



Corporate image and reputation in B2B markets: Insights from CI/ARG 2008

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The Corporate Identity/Associations Research Group—CI/ARG—is an informal assembly of international scholars interested in how people think about and respond to companies, primarily with respect to issues surrounding corporate brands, identities, images, and reputations (Dacin & Brown, 2006). At the time of formation of the CI/ARG, many academic researchers studied topics such as company image or reputation, corporate branding, boycotting behavior, organizational identification and green marketing, however, few of these researchers communicated with each other. Thus, the initial goal of the CI/ARG was to integrate and cross-fertilize these disparate research streams with a longer term aspiration that this research on corporate-level phenomena would comprise its own subarea of marketing and organizational research, much as Balmer (2001) called for attention to the notion of “corporate marketing.”

Since its initial meeting in Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2002 which established the research objectives of the CI/ARG (Dacin & Brown, 2002), the group continues to meet at venues such as Kingston, Ontario, Canada; Los Angeles, California; Tampa, Florida; Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and, in 2008, in Vancouver, Canada. CI/ARG conferences differ from most conventional, large academic conferences on at least two dimensions: First, there is no conference fee—delegates pay their own travel and accommodation expenses, and a host institution covers other costs. Second, there are no tracks, track chairs, session chairs or discussants—participants gather in one room, and everyone listens to everyone else while freely sharing their own comments, critiques, and ideas with the group.

Although relatively nascent, the CI/ARG is already beginning to make its presence felt in the marketing literature. Numerous outstanding scholars have participated during the relatively short

history of the CI/ARG, presenting high quality, insightful research and this research is now appearing in the best marketing journals. In addition, in 2006, the CI/ARG in association with the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science published a special issue of that journal focused on issues of corporate branding, identity, and customer response.

This year the CI/ARG is collaborating with Industrial Marketing Management to publish a special issue featuring selected papers from the 2008 CI/ARG Vancouver conference focused on the theme of corporate image and reputation in business-to-business (B2B) markets. Prior to submission to this special issue, the authors benefitted from the intellectual exchanges that took place during the presentation of their research at the Vancouver conference. All submitted papers then proceeded through the rigorous double-blind review process that submissions to Industrial Marketing Management usually entail. The nine articles in this volume of the journal are the result of this process.

1. Corporate brands, image, identity and reputation in B2B markets

General issues surrounding brands and their management continue to be of interest in the B2B marketing literature but have not garnered the same attention as they have in, say, the consumer marketing literature. A rough census of the articles appearing in Industrial Marketing Management during 2007 and 2008 reveals approximately 5% of the articles dealing specifically with B2B brands and brand management. Most of these articles, however, address issues about branded offerings of a firm rather than issues about corporate brands, images, identities or reputations in a B2B context. Since the journal's inception more than thirty years ago, only four articles dealt directly with the broader aspects of corporate associations, such as corporate image (Dowling, 1986; Sims, 1979), and corporate reputation

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