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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CORPORATE IMAGE FORMATION IN E-COMMERCE

Summary. This article examines the theoretical foundations of corporate image formation in e-commerce in the context of the digital transformation of the economy. In today's digital environment, corporate image is increasingly strategic. It shapes consumer trust, strengthens competitiveness, directs the behavioural responses of target audiences, and supports a company's market position. It is emphasised that, unlike in the traditional marketplace, corporate image in e-commerce is shaped by a broader range of factors, among which online reputation, digital customer experience, user-generated content, reviews, ratings, visual identity, and the algorithms of digital platforms play a particularly significant role. Because of this, there is a growing need to reconsider academic approaches to understanding and managing corporate image by taking into account the unique features of e-commerce.

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to further develop the theoretical provisions of corporate image formation in e-commerce and to substantiate the sequence of stages of its formation under contemporary digital conditions, taking into account consumer behavioural characteristics, the role of digital platforms, and the need to integrate marketing, reputational, technological, and communication tools into a coherent system of corporate image management.

Materials and methods. The materials used in this study include: (1) scholarly works by domestic and foreign authors focus on corporate image, brand management, digital marketing, behavioural economics, and online reputation management; and (2) analytical and statistical sources reflecting current trends in the development of e-commerce, patterns of consumers' digital behaviour, and the role of online reviews, ratings, and digital platforms in shaping brand perception.

The study used several scientific methods, each linked to specific research tasks. Theoretical generalisation and systematisation clarified the category of "corporate image", summarised scholarly approaches, and organised models relevant to its formation. Comparative analysis identified differences between traditional and digital approaches. Structural and logical modelling distinguished the main components of corporate image in e-commerce and made it possible to structure the sequence of stages of its formation. Analysis and synthesis substantiated the interrelationship between communication, reputational, technological, and behavioural factors influencing corporate image. Logical generalisation was then applied to formulate the study's final conclusions.

Results. The study found that corporate image in e-commerce constitutes a complex, multi-level system shaped through the interaction of communication, reputational, behavioural, technological, and emotional factors. It was demonstrated that the digital environment transforms the traditional mechanisms of corporate image formation by reinforcing the role of interactivity, personalisation, the speed of information dissemination, and the influence of external digital platforms. The evolution of scholarly models of corporate image formation was systematised, and it was established that, in the context of the digital economy, the most relevant is an integrated model combining marketing, behavioural, and technological approaches. The sequence



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of stages of corporate image formation in e-commerce was substantiated and structured, encompassing five interrelated stages: diagnosis of the current image, identification of the target image and strategic positioning, development of an image formation strategy, implementation of image-building measures, and monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of the results. In addition, the principal directions for strengthening corporate image were structured according to their external and internal dimensions.

Prospects for further research. Future scholarly research should focus on developing tools for the quantitative assessment of corporate image in e-commerce, as well as on identifying a set of indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of image-building measures in the digital environment. This would improve the methodological support for corporate image management and enhance the validity of managerial decision-making in e-commerce.

Key words: corporate image, e-commerce, digital economy, digital marketing, brand, digital communications, consumer behaviour, digital platforms.

Problem statement. In the contemporary economy, characterised by the digitalisation of business processes, the expansion of e-commerce, and the transformation of consumer behaviour, approaches to enterprise management are undergoing significant change. Under conditions of information overload, corporate image functions not merely as an element of marketing policy, but also as a key factor in differentiation and in building consumer trust. According to international analytical platforms, the global e-commerce market has exceeded USD6.3 trillion [1]. At the same time, empirical studies indicate that around 70% of consumers take online reviews and the level of trust in a brand into account when making purchasing decisions [2]. Thus, in the digital environment, corporate image becomes a decisive factor in competitiveness.

A distinctive feature of e-commerce is that interaction between the enterprise and the consumer occurs predominantly in the digital space, without physical contact. This, in turn, considerably enhances the role of online reputation, brand visual identity, digital customer experience, and social proof, particularly in the form of consumer reviews and ratings. However, the problem is that traditional approaches to corporate image formation do not fully account for the specific characteristics of the digital environment.

Despite the substantial body of research on corporate image, branding, and digital marketing, most studies focus on only certain aspects of this issue. By contrast, a comprehensive theoretical substantiation of corporate image formation in e-commerce, taking into account digital platforms, algorithmic influences, and the need for further development of quantitative evaluation tools, remains underdeveloped, underscoring the need for further scholarly research.

Recent research and publications analysis. While recognising the contribution of scholars to the development of the theory of corporate image and brand management, it should be noted that these concepts were formed primarily within the context of the traditional economy. Accordingly, scholarly approaches to the interpretation of image are largely based on the use of classical marketing communications and branding tools. Among the most prominent scholars who contributed to the theoretical substantiation of the essence of image and brand equity are D. Aaker [3], K. Keller [4], and Ph. Kotler [5], who regard image as a set of associations and perceptions formed in the consumer's mind.

The further development of scholarly approaches took place within the corporate perspective, in which image is interpreted as the result of the interaction between corporate identity, organisational culture, and communication processes. A significant contribution to the advancement of these approaches was made by G. Dowling [6] and J. Balmer [7], who regard image as a strategic intangible asset of the enterprise.

Contemporary research has developed in the context of the digital transformation of the economy. It incorporates a behavioural perspective, emphasizing cognitive and emotional mechanisms of perception (D. Kahneman [8]; R. Thaler [9]). In digital marketing, corporate image is seen as the result of interactions between enterprises and consumers. This occurs through digital platforms, social media, and user experience (D. Chaffey [10]; D. Ryan [11]; A. Kaplan [12]; M. Haenlein [12]). Among Ukrainian scholars who address these issues, V. Bokovets [13], O. Harmatiuk [14], and S. Podzihun [14] focus on corporate image as a multi-component system. They note it is shaped by marketing communications, digital tools, and factors of the competitive environment.

Both foreign and Ukrainian scholars have made substantial contributions. However, the issues surrounding corporate image formation in e-commerce remain insufficiently systematised. This process is inherently interdisciplinary. It requires further theoretical substantiation, which underscores the relevance of this study.

The purpose of this article is to further develop the theoretical provisions of corporate image formation in e-commerce and to substantiate the sequence of stages of its formation under contemporary digital conditions, taking into account consumer behavioural characteristics, the role of digital platforms, and the need to integrate marketing, reputational, technological, and communication tools into a coherent system of corporate image management.

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The study used several scientific methods, each linked to specific research tasks. Theoretical generalisation and systematisation clarified the category of “corporate image”, summarised scholarly approaches, and organised models relevant to its formation. Comparative analysis identified differences between traditional and digital approaches. Structural and logical modelling distinguished the main components of corporate image in e-commerce and made it possible to structure the sequence of stages of its formation. Analysis and synthesis substantiated the interrelationship between communication, reputational, technological, and behavioural factors influencing corporate image. Logical generalisation was then applied to formulate the study's final conclusions.

Presentation of the main research findings. The term *image* is of Latin origin and is associated with the words *imago* and *imitari*, which may be translated as “image”, “representation”, as well as “to imitate” or “to reproduce”. In the context of Ancient Rome, particularly in the second and third centuries BC, the term *imago* denoted posthumous masks made of wax or plaster, reproduced directly from the facial features of members of the nobility. Such masks were kept within the family household and performed an important socio-cultural function, particularly during funeral rites, where they served as a means of visualising lineage and the symbolic continuity between generations [15]. The further evolution of the semantics of this concept occurred through the Old French word *image*, which was integrated into the English lexicon in the thirteenth century. In its early stages of use, the term was primarily associated with material and imagined forms of representation, including statues, portraits, mirror reflections, and mental images. In medieval European tradition, the term's meaning was expanded to include interpretations such as “phantom”, “ghost”, or “abstract idea” [16].

The modern understanding of the category of *image* as a public image, a reputational construct, or a deliberately shaped perception of an object emerged in the early twentieth century. Initially, its use was limited (from the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately from 1908 onwards); however, during the 1930s-1950s, the term became significantly more widespread in connection with the rapid development of advertising and public relations [17]. At the same time, as early as 1806, Noah Webster's dictionary recorded the concept of *image* as an artificially created reproduction of the external appearance of a person or object [18]. Today, image is understood not merely as “how one is perceived”, but as a deliberately constructed representation in the minds — and even the subconscious — of people, composed of rational components (facts, achievements, appearance) as well as emotional and irrational components (associations, stereotypes, and feelings of trust or sympathy).

Thus, corporate image constitutes one of the key categories of contemporary economic science, situated at the intersection of marketing, communication management, behavioural economics, and strategic management. In general terms, corporate image is interpreted as an integral set of perceptions, associations, and evaluations formed in the minds of stakeholders under the influence of informational signals, interaction experience, and the social context (Keller K. L. [4]; Aaker D. A. [3]).

In classical branding concepts [3; 4; 19], image is a set of associations. These include functional characteristics (quality, price, reliability), symbolic attributes (status, style, identity), and emotional components (trust, sympathy, loyalty).

Thus, an image performs not only an informational but also a behavioural function, influencing consumers' decision-making. In this context, an image serves as an element of brand equity that ensures the enterprise's long-term competitiveness.

At the same time, within the corporate approach, image is viewed as the outcome of interactions among internal and external factors, including corporate culture, values, communication strategies, and social responsibility (Dowling G. R. [6]). This underscores its strategic nature and integrative character.

The development of digital technologies and the transformation of economic relations have significantly changed the conditions under which enterprises operate. The active phase of the transition to the digital economy occurred from 2010–2020, when digital solutions were adopted on a mass scale, e-commerce developed rapidly, and traditional business models were reconsidered. Subsequently, beginning in 2020, the digital economy assumed a dominant role, leading to a transformation in approaches to corporate image formation and the growing importance of digital channels for consumer interaction.

Contemporary research confirms that, within the digital economy, corporate image is increasingly shaped by online reputation, user-generated content, and digital communications. For example, the likelihood of purchasing products with at least 5 reviews increases by 270% compared with products with no reviews, while companies with excellent ratings receive approximately 31% higher customer spending [20]. Another significant feature of the digital environment is the high sensitivity of corporate image to negative information. Studies show that up to 40% of potential buyers may refrain from purchasing a product or service because of negative reviews, while more than 50% of users avoid brands with low ratings [21]. This indicates that corporate image in e-commerce is highly vulnerable to reputational risks and therefore requires continuous management.

Whereas under traditional market conditions, image was formed primarily through one-way communication channels (advertising and public relations), in the digital environment, it acquires an interactive, dynamic, and decentralised character. This means that an enterprise no longer retains full control over shaping its own image, since a substantial part of the information environment is created by users and digital platforms.

It should be noted that digitalisation alters a number of the key parameters of corporate image.

1. Sources of corporate image formation. In the traditional economy, enterprises shaped their corporate image mainly through controlled communications like advertising, public relations, and branding. By contrast, in the digital environment, the decisive role is played by reviews and ratings (Amazon, Rozetka, Google Reviews), social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok), and user-generated content, including video reviews, comments, and recommendations. Products with many reviews see much higher conversion rates. This shows social proof now dominates corporate image formation.

2. Speed of corporate image formation. In the traditional model, the corporate image formed gradually over a relatively long period. In the digital environment, however, this process is virtually instantaneous: information spreads in real time, and reputation may change within a matter of hours. For instance, viral social media content can boost brand awareness, whereas a negative review or public scandal can immediately reduce trust.

3. Degree of personalisation. Digital technologies allow a high degree of personalised interaction. Algorithms analyse user behaviour and generate individual offers. This process creates a multidimensional corporate image. Personalised recommendations may boost companies' revenues by 10–15%, confirming the importance of personalisation for a positive corporate image.

4. Control over corporate image. In the context of the digital economy, control over corporate image becomes decentralised and multi-layered, as the process of its formation extends beyond the exclusive influence of the business entity itself. Whereas under traditional conditions an enterprise could exercise relatively full control over image-related communications through managed channels such as advertising, public relations, and brand communications, in the digital environment, this control is distributed among several key actors. First, the enterprise generates core image signals through official communications, such as its website, social media, advertising, and content marketing. Second, consumers co-create the image by posting reviews, comments, ratings, and recommendations, which often enjoy more trust than the company's official statements. Third, digital platforms, including marketplaces, search engines, and social media, use algorithms that set brand visibility through ranking, personalised recommendations, and content moderation. Accordingly, the algorithms of digital platforms are important in determining consumers' access to information about the enterprise. They influence both the level of audience reach and how consumers perceive the enterprise. As a result, corporate image is shaped as a dynamic system that emerges from interactions between corporate communications, consumer-generated content, and digital platform mechanisms. This requires a comprehensive approach to digital reputation management. It is also necessary to account for the operational characteristics of algorithms in the formation of corporate image.

Thus, in the digital economy, corporate image is transformed from a relatively stable and controllable category into a dynamic, interactive system shaped by a multiplicity of factors. Its key characteristics include openness and transparency, dependence on consumer behaviour, integration of technological and communication factors, and rapid change. This calls for reconsidering traditional approaches to corporate image management and introducing new tools and approaches oriented towards the digital environment, taking into account user experience, online reputation, and algorithmic mechanisms.

All of the above illustrates the evolutionary nature of the category of corporate image, transitioning from classical marketing concepts to integrated models that consider the digital environment and consumer behaviour. Each scholarly model thus reflects the specific features of its corresponding stage in economic development and the dominant managerial approaches of the era. To bridge these scholarly approaches, the models of corporate image formation have been systematised, as presented in Table 1.

Classical and brand-oriented models focus primarily on the communicative and symbolic aspects of image, whereas corporate approaches emphasize the enterprise's internal characteristics and identity. Behavioural models, in turn, take into account the psychological mechanisms underlying consumer perception, thereby allowing for a deeper explanation of the process of corporate image formation. Contemporary digital models expand traditional approaches by incorporating factors such as user experience, online communication, and digital platforms, indicating the transformation of the corporate image from a relatively static characteristic into a dynamic system formed through continuous interaction between the enterprise and consumers. In this context, the integrated model of corporate image formation appears to be the most relevant in the digital economy, as it combines marketing, behavioural, and technological approaches. Its application enables consideration of the multidimensional nature of corporate image and enhances the effectiveness of its management in e-commerce.

The development of an integrated approach to corporate image formation requires a more detailed examination of its structural components. In this regard, it is advisable to distinguish the principal components of

Table 1

Evolution of models of corporate image formation

Model	Essence	Key elements	Advantages	Limitations
Classical marketing model (1950s–1980s)	image as the result of communications	advertising, public relations, brand	ease of implementation; clear logic of construction	low level of interactivity; limited adaptability to digitalisation
Brand-oriented model (1980s–1990s)	image as part of brand equity	brand associations, loyalty	strategic character; long-term brand value	does not consider digital platforms; adapts slowly to environmental changes
Corporate model (1990s)	image as a reflection of corporate identity	corporate culture, values, mission	comprehensive approach to the perception of the enterprise	complexity of management; slow pace of change in corporate perception
Behavioural model (2000s–2010s)	image through the consumer's perception of the enterprise	emotions, cognitive responses, loyalty, behavioural intentions	enables an understanding of consumer behaviour and the psychological mechanisms underlying attitudes towards the brand	difficulty of measuring emotional and cognitive characteristics
Digital model (2010s–2020s)	image through online interaction	user experience (UX), social media, content	oriented towards actual digital consumer behaviour	dependence on technologies, platforms, and algorithms
Integrated model (2020 onwards)	synthesis of all approaches	brand + UX + reputation + algorithms	analytical precision; combination of strategic and operational image management	complexity of practical implementation; the need for continuous updating of the toolkit

Source: compiled by the author based on [4; 5–13; 19]

corporate image in e-commerce, each of which performs a specific function in shaping consumers' perception of the brand.

The functional component encompasses the objective characteristics of the enterprise's offering. These include product quality, pricing levels, and logistical efficiency. These parameters form the consumer's basic perception of the enterprise's reliability. Delivery speed, in particular, serves as a key factor that directly influences customer satisfaction.

The communication component is associated with the formation of corporate image through content, advertising messages, and communication style. In the digital environment, the enterprise's presence on social media is particularly important, as it enables continuous interaction with consumers and shapes consumers' emotional perceptions of the brand.

The reputational component reflects users' evaluations of the enterprise and includes reviews, ratings, and other forms of social proof. For example, a high rating (4.8 out of 5) may signal quality and significantly influence the purchase decision.

The technological component encompasses the features of the enterprise's digital infrastructure, including the quality of its website and mobile application and its overall usability. A user-friendly interface and the platform's speed contribute to a positive user experience, which directly influences corporate image.

The emotional component characterises consumers' subjective attitudes towards the enterprise and includes such elements as trust, affinity, and loyalty. It is this component that underpins the development of long-term customer relationships and contributes to the consolidation of a positive corporate image.

Corporate image in e-commerce has a multi-layered structure. A key role is played not only by product quality, but also by the user's digital interaction experience with the enterprise. The technological component is of particular importance. It did not exert a decisive influence in the traditional economy.

Based on the above, there is a clear need to substantiate and structure the sequence of stages of corporate image formation that takes into account the specific features of e-commerce, integrates contemporary digital tools, and ensures the coherence of its communicative, behavioural, and technological components (Figure 1). The absence of a systematic approach to corporate image management in the digital environment may lead to fragmentation in image-building influences and a reduction in the effectiveness of consumer interaction.

The proposed sequence of stages is based on several fundamental principles.

The principle of systemicity states that corporate image comes from the coordinated work of all subsystems, including marketing, service, logistics, customer support, SMM, content management, review management, and employer branding. Corporate image is not created solely by advertising but is the result of overall enterprise perception.

The principle of integrity means that all external and internal manifestations of the enterprise must correspond to a unified corporate image concept. Website design, communication style, content quality, the tone of responses in messengers, advertising positioning, and public reputation-related activities should all be logically interconnected.

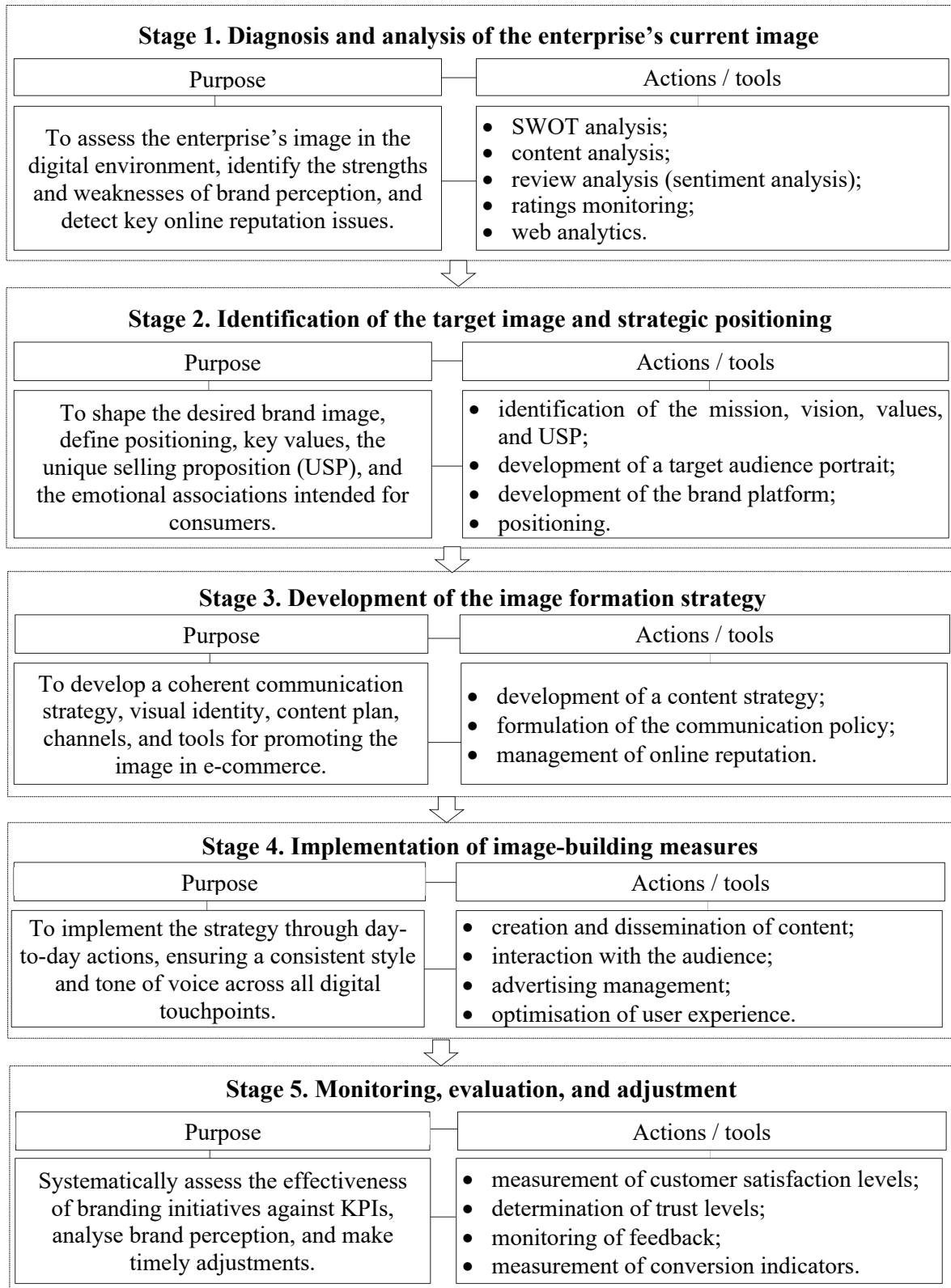


Fig. 1. The sequence of stages of corporate image formation in e-commerce
 Source: compiled by the author

The principle of customer orientation focuses not only on conveying a desired corporate image but also on the actual expectations, needs, motives, and behavioural patterns of the target audience. In the digital environment, the corporate image is shaped by consumer perception rather than solely by the enterprise's intentions.

The principle of adaptability requires the continuous adjustment of image policy in response to changes in the market environment, trends in e-commerce, platform algorithms, competitors' behaviour, and audience reactions.

The principle of evidence-based management means that corporate image management should rely on analytical data, including indicators of reach, conversion, tone of mentions, loyalty levels, repeat purchases, reviews, and users' behaviour on the website.

The principle of continuity implies that corporate image formation is not a one-off campaign, but rather an ongoing process of maintaining and improving the corporate image.

Thus, the above principles form the conceptual foundation of the proposed sequence of stages and determine the logic of its further implementation. As shown in Figure 1, this structured process reflects not only the sequence of managerial actions but also a conceptually coherent, cyclical system consisting of five interrelated stages that together form a closed loop of corporate image management, thereby ensuring its adaptability to the dynamic changes of the digital environment.

The first stage serves as the analytical foundation for the system. It is based on brand orientation and the initial levels of the brand perception model, focusing on brand awareness and presence in consumers' minds. During this stage, a comprehensive corporate image assessment is conducted. Internal analysis uses data from the customer database and web analytics. External monitoring includes review sentiment analysis, tracking social media mentions, and brand trust assessment. Contemporary digital analytics tools help collect objective information about the enterprise's perception. Key performance indicators include brand awareness, sentiment index, share of information presence, and negative review dynamics.

The second stage is strategic and shapes the desired corporate image in consumers' minds. Theoretically, it matches the stage of brand meaning formation and covers both functional and symbolic traits. Here, the brand's value system is developed, the unique selling proposition is defined, and emotional associations are created. Segmenting the target audience and constructing behavioural profiles ensures precise positioning. Effectiveness is measured by the strength, favourability, and uniqueness of brand associations, as well as by consumers' emotional attachment to the brand.

The third stage involves transforming the target corporate image into a coherent system of managerial decisions. Its theoretical foundation is the concept of integrated marketing communications, which ensures the consistency of all consumer interaction channels. Within this stage, a communication strategy is formulated, a content plan is developed, and the promotion channels and tools for audience engagement are identified. Particular attention is paid to ensuring the unity of the enterprise's visual and verbal identity. Effectiveness is assessed through indicators such as audience reach, engagement level, and growth in brand awareness.

The fourth stage is the operational phase, during which the corporate image is formed in practice through digital touchpoints with consumers. It corresponds to the level of forming evaluations and attitudes towards the brand and involves the creation and dissemination of content, active interaction with the audience, review management, and the optimisation of user experience. Ensuring consistency of communications across all channels and responding promptly to feedback are of particular importance. The key indicators at this stage include the conversion rate, average interaction duration, repeat purchase frequency, and the volume of user-generated content.

The fifth stage completes the cycle and ensures continuity. It uses an iterative management approach, with continuous measurement of results and strategy adjustment. In this stage, customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and the effectiveness of image-building actions are evaluated, along with an analysis of changes in corporate image perception. These results guide managerial decisions in response to external changes.

Thus, the proposed sequence of stages is comprehensive, integrating the analytical, strategic, and operational components of corporate image management. Its application contributes to the formation of a coherent corporate image, enhances consumer trust, and strengthens the enterprise's competitive position in e-commerce.

The enterprise's subsequent actions aim to strengthen its established corporate image. This is a continuous, multifaceted, and strategically significant process. It focuses not only on maintaining a positive perception but also on enhancing resilience, persuasiveness, and competitive value among key target audiences. Unlike the initial formation of a corporate image, which involves creating the desired perception of the enterprise, strengthening the image requires systematic efforts to consolidate positive associations, increase trust, reduce reputational vulnerability, and ensure consistency between the projected image and the actual experience of consumers, partners, employees, and stakeholders.

From a theoretical perspective, ways to strengthen corporate image should be seen as a combination of managerial, marketing, communication, organisational, behavioural, and technological measures. These are aimed

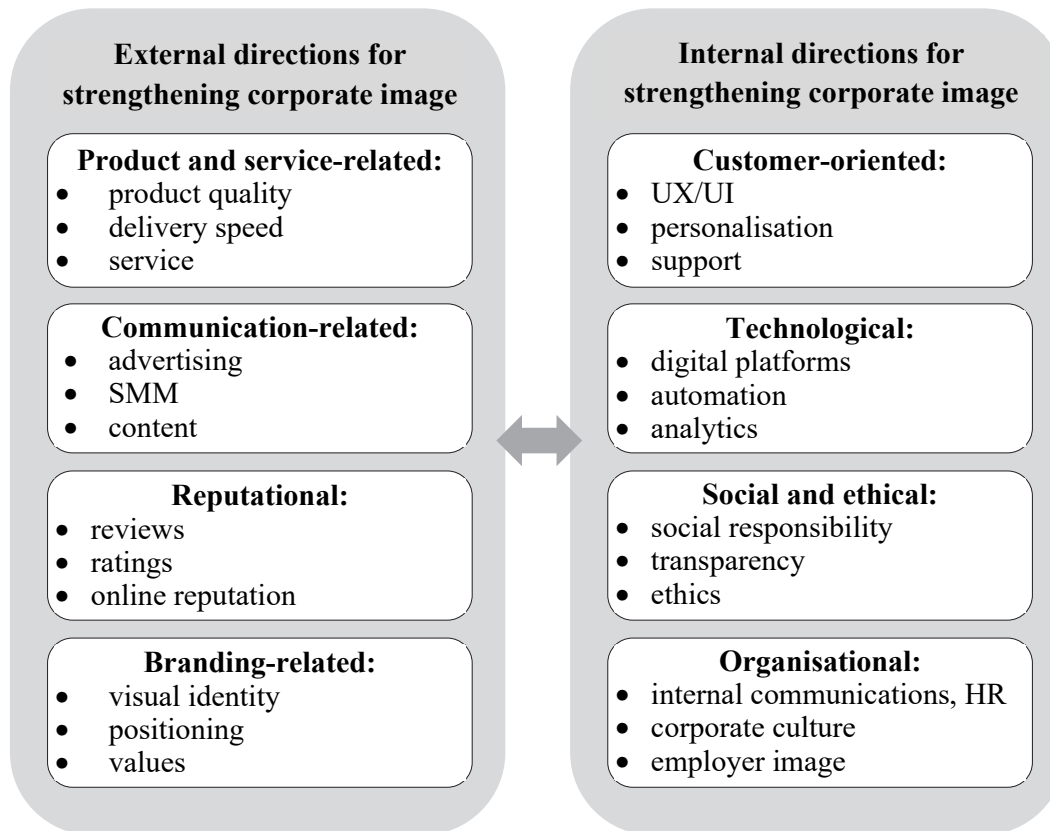


Fig. 2. Structuring the directions for strengthening corporate image by external and internal dimensions
 Source: compiled by the author based on [3–6; 13; 14; 20; 22–24]

at enhancing the enterprise’s positive perception, expanding trust, and reinforcing its competitive position in both external and internal environments. The effectiveness of such measures relies on their comprehensive and systemic application, not isolated efforts, and on their alignment with the enterprise’s strategic positioning. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider the principal directions for strengthening corporate image (Figure 2).

The proposed logic of strengthening corporate image is based on the idea that corporate image is shaped not only by external communications or internal resources. Instead, it emerges from the ongoing interaction between how the enterprise presents itself externally and how its internal processes genuinely confirm that image.

Product and service-related direction of corporate image strengthening. A fundamental condition for strengthening corporate image is the provision of consistently high product or service quality. Even the most professionally organised communication measures cannot ensure the long-term maintenance of a positive corporate image if the actual quality of the product, service, or customer experience falls short of consumer expectations. It is quality that provides the rational foundation for trust in the enterprise and lays the groundwork for the emergence of positive emotional associations.

In the context of corporate image strengthening, quality should be regarded not merely as a property of the product, but as a broader category encompassing the reliability with which the brand’s promises are fulfilled, the consistency of actual characteristics with those declared, the quality of service, the convenience of the purchasing process, the speed of delivery, the effectiveness of after-sales support, and the enterprise’s willingness to resolve problematic situations promptly. If consumers repeatedly have a positive experience interacting with the enterprise, corporate image ceases to be merely an informational construct and becomes a stable conviction reinforced by practice. Thus, one of the most important ways to strengthen corporate image is to confirm already formed positive perceptions through a high-quality, real consumer experience. It is precisely this factor that ensures the transition from a situational positive impression to enduring reputational value.

One of the key ways of strengthening corporate image is to ensure the consistency of all the enterprise’s communications. Corporate image is weakened when different channels transmit contradictory signals or when declared values are not supported by the brand’s actual messages and behaviour. By contrast, communication consistency helps to consolidate clear associations, enhance recognisability, and make the corporate image more stable in the minds of the audience. Such consistency should be maintained across several dimensions: substantive, stylistic, visual, and value-based. The substantive dimension requires the enterprise to communicate

interconnected meanings across channels and to avoid radical changes in positioning without strategic justification. Stylistic consistency implies a unified tone of communication aligned with the brand's character. Visual consistency concerns the stable use of colours, fonts, logos, graphic elements, and overall design aesthetics. Value-based consistency means alignment between what the enterprise declares and how it acts in practice. Accordingly, strengthening corporate image involves not simply increasing the volume of communication, but building a coherent communication field in which all signals reinforce one another.

Under current conditions, the enterprise's *reputational space* is shaped not only by the enterprise itself but also by consumers, platforms, bloggers, aggregators, search engines, and recommendation algorithms. This means that the enterprise must not merely disseminate positive information about itself, but must continuously monitor and analyse the entire information environment in which the enterprise is mentioned.

Online reputation management encompasses several areas: monitoring mentions, analysing message sentiment, handling negative reviews, amplifying positive user-generated content, responding promptly to conflicts, and maintaining an open dialogue with consumers. At the same time, it is essential that the enterprise's response to criticism should not be purely formal or defensive. On the contrary, constructive, courteous, and professional engagement with negative feedback often contributes more to strengthening corporate image than the complete absence of criticism, as it demonstrates responsibility, maturity, and a willingness to improve. Strengthening corporate image through online reputation, therefore, involves a shift from passive observation to active management of the reputational environment, in which every review, comment, or mention is treated as a meaningful signal related to the corporate image.

An important means of strengthening corporate image is the development of *branding* and *visual identity*. Visual elements significantly influence brand recognition, emotional perception, and the enterprise's ability to stand out from competitors. Strengthening corporate image through branding involves not only a logo or corporate colours, but a coherent visual code that is recognisable, consistent, meaningful, and aligned with the enterprise's positioning. For instance, a company seeking to project an innovative and technologically advanced corporate image should use a visual language that conveys dynamism, functionality, and digital aesthetics, whereas a brand focused on reliability and stability may benefit from more restrained design solutions. Equally important is the consistent application of visual identity across all points of contact, including the website, mobile applications, social media, email campaigns, packaging, advertising materials, presentations, and customer response templates. The more coherent this visual identity is, the more stable it becomes in the minds of the target audience.

A significant means of strengthening corporate image is the adoption of a *customer-oriented approach* across key business processes. The corporate image of a modern enterprise depends less on what it says about itself and more on how it treats the customer in practice. Therefore, service quality, convenience of interaction, accessibility of information, and readiness for dialogue are central to corporate image strengthening. This is especially important in e-commerce, where even minor inconveniences or delays can quickly damage corporate image, as consumers have many alternatives and easily compare experiences across brands.

For many enterprises, especially in e-commerce, an important way of strengthening corporate image is the demonstration of *innovativeness and technological maturity*. Consumers often associate brand quality with digital sophistication, convenience, speed of service, personalisation, and the overall modernity of interaction. Corporate image can therefore be strengthened through improved website functionality, chatbots, personalised recommendations, mobile solutions, omnichannel interaction, and automated order support. At the same time, technology should not become an end in itself, but serve as a means of improving convenience, speed, and service quality.

Implementation of *social responsibility and ethical conduct* is an effective way of strengthening corporate image. Consumers evaluate enterprises not only by product quality, but also by their social stance, environmental responsibility, ethical conduct, treatment of employees, and contribution to socially significant issues. Social responsibility enhances corporate image when it is not merely declarative, but embedded in the enterprise's value system. It may be reflected in charitable initiatives, community support, environmental programmes, honest communication, inclusiveness, and transparency. When integrated into communication policy, it reinforces the corporate image of the enterprise as a reliable and socially responsible market actor.

Development of *corporate culture and internal image* is an important means of strengthening corporate image. Employees shape external perceptions of the enterprise, as they embody its values and often become its first communicators. For this reason, internal image depends on a positive workplace climate, transparent communication, strong corporate culture, professional development, fair motivation, and employees' sense of belonging to the enterprise's mission. When staff share the company's values and take pride in their affiliation, this is reflected externally and strengthens corporate image. Under current conditions, the employer brand is especially important, as an enterprise's reputation as an employer is increasingly linked to its overall market corporate image.

The external and internal dimensions do not exist in isolation. They are in a constant cause-and-effect relationship. The external dimensions shape consumer expectations, market perceptions, and the brand's informational context. The internal dimensions show the enterprise's real ability to meet these expectations and maintain its public corporate image. This systemic interaction creates a resilient, credible, and competitive corporate image in the digital environment.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The study has confirmed that corporate image in e-commerce constitutes an important strategic factor in securing consumer trust, strengthening competitive advantages, and maintaining the enterprise's sustainable market position. It has been demonstrated that, under conditions of digitalisation, corporate image is shaped not only by traditional marketing communications, but also by a broader range of factors, including online reputation, digital customer experience, user-generated content, brand visual identity, the technological convenience of the platform, and the specific features of interaction with consumers in the digital environment. The key components of corporate image have been identified, and the sequence of stages of its formation has been substantiated and structured, based on the principles of systemicity, integrity, adaptability, and continuity, and involving the consistent integration of analytical, strategic, and practical actions. It has been established that strengthening corporate image in e-commerce should be carried out comprehensively by aligning its external and internal dimensions.

The practical value of the findings lies in their applicability to improve corporate image policy, enhance consumer trust, and ensure more effective brand management in e-commerce.

Future research should focus on developing tools for the quantitative assessment of corporate image in e-commerce, as well as on identifying an indicator system to evaluate the effectiveness of image-building measures in the digital environment. This would improve the methodological support for corporate image management and enhance the validity of managerial decision-making in e-commerce.

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ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ЗАСАДИ ФОРМУВАННЯ ІМІДЖУ ПІДПРИЄМСТВА У СФЕРІ ЕЛЕКТРОННОЇ КОМЕРЦІЇ

Анотація. Вступ. У статті досліджено теоретичні засади формування іміджу підприємства у сфері електронної комерції в умовах цифрової трансформації економіки. Обґрунтовано, що в сучасному цифровому середовищі імідж підприємства набуває стратегічного значення, оскільки впливає на рівень довіри споживачів, конкурентоспроможність, поведінкові реакції цільової аудиторії та стійкість ринкових позицій. Акцентовано, що на відміну від традиційного ринку, в електронній комерції імідж формується під впливом ширшого кола чинників, серед яких особливу роль відіграють онлайн-репутація, цифровий клієнтський досвід, користувацький контент, відеуки, рейтинги, візуальна ідентичність та алгоритми цифрових платформ. У зв'язку з цим виникає потреба в оновленні наукових підходів до розуміння та управління іміджем підприємства з урахуванням специфіки e-commerce.

Мета. Метою дослідження є поглиблення теоретичних положень щодо формування іміджу підприємства у сфері електронної комерції та обґрунтування послідовності етапів його формування з урахуванням сучасних цифрових умов, поведінкових характеристик споживачів, ролі цифрових платформ і необхідності інтеграції маркетингових, репутаційних, технологічних і комунікаційних інструментів у цілісну систему управління іміджем.

Матеріали і методи. Матеріалами дослідження є: 1) наукові праці вітчизняних і зарубіжних авторів, що присвячені проблематиці іміджу підприємства, бренд-менеджменту, цифрового маркетингу, поведінкової економіки та управлінню онлайн-репутацією; 2) аналітичні та статистичні джерела, що відображають сучасні тенденції розвитку електронної комерції, цифрової поведінки споживачів, ролі онлайн-відеуків, рейтингів і цифрових платформ у формуванні сприйняття бренду.

У процесі дослідження використано такі наукові методи: теоретичного узагальнення та систематизації (для уточнення сутності категорії "імідж підприємства", узагальнення наукових підходів до його трактування та систематизації моделей формування іміджу); порівняльного аналізу (для виявлення відмінностей між традиційними та цифровими підходами до формування іміджу підприємства); структурно-логічного моделювання (для виокремлення основних компонентів іміджу підприємства в електронній комерції та структурування послідовності етапів його формування); аналізу і синтезу (для обґрунтування взаємозв'язку між комунікаційними, репутаційними, технологічними та поведінковими чинниками формування іміджу); логічного узагальнення (для формулювання висновків дослідження).

Результати. У результаті дослідження встановлено, що імідж підприємства у сфері електронної комерції є складною багаторівневою системою, яка формується в процесі взаємодії комунікаційних, репутаційних, поведінкових, технологічних та емоційних чинників. Доведено, що цифрове середовище змінює традиційні механізми формування іміджу, посилюючи роль інтерактивності, персоналізації, швидкості поширення інформації та впливу зовнішніх цифрових платформ. Систематизовано еволюцію наукових моделей

формування іміджу підприємства та визначено, що в умовах цифрової економіки найбільш релевантною є інтегрована модель, яка поєднує маркетингові, поведінкові та технологічні підходи. Обґрунтовано та структуровано послідовність етапів формування іміджу підприємства в електронній комерції, що охоплює п'ять взаємопов'язаних етапів: діагностику поточного іміджу, визначення цільового іміджу та стратегічного позиціонування, розроблення стратегії формування іміджу, реалізацію іміджевих заходів, а також моніторинг, оцінку й коригування результатів. Також структуровано основні напрями зміцнення іміджу підприємства за зовнішніми та внутрішніми складовими.

Перспективи. У подальших наукових дослідженнях доцільно зосередити увагу на розробленні інструментарію кількісного оцінювання іміджу підприємства у сфері електронної комерції, а також на визначенні системи показників, що дають змогу оцінити ефективність іміджевих заходів у цифровому середовищі. Це сприятиме вдосконаленню методичного забезпечення управління іміджем підприємства та підвищенню обґрунтованості управлінських рішень у сфері e-commerce.

Ключові слова: імідж підприємства, електронна комерція, цифрова економіка, цифровий маркетинг, бренд, цифрові комунікації, поведінка споживачів, цифрові платформи.