected domains where strategic communication could influence corporate image: corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, integrated communication strategies, identity and visual representation, internal communication and employee engagement, social media and digital influence, and authenticity in perception management. The findings also suggest that strategic communication functions as a vital intangible resource which helps in aligning organisational identity with stakeholder expectations and enhancing legitimacy. The study contributes to theory by framing communication as a strategic resource within the RBV, and by advancing understanding of corporate image formation as a dynamic, multidimensional process. Furthermore, the study shows that authenticity, coherence, and integration are essential for sustaining favourable perceptions of modern businesses.

Keywords: Strategic Communication, Corporate Image, Perception Management, Business, Resource-Based View

İřletmelerde Algı Yönetimi: Kurumsal İmajın Oluřumunda Stratejik İletişimin Rolü

Öz

Bu çalışma, günümüz iş ortamında faaliyet gösteren şirketlerin kurumsal imajına stratejik iletişim nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu incelemektedir. Çalışma kapsamında teorik çerçeve olarak işletmede Kaynak Tabanlı Görüş (RBV) kullanılarak, 2015–2025 yılları arasında yayımlanmış 21 hakemli makalenin tematik analizi yapılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, stratejik iletişimin kurumsal imajı etkileyebileceği birbiriyle ilişkili çeşitli alanları öne çıkarmaktadır. Söz konusu alanlar şu şekildedir: kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk (KSS) girişimleri, entegre iletişim stratejileri, kimlik ve görsel temsil, iç iletişim ve çalışan bağlılığı, sosyal medya ve dijital etki ile algı yönetiminde özgünlük. Elde edilen bulgular ayrıca, stratejik iletişimin örgütsel kimliği paydaş beklentileriyle uyumlaştırmaya ve meşruiyeti artırmaya yardımcı olan önemli bir soyut kaynak işlevi gördüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, iletişimi RBV kapsamında stratejik bir kaynak olarak konumlandırarak teoriye katkı sağlamak ve kurumsal imaj oluşumunu dinamik ve çok boyutlu bir süreç olarak anlamaya yardımcı olmaktadır. Bunlara ek olarak bu araştırma, modern işletmelerin olumlu algıları sürdürebilmesi için özgünlük, tutarlılık ve entegrasyonun kritik önemde olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik İletişim, Kurumsal İmaj, Algı Yönetimi, İşletme, Kaynak Tabanlı Görünüm

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¹ Dr. – Muęla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, Bodrum Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi, Milas Meslek Yüksekokulu, burakpekun@mu.edu.tr,

 ORCID: 0000-0002-8480-0202

Introduction

In today's business environment, shaped by global competition, rapid digitalization, and rising stakeholder expectations (Özkeçeci & Alkın, 2022; Özkeçeci, Caymaz & Akyön, 2022; Ohinok & Hunka, 2023), perception management through communication constitutes a critical dimension of corporate strategy (Derman, 2021; Chan, Lee, Ng & Huam, 2023). Strategic communication is understood as the purposeful use of communication to enable organizations to fulfill their missions and objectives; drawing on management, marketing, and public relations, it shapes how companies are perceived by both internal and external stakeholders (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2007; Keller-Bacher & Zerfass, 2019). What is noteworthy here is that strategic communication is not confined to short-term tactical messaging but must align with long-term organizational goals. This alignment suggests that strategic communication can influence corporate identity, image, and reputation (Zerfass, 2008).

The importance of corporate image has long been emphasized in both academic and practitioner-oriented discussions (Tran, Nguyen, Melewar & Bodoh, 2015; Oparaugo, 2021). Corporate image functions as a multidimensional construct that encompasses stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's values, actions, and distinctiveness (Tran et al., 2015). Unlike reputation—which reflects evaluations accumulated over time—image is shaped more immediately by organizational communication and behavior, and is typically constructed through traditional media, social media, branding efforts, and stakeholder engagement (Demir, Budur & Heshmati, 2021). Accordingly, corporate image emerges not merely as a reflection of organizational performance but also as the outcome of deliberate communication strategies. This duality clarifies why strategic communication contributes to image construction.

The relevant literature demonstrates that corporate communication has evolved from isolated functional practices into a more integrated domain with direct implications for strategic management (Hallahan et al., 2007). According to Zerfass (2008), communication should be conceptualized not merely as a supportive function but as a core component of value creation, directly linked to the achievement of defined business objectives. Hallahan et al. (2007) further argue that strategic communication has acquired an interdisciplinary scope that spans management, marketing, technical communication, and political communication. These perspectives highlight communication as an essential mechanism for shaping perceptions and influencing stakeholder attitudes—thereby reinforcing organizational competitiveness and legitimacy.

Although substantial progress has been made in the literature on strategic communication and corporate image, the relationship between these concepts requires deeper examination, particularly in the context of corporate perception management. Organizations are operating in increasingly complex environments. Understanding how communication contributes to the construction and sustainability of corporate image has therefore become crucial for both theoretical development and managerial practice. Addressing this challenge, the present study focuses on the following primary research question: "What is the role of strategic communication in constructing corporate image?" In addition, the study explores a secondary question: "How does the use of strategic communication in building corporate image influence perception management within businesses?" Answers to these questions may offer a more nuanced understanding of how communication contributes to corporate value creation and clarify the role of strategic communication in shaping stakeholder perceptions in dynamic environments.

Theoretical Framework

This study distinguishes the concepts of corporate image, corporate reputation, and brand image to ensure conceptual clarity. Corporate image refers to stakeholders' immediate perceptions of an organization, which are largely shaped by communication and symbolic representations. In contrast, corporate reputation reflects a cumulative evaluation formed over time on the basis of past actions and performance. Brand image is generally associated with customers' perceptions of a company's products or services. The primary focus of this article is corporate image; however, reputation and brand image are also addressed when contextually relevant. A detailed discussion of these concepts is presented below.

Corporate image is defined as the sum of stakeholders' perceptions of an organization at a given moment (Tran et al., 2015). Moreover, corporate image emerges through a dynamic interaction among organizational actions, communication practices, and stakeholder interpretations (Tran et al., 2015). It is noteworthy that corporate image is distinct from, yet related to, reputation. Whereas reputation accumulates through repeated interactions and evaluations over time, image is shaped more immediately

through a combination of visual symbols, narratives, employee behavior, and communication channels. The formation of corporate image involves not only tangible elements such as logos and design but also intangible dimensions such as attitudes, credibility, and trustworthiness (Tran et al., 2015). This multidimensional character explains why corporate image is highly sensitive to deliberate communication strategies.

Strategic communication is commonly conceptualized as the purposeful use of communication by organizations to achieve their objectives and align internal and external stakeholders with their mission (Hallahan et al., 2007; Keller-Bacher & Zerfass, 2019). Unlike tactical communication, which focuses on discrete and independent campaigns or messaging activities, strategic communication operates with a long-term orientation and promotes integration across organizational functions such as management, marketing, public relations, and political communication. In this sense, strategic communication represents a holistic perspective that regards communication as both an organizational resource and a managerial function necessary for sustaining corporate legitimacy (Zerfass, 2008).

A useful theoretical framework for understanding the contribution of strategic communication to corporate image building is the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, developed by Barney (1991). RBV emphasizes the role of both tangible and intangible resources in generating sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Chan et al., 2023). When approached strategically, communication can become a valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate intangible resource that enables organizations to differentiate themselves in competitive markets. For example, consistent internal communication enhances commitment and alignment, while external communication builds credibility and trust; together, these elements create reputational capital that competitors cannot easily replicate. Accordingly, RBV positions communication as a core strategic resource directly associated with organizational value creation.

In this context, strategic communication functions as the mechanism through which organizational identity and objectives are translated into a corporate image that stakeholders can interpret. The RBV framework helps explain why some organizations succeed in achieving enduring corporate image advantages: their communication capacities generate unique intangible resources that support long-term legitimacy and performance. Hallahan et al. (2007) also highlight that the interdisciplinary nature of strategic communication enables organizations to influence diverse stakeholders in ways that are both consistent and adaptable. Taken together, the concepts of strategic communication, corporate image, and RBV provide a useful framework for analyzing how businesses manage perceptions in contemporary environments. The theoretical foundation discussed in this section forms the basis for the analysis of the current academic literature, which is elaborated in the next section.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on thematic analysis. The choice of thematic analysis is appropriate for this study because it enables the identification, interpretation, and organization of recurring patterns within textual data (Bryman, 2012), thereby offering insights into both explicit and implicit themes. The processing of the textual data was carried out manually using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

The study follows a systematic literature review structure guided by predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, a fixed publication time frame (2015–2025), and a transparent selection process. Although qualitative and interpretive in nature, the literature review also draws on principles from established reporting guidelines such as PRISMA (Sarkis-Onofre, Catalá-López, Aromataris & Lockwood, 2021). This framework supports methodological transparency in source selection, coding, and synthesis. To enhance the reproducibility and clarity of the review process, a simplified selection summary is presented in the following section.

The dataset consists of 21 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 (see Table 1). Articles were identified through systematic searches conducted across four academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. The following keywords and Boolean operators were used in various combinations: “strategic communication,” “corporate image,” “perception management,” “corporate identity,” “CSR communication,” and “reputation building.”

Table 1. *Academic Studies Used in Thematic Analysis*

Author(s)	Title	Year	Journal
Slabbert, Y.	A New Conceptual Framework to Strengthen Internal Corporate Image: A Stakeholder-Inclusive Perspective	2016	Communicatio
Schmeltz, L. & Kjeldsen, A.K.	Naming as Strategic Communication: Understanding Corporate Name Change Through an Integrated Framework of Branding, Identity, and Corporate Theory	2016	International Journal of Strategic Communication
Lestari, H. W. T. D., Dimiyati, D. & Shihab, M.	Strategic Communication and Corporate Branding: A Study on Jebsen & Jessen Indonesia Group	2017	Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi
Lysyckina, I.	The Image of Security Sector Agencies as a Tool of Strategic Communication	2017	Connections
Mohamad, B. & Bakar, H. A.	Corporate Communication and Strategic Management: History, Operational Concept, and Integration	2018	INSYMA Proceedings
Pang, A., Lwin, M. O., Ng, C. S. M., Ong, Y. K., Chau, S. R. W. C. & Yeow, K. P. S.	Using CSR to Build Corporate Image in Asia: The Need for an Integrated Approach	2018	Asian Journal of Communication
Belasen, A. T. & Belasen, A. R.	The Strategic Value of Integrated Corporate Communication: Functions, Social Media, and Stakeholders	2019	International Journal of Strategic Communication
Keller-Bacher, J. & Zerfass, A.	How Strategic Communication Facilitates Firms' Internationalization: A Situational Framework	2019	In Big ideas in public relations research and practice
June, C. T. & Jwan, J. O.	Corporate Identity Formation in Telecommunications Organizations in Kenya	2020	African Journal of Emerging Issues
Ajayi, O. A. & Mmutle, T.	Corporate Reputation Through the Strategic Communication of Corporate Social Responsibility	2021	Corporate Communications: An International Journal
Alsharairi, A. & Jamal, J.	Strategic Communication of CSR Activities in Strengthening Customer-Based Corporate Reputation: Evidence from Jordanian Banks	2021	American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
Budiman, S.	The Effect of Social Media on Brand Image and Brand Loyalty: A Study of Millennials	2021	Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business
Derman, G. S.	Perception Management in the Media	2021	International Journal of Social and Economic Sciences
Iřık, Ö.	Corporate Identity Formation of Universities in the Context of Corporate Communication: An Analysis of University Websites	2021	Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication
Oparaugo, B.	The Role of Public Relations in Building and Sustaining Corporate Image	2021	International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management
Chan, T. J., Lee, J., Ng, M. L. & Huam, H. T.	Factors Affecting the Reputation of a Private Malaysian University from the Perspective of Strategic Communication Management	2023	Studies in Media and Communication
Pop, A. M. & Sim, M. A.	The Impact of Internal Communication on Corporate Image	2023	Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series
Rehman, F. U. & Zeb, A.	Translating the Effects of Social Advertising on Muslim Consumers' Purchasing Behavior: The Moderating Role of Brand Image	2023	Journal of Islamic Marketing
Johansen, T. S. & Gregersen, M. K.	The Authenticity of Corporate-Level Visual Identity in Strategic Communication Contexts	2024	International Journal of Strategic Communication
Ozan, M. S. & Yolcu, F. S.	An Evaluation of the Relationship Between Corporate Communication and Corporate Reputation	2024	International Journal of Disciplines in Economics & Administrative Sciences Studies
Aksoy, Z. & Misci Kip, S.	From Tactical Strategy to Strategic Sustainability Communication: A Qualitative Study of Companies in Turkey	2025	Corporate Communications: An International Journal

To ensure that the analysis draws on relevant and high-quality sources, the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during article selection are presented in Table 2. First, to maintain academic rigor and methodological validity, only peer-reviewed journal articles were included in the analysis. All selected

articles were published between 2015 and 2025 in order to capture contemporary developments in strategic communication, particularly in relation to digital transformation, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility. This ten-year period reflects a time during which the concepts of corporate image and communication experienced significant evolution.

Table 2. *Article Selection Process*

Stage	Article Number
Initial database results	84
After title and abstract screening	36
After full-text review	21 (final dataset)

In addition, the language of the published works included in the study was limited to English, as the aim is to synthesize research with global accessibility and broad scholarly impact. Furthermore, only articles offering theoretical or empirical insights into strategic communication practices within business or organizational contexts were included. The selected studies were required to have content explicitly connected to topics such as corporate image, reputation, identity, branding, perception management, or stakeholder communication. The articles were also assessed for their alignment with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theoretical framework, which informs this study's conceptualization of communication as a strategic organizational resource.

Conversely, several criteria led to the exclusion of certain works. Opinion pieces or news-style texts, which tend to have limited peer review and lack systematic methodology, were not included. Studies focusing exclusively on political or public communication were also excluded, as the primary focus of this study is business organizations. Additionally, articles that did not provide sufficient depth in their analysis of strategic communication or failed to link communication practices to corporate image or perception management were deemed unsuitable for inclusion.

The articles were selected based on their relevance to the research objective and their alignment with the study's strategic communication and corporate image orientation. These works represent various sectors and regions—including financial services, education, telecommunications, and non-governmental organizations—thereby providing a broad empirical and conceptual foundation for the analysis (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

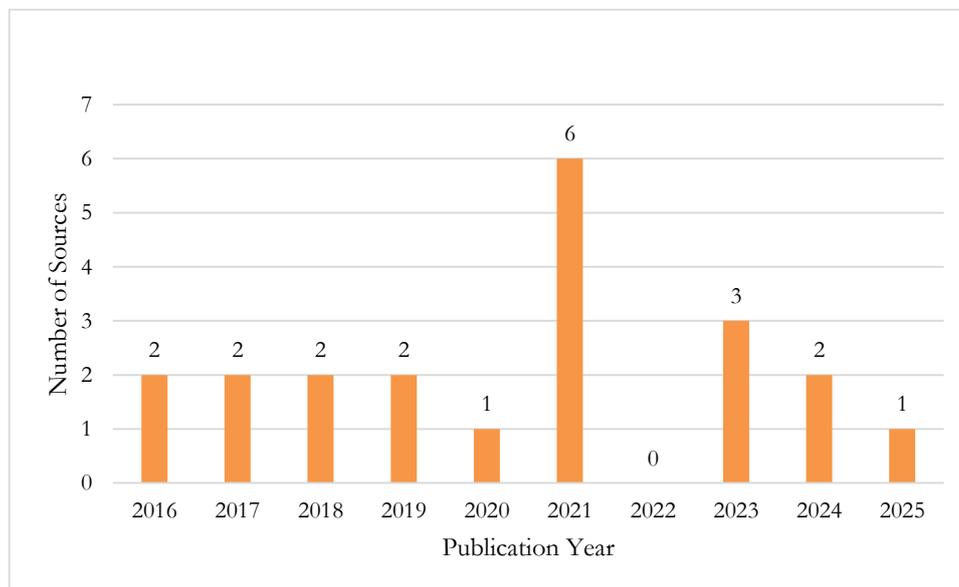


Figure 1. *Number of Sources by Publication Year*

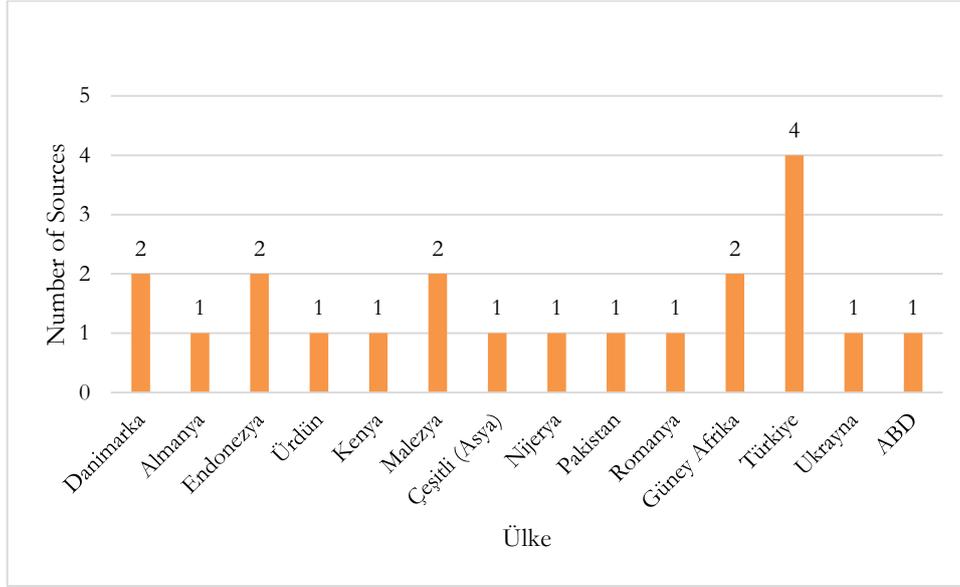


Figure 2. *Number of Sources by Country*

In line with the step-by-step framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is widely recognized in qualitative research for its systematic approach to identifying and organizing patterns in descriptive data, a thematic analysis was conducted. The process began with the familiarization phase, during which all 21 selected articles were carefully read and initial impressions were recorded. This was followed by the initial coding stage, in which meaningful segments of text related to strategic communication, corporate image, and perception management were highlighted and assigned concise descriptive codes using Microsoft Word and Excel.

In the next stage, the codes were reviewed, compared, and clustered into broader categories based on conceptual similarity. These categories were then transformed into candidate themes and refined through several rounds of iterative review to ensure internal coherence and external distinction. Finally, higher-level themes were developed by linking the grouped codes to the study's theoretical concepts, particularly the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991). Throughout the entire process, the analysis maintained an interpretive orientation rather than being purely descriptive; both explicit content and underlying meanings were considered in theme construction. This approach ensured that the final thematic structure reflected both the diversity and the depth of the literature.

Results

The completed thematic analysis revealed multiple interrelated themes that clarify the role of strategic communication in corporate image construction. These themes are as follows (see Figure 3): (1) corporate social responsibility (CSR) and reputation, (2) integration of communication strategies, (3) corporate identity and visual representation, (4) internal communication and employee engagement, (5) social media and digital influence, and (6) perception management and authenticity. The thematic analysis clearly demonstrates that strategic communication plays a multidimensional role in constructing corporate image and supporting sustainable competitive advantage.

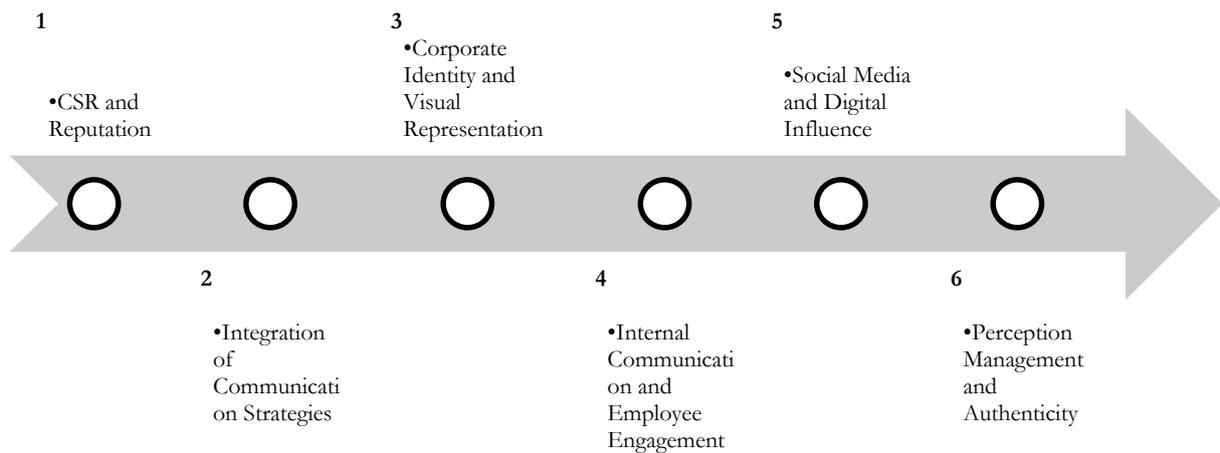


Figure 3. *Themes Used in the Thematic Analysis*

In addition, the analysis reveals several noteworthy challenges. Many organizations still rely on tactical rather than strategic communication, particularly in the context of CSR and sustainability (Aksoy & Misci Kip, 2025). Others struggle to align internal and external image, creating risks of inconsistency that may undermine stakeholder trust (Slabbert, 2016). Moreover, the growing influence of digital platforms provides opportunities for engagement while simultaneously increasing vulnerability to misinformation (Derman, 2021).

From a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, these findings confirm that communication becomes a strategic resource when it is authentic, integrated, and aligned with corporate identity. However, when communication remains fragmented or merely tactical, it fails to provide sustainable competitive advantage. Effective perception management therefore depends on organizations' ability to develop communication capabilities that are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate.

CSR Communication and Corporate Reputation

One prominent theme is the role of CSR as a component of strategic communication that shapes positive stakeholder perceptions and contributes to reputation building. Research shows that when CSR initiatives are communicated effectively, they strengthen corporate image by signaling credibility, responsibility, and alignment with stakeholder values.

Ajayi and Mmutle (2021) found that organizations in South Africa use CSR communication to build reputation, although an overreliance on controlled channels limits stakeholder engagement. Similarly, Alsharairi and Jamal (2021) showed in a recent study that customer trust mediates the transformation of CSR activities into positive corporate reputation within the Jordanian banking sector. Pang et al. (2018) demonstrated that CSR strengthens corporate image in Asian companies through authenticity and stakeholder dialogue, yet many organizations fear being perceived as overly self-promotional. Collectively, these findings indicate that CSR supports sustainable corporate image when integrated into communication strategies as an intangible resource. From an RBV standpoint, this positions CSR communication as a valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate capability, enabling differentiation in competitive markets (Chan et al., 2023).

Integration of Communication Strategies

Another significant theme concerns how the relationship between strategic communication and integrated communication unfolds across organizational functions and platforms. Belasen and Belasen (2019) argue that integrated corporate communication (ICC) ensures message coherence across stakeholders, strengthens reputational assets, and provides consistency during crises.

Mohamad and Bakar (2018) emphasize that corporate communication is increasingly becoming a strategic management function intertwined with global corporate identities. Ozan and Yolcu (2024) note that fragmented approaches heighten the risk of inconsistency and stakeholder confusion, whereas systematic and strategic communication management plays a central role in building and sustaining corporate reputation.

The analysis shows that integrated communication not only enhances the coherence of corporate image but also strengthens perception management in adapting to environmental change. This indicates that consolidating communication as a cross-functional resource can align identity, culture, and stakeholder expectations. Such alignment underscores the status of strategic communication as a core intangible capability from an RBV perspective.

Corporate Identity and Visual Representation

The construction of corporate image is closely linked to the management of identity and visual symbols. June and Jwan (2020), in their study of Kenya's telecommunications sector, demonstrate that corporate identity directly influences corporate image and that strong visual identities effectively reflect mission and culture.

Işık (2021) shows that university websites function as tools for identity and image construction, revealing how design and presentation shape stakeholder perceptions. Johansen and Gregersen (2024) explore authenticity in visual identity, highlighting that stakeholders seek process-oriented, consumer-centered, and aspirational forms of authenticity rather than a static essence.

Similarly, Schmeltz and Kjeldsen (2016) examine corporate name changes as a strategic communication tool, noting that identity shifts can reposition companies while aligning branding with organizational expectations.

Taken together, these studies on corporate identity and visual representation show that identity symbols, when aligned with stakeholders through strategic communication, serve as powerful elements of corporate image construction.

Internal Communication and Employee Engagement

Another theme emerging in corporate image construction is internal communication and employee engagement. Pop and Sim (2023) demonstrate that effective internal communication enhances productivity, alignment, and employee engagement, which in turn indirectly strengthens corporate image.

Slabbert (2016) proposes a stakeholder-oriented framework in which employee perceptions shape external image, highlighting internal culture and communication as antecedents of reputation. Oparaugo (2021) further shows that public relations functions as a tool for generating goodwill among both internal and external publics.

These findings indicate that employees are not only communicators but also carriers of corporate identity, and their engagement directly influences external perceptions. Strategic communication aligned with internal culture creates consistency between internal and external image, reinforcing organizational legitimacy and appeal.

Social Media and Digital Influence

The reviewed literature strongly underscores the role of digital platforms in shaping perceptions. Budiman (2021), for instance, shows that Generation Y consumers in Indonesia build brand loyalty and image through social media interactions (e-WOM, online communities).

Rehman and Zeb (2023) find in a recent study that social advertising positively affects brand image and consumer behavior among Islamic fashion consumers. Belasen and Belasen (2019) highlight that integrating social media narratives into corporate communication is vital for maintaining reputation during crises.

These findings indicate that digital platforms have become indispensable tools for strategic communication. At the same time, while social media enables two-way interaction and rapid message diffusion, it also increases risks of misinformation and perceptual distortion (Derman, 2021).

Perception Management and Authenticity

Underlying the themes above is the function of strategic communication as a tool for perception management. Derman (2021) emphasizes that in the information age, perceptions can be manipulated easily, making perception management essential for businesses, governments, and civil society.

Aksoy and Misci Kip (2025) show that many organizations still adopt tactical rather than strategic approaches to sustainability communication, making it difficult to manage perceptions authentically. In

contrast, Lestari, Dimiyati and Shihab (2017) demonstrate that Jebsen & Jessen Indonesia strengthened image authenticity by implementing strategic branding aligned with public relations planning.

These findings show that perception management requires more than superficial messaging. Authenticity, consistency, and alignment between organizational values and communication strategies are essential for sustaining positive perceptions (Lysychkina, 2017). This aligns with Tran et al.'s (2015) conceptualization of corporate image formation as a multidimensional process influenced by both tangible and intangible cues.

Summary of Findings

Taken together, the six thematic areas demonstrate how strategic communication contributes to corporate image and, consequently, to perception management in contemporary business environments. The findings directly address the first research question by showing that communication influences image construction through multiple interconnected practices, including CSR signaling, cross-functional integration, symbolic identity management, employee involvement, digital presence, and authenticity. Each theme illustrates that image is not a static attribute but a perception strategically constructed through communication. In relation to the second research question, the findings reveal that image-building practices also function as mechanisms of influence, enabling organizations to align with stakeholder expectations, manage reputation risk, and establish legitimacy. Thus, strategic communication serves both as a resource that constructs image and as a tool for managing perceptions within complex stakeholder environments.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to examine the role of strategic communication in the construction of corporate image and, secondarily, its influence on perception management in the business environment. The thematic analysis of recent literature shows that strategic communication serves as a central mechanism through which organizations build, maintain, and adapt their image within competitive and dynamic contexts. The role of strategic communication as an intangible resource renders it a vital component of organizational success and highlights the need for its continued development as well as sustained academic attention. Strategic communication not only supports value creation but also strengthens legitimacy and trust, which are essential for long-term success. These findings reaffirm the importance of the Resource-Based View (RBV) in framing communication as a strategic asset.

The analysis identifies six interconnected practices that constitute critical components of strategic communication: CSR communication, integration of communication strategies, corporate identity and visual representation, internal communication and employee engagement, social media and digital influence, and authenticity in perception management. Each of these themes can be interpreted through the VRIO (Value, Rarity, Inimitability, Organization) dimensions of the RBV framework (Barney, 1991). CSR communication, when credibly aligned with stakeholder values, is a valuable capability that strengthens trust and organizational legitimacy. Integrated communication, which ensures coherence across platforms and departments, represents a rare capability because of the difficulty of achieving it in practice. Corporate identity and visual representation, when strategically designed and authentically conveyed, are inimitable due to their reliance on symbolic resources and historically embedded structures that competitors cannot easily replicate. Internal communication and employee engagement reinforce trust and alignment, forming capabilities that are both valuable and rare and directly shaping external perceptions. The strategic use of social media reflects an organized capability that enables real-time coordination of engagement in digital environments. Finally, authenticity in communication—through its alignment of organizational behavior with stakeholder expectations—exemplifies all four RBV attributes: it is valuable, rare, inimitable, and dependent on well-structured internal processes for its sustainability.

Interpreting these themes through the RBV perspective clarifies how strategic communication operates as a distinctive intangible resource capable of generating sustainable competitive advantage. These insights underscore that communication should be viewed as a deeply embedded organizational routine and a central component of strategic management.

Nevertheless, several challenges persist. Many organizations continue to adopt tactical rather than strategic approaches to sustainability and CSR communication, limiting their capacity to manage perceptions effectively. Others struggle to balance authenticity with promotional discourse, particularly

under heightened stakeholder scrutiny in digital environments. These challenges demonstrate the need for organizations to further professionalize their communication strategies and integrate them more deeply into strategic management processes.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer important contributions to theory in several ways. First, they reinforce that strategic communication is not merely a tactical or instrumental activity. As Hallahan et al. (2007) emphasize, strategic communication involves the purposeful use of communication to achieve organizational objectives. The thematic analysis supports this by showing that communication practices are integrated as part of broader strategies such as CSR, identity management, and digital engagement. This underscores the value of examining communication as a central driver of organizational legitimacy and competitive strength.

Furthermore, the study advances the theoretical understanding of corporate image formation. Drawing on Tran et al. (2015), the results confirm that corporate image is a multidimensional construct shaped by both tangible elements (logos, facilities, visual symbols) and intangible cues (authenticity, trust, perceptions of responsibility). The literature shows that image is fluid, dynamic, and sensitive to stakeholder interpretation; therefore, future theories of corporate image should account for the interactive and dialogic processes that underlie perception management. Accordingly, image is no longer treated as a fixed reflection of identity but as the product of ongoing negotiation between organizations and the public.

The present study also integrates these insights with the RBV, offering a theoretical contribution by framing strategic communication as an intangible resource capable of generating sustainable competitive advantage. Communication capabilities such as authenticity, integration, and stakeholder alignment meet the RBV criteria of being valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate. Through the application of the RBV, the study brings the academic literature on communication into the domain of strategic management, highlighting the resource potential of communication practices and linking them directly to organizational performance outcomes.

Another noteworthy finding is the prominence of authenticity and alignment as theoretical concepts at the center of communication and perception management. Johansen and Gregersen (2024) demonstrate that authenticity in visual identity is increasingly demanded by stakeholders. Aksoy and Misci Kip (2025) show that tactical approaches to sustainability communication often fall short of this standard. In this context, it is clear that authenticity should be conceptualized as a relational and evolving concept shaped over time through communication practices.

Finally, this study proposes several directions for future research. Scholars may develop models that more explicitly integrate perception management with strategic communication and the RBV, investigate sectoral differences in image formation processes, and examine the interaction between digital platforms and authenticity. Such research would enhance both theoretical depth and practical relevance.

One important implication of these findings is that organizations should establish cross-functional communication teams that coordinate messaging across marketing, human resources, and corporate relations. This integration reduces the risk of conflicting messages and strengthens corporate image by offering stakeholders a consistent organizational voice. Moreover, managers should invest in internal communication training programs that equip employees with the knowledge and language required to act as brand ambassadors. When employees understand the company's values and strategic goals, they reflect them more effectively in interactions with customers and the public, thereby reinforcing the desired corporate image.

This study has certain limitations. First, the analysis is based solely on academic articles published between 2015 and 2025; this may exclude valuable insights from grey literature, industry reports, or more recent developments. Second, thematic analysis is interpretive in nature, meaning that the coding and theme development processes are shaped by the researcher's perspective and theoretical framework. While this approach offers depth, it also introduces a degree of subjectivity that should be taken into account when considering the generalizability of the findings.

Future research may extend this study by developing conceptual and empirical models that more clearly articulate the connection between strategic communication, perception management, and the RBV.

Examining how communication capabilities evolve in sectors such as healthcare, technology, or public services—and whether sector-specific dynamics influence the formation and durability of corporate image—represents a promising area of inquiry. Researchers may also investigate how different stakeholder groups interpret authenticity in strategic messaging across cultural contexts. Additionally, studying how the effectiveness of strategic communication practices varies between high-trust and low-trust stakeholder environments would be valuable. Methodologically, future studies could benefit from comparative case analyses, mixed-methods approaches, or experimental designs that combine insights from interviews, content analysis, and stakeholder surveys. Longitudinal research could also help track changes in communication strategies and reputation outcomes over time. Taken together, these directions would enrich both theoretical and managerial contributions within the evolving field of strategic communication.

Ethical Declaration

During the writing process of the study “*Perception Management in Businesses: The Role of Strategic Communication in Building Corporate Image*” scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed. No falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication medium for evaluation. Ethics Committee Permission is not required.

Etik Beyan

“İşletmelerde Algı Yönetimi: Kurumsal İmajın Oluşumunda Stratejik İletişimin Rolü” başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel kurallara, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. Çalışma, tasarımı dolayısıyla etik kurul onayı gerektirmemektedir.

Declaration of Conflict

There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.

Çatışma Beyanı

Yazarın bu çalışmayla ilgili herhangi bir çıkar çatışması yoktur.

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GENİŐLETİLMİŐ ÖZET

Bu çalıřma, günümüz iř ortamında faaliyet gösteren řirketlerin kurumsal imajına stratejik iletiřimin nasıl katkıda bulunduđunu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Stratejik iletiřim, iřletmenin amaçlarına ulařmak ve iç ve dıř paydařları örgütsel hedeflerle uyumlařtırmak için iletiřimin kasıtlı ve uzun vadeli biçimde kullanılması olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Buna karřılık, ilgili bir kavram olan kurumsal imaj, belirli bir zamanda paydařların bir örgüt hakkında sahip oldukları algıların toplamı řeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. Kurumsal imaj ile kurumsal itibar birbirinden farklı yapılarıdır; kurumsal imaj iletiřim yoluyla řekillenen anlık bir algıyı ifade ederken, itibar zaman

içerisinde oluşan birikimli bir yargıyı temsil etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, stratejik iletişimin kurumsal imajın geliştirilmesine etkin bir biçimde katkıda bulunduğu; dolayısıyla paydaş algılarını, davranışsal tepkileri ve nihayetinde rekabetçi konumlanmayı etkilediği varsayılmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu süreçlerin örgütlerin dış çevreyle kurduğu ilişki biçimini hem stratejik hem de operasyonel düzeyde yeniden şekillendirdiği kabul edilmektedir. Bu çalışma, iki temel araştırma sorusuna odaklanmaktadır. Birinci araştırma sorusu “Kurumsal imajın inşasında stratejik iletişimin rolü nedir?” İkinci araştırma sorusu ise “Kurumsal imajın inşasında stratejik iletişim kullanımının iş dünyasında algı yönetimini nasıl etkilediğidir?” Her iki soru da modern işletmelerde iletişimin yalnızca destekleyici bir faaliyet değil, karar alma süreçlerini etkileyen kritik bir unsur olduğunu varsaymaktadır. Teorik çerçeve açısından çalışma, Kaynak Tabanlı Görüş’ü (RBV) kullanmaktadır. İşletmenin Kaynak Tabanlı Görüşü (RBV), stratejik iletişimi sürdürülebilir rekabet avantajı sağlayabilecek bir kaynak/yetenek olarak konumlandırılan teorik temeli oluşturmaktadır. RBV’ye göre, iletişim uygulamaları değerli, nadir, taklit edilmesi güç ve buna uygun şekilde örgütlenmiş olduğunda rekabet avantajı sağlayabilir. Bu yaklaşım, iletişim faaliyetlerinin yalnızca mesaj üretmekten ibaret olmadığını, aynı zamanda örgütlerin uzun vadeli konumlanmasını etkileyen stratejik bir kapasite oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışma nitel bir araştırmadır ve seçilen yöntem, 2015 ile 2025 yılları arasında yayımlanmış 21 hakemli dergi makalesinin tematik analizidir. Çalışmada kullanılan kaynaklar, çok çeşitli sektörleri ve coğrafi bölgeleri kapsamakta olup iletişim uygulamalarına ilişkin kapsamlı bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Tematik analiz Microsoft Word ve Excel kullanılarak manuel olarak yürütülmüş; bu süreç, verilerin yinelemeli kodlanmasını, temel pasajların belirlenmesini ve üst düzey temalara dönüştürülmesini içermektedir. Bu temalar daha sonra algı yönetiminde iletişim uygulamalarının stratejik kaynaklar olarak nasıl işlev gördüğünü vurgulamak amacıyla RBV çerçevesinden yorumlanmıştır. Bulgular, stratejik iletişimin kurumsal imajın inşasındaki çok boyutlu rolünü açıklayan altı birbiriyle bağlantılı tema ortaya koymaktadır: (1) KSS iletişimi ve itibar; (2) iletişim stratejilerinin entegrasyonu; (3) kurumsal kimlik ve görsel temsil; (4) iç iletişim ve çalışan bağlılığı; (5) sosyal medya ve dijital etki; ve (6) algı yönetimi ve özgünlük. İlk olarak, KSS iletişimi güveni güçlendiren ve paydaş değerleriyle uyumu sağlayan kritik bir mekanizma olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Coğrafi bağlamlar arasında yürütülen çalışmalar, stratejik biçimde iletişim kurulan KSS girişimlerinin özgün olarak algılandığında itibari sermaye oluşturduğunu doğrulamaktadır. İkinci olarak, iletişim fonksiyonları arasındaki entegrasyon tutarlılık ve uyum sağlamaktadır. Araştırmalar, parçalı iletişim stratejilerinin paydaşlarda karışıklığa ve itibarda tutarsızlığa yol açma riskini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Buna karşılık, bütünleşmiş kurumsal iletişim (ICC), kimliği, kültürü ve misyonu güçlendirerek işletmeyi dalgalı çevrelerde avantajlı bir konuma yerleştirmektedir. Bu bütünleşme, kurumların kriz anlarında dahi daha öngörülebilir bir imaj sergilemesine yardımcı olmaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, kurumsal kimlik ve görsel temsil algıyı önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir. Logolar, tasarım unsurları ve adlandırma gibi semboller imaj inşasının güçlü araçlarıdır. Stratejik amaçla tasarlanıp özgünlük algısıyla birleştiğinde, bu semboller işletmenin misyon ve değerlerini temsil eden göstergeler haline gelmektedir. Görsel özgünlüğün önemi artmaktadır; zira paydaşlar, marka ifadelerinin örgütün değişen anlatılarını yansıtmasını beklemektedir. Dördüncü olarak, iç iletişim ve çalışan bağlılığı imaj inşası için vazgeçilmezdir. Çalışanlar hem iç paydaşlar hem de dış marka elçileri olarak hizmet vermektedir. Çalışanların kurumsal değerlere uyumu dış algıları doğrudan etkilemektedir. Etkili iç iletişim, uyumu ve güveni artırarak bütünleşik bir imaj oluşumuna katkıda bulunmaktadır. Beşinci olarak, dijital platformlar—özellikle sosyal medya—kurumsal iletişimin dinamiklerini dönüştürmüştür. Sosyal medya iki yönlü etkileşim sağlamak ve imaj üzerinde gerçek zamanlı etki yaratmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, yanlış bilgi ve algı çarpıtımı gibi riskler de doğurmaktadır. Bu nedenle firmaların anlatıları üzerindeki kontrolü sürdürülebilmek için dijital alanda stratejik biçimde konumlanması gerekmektedir. Altıncı olarak, algı yönetimi yalnızca taktiksel mesajlaşmadan ibaret değildir. İletişim, davranış ve kimlik arasında özgünlük ve uyum temel kavramlardır. Dijital ortamların denetim ve incelemeyi artırdığı günümüzde, paydaşlar işletmelerin anlattıkları ile yaptıkları arasındaki uyumu talep etmektedir. Özgünlükten yoksun stratejik iletişim, sürdürülebilir itibari sonuçlar üretme kapasitesine sahip değildir. Çalışmanın sonucu, stratejik iletişimin kurumsal imajın inşasında ve sürdürülmesinde belirleyici bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Algı yönetimi üzerindeki etkisi, özgünlük, entegrasyon ve stratejik uyum ilkelerine dayanmaktadır. Etkili biçimde yönetildiğinde stratejik iletişim, meşruiyet ve performans üreten soyut bir kaynak hâline gelmektedir. Teorik açıdan bu çalışma, stratejik iletişimin soyut bir varlık olarak kavramsallaştırılmasını güçlendirerek literatüre katkı sunmaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca RBV yaklaşımını algı yönetimi alanına uygulayarak iletişim çalışmalarını stratejik yönetim literatürüyle ilişkilendirmekte ve iletişim yeteneklerinin rekabet avantajı yaratabileceğini göstermektedir. Uygulamalı açıdan bakıldığında ise bulgular, örgütlerin iletişim fonksiyonlarını profesyonelleştirmesi, mesajları platformlar arasında entegre etmesi ve özgünlüğe öncelik vermesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle KSS ve sürdürülebilirlik iletişiminde taktiksel yaklaşımlar inandırıcılığı zedeleyebilir. Dahası, paydaşların görsel ve sembolik temsilcileri giderek daha fazla sorguladığı günümüzde, özgün ve süreç temelli kimlik inşasına yönelik talep artmaktadır.