Academic Research

A Corporate Character Scale to Assess Employee and Customer Views of Organization Reputation

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ABSTRACT

How employees and customers perceive the reputation of an organization will influence their behavior towards it. Particularly in a service business, the perspectives of employee and customer are seen as interdependent. Gaps between the two have been seen as potential causes of crises. Reported here is the development of a corporate character scale to assess the reputation of an organization from both perspectives. Potential dimensions and items are drawn from relevant literatures and from primary research. Surveys of 2,061 employees and 2,565 customers in 49 different business units of 13 organizations are used to provide data. Five major and two minor dimensions of corporate character are identified. These are labeled: Agreeableness (honest, socially responsible); Competence (reliable, ambitious); Enterprise (innovative, daring); Ruthlessness (arrogant, controlling); Chic (stylish, exclusive); Informality (easy going) and Machismo (tough). The practical implications of the dimensions and the items used to measure them are discussed, including an analysis of those aspects of corpo-rate character that correlate with customer and employee satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

A number of models of organization repu-tation see the customer and employee perspectives as being inter-linked or inter-dependent (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Fombrun, 1996; Davies and Miles, 1998). If a customer-facing employee and the custo-mer share a positive view of the organiza-tion then a positive interaction between them is more likely to occur. Specifically, the view that customer-facing employees have of their organization is held to influ-ence the impression that customers form of the organization (de Chernatony, 1999) because the contact between customers and employees can shape the image customers hold of it (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001). Custo-mers catch the displayed emotions of employees through a process of 'emotional contagion' and this affects their image of the service they receive (Pugh, 2001). This is likely to be more important in organiza-

tions with a high level of interaction between employees and customers, for example services such as hotels, restaurants and fashion stores. What managers do inside such companies can affect how the customer is treated and how the customer regards the provider. For example, how employees are rewarded will affect their relationships with customers (Rousseau and Wade-Benzoni, 1994). If there are links between the internal and external perspectives, then the potential exists to influence both simultaneously. For example, a corporate website can be used to communicate a company's mission and vision, and this can influence how various stakeholders perceive the organization (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Chun and Davies, 2001). Managers should therefore be cognisant of any differences between the content of communications that might affect employees and customers directly or indirectly and the current perceptions held by both.

Companies might also seek to create a positive internal view so as to create a positive external view. They should align internal and external perceptions (Hatch and Schultz, 2001) to reduce any gaps or relational difference between the internal and external views of the company's reputation. Significant gaps between the way internal and external stakeholders see the organization have been associated with future crises (Dowling, 1994: 92). Gaps can be created if management have a different view of what their organization should stand for, compared with how employees see the reality and what customers actually experience (Davies and Miles, 1998). For example, if an organization tries to create an external perception of being ethical and socially responsible, while in reality it exploits its workforce, then it risks its true character being exposed in the media and thence to customers to the detriment of its overall reputation and commercial success. Enron's management promoted a number

of 'values' inside of its organization, one being 'integrity'. Enron was ranked highly in *Fortune's* America's Most Admired Companies rankings, specifically for innovation and the quality of its management, such rankings representing the perspectives of business people and business analysts, rather than customers. How some employees saw the Enron organization was somewhat different, as was clear from the testimony of whistle blower Sherron Watkins. Enron is an extreme example of gaps existing between the perceptions of different stakeholder groups, but if *any* gaps are potentially damaging for an organization, then ways of measuring gaps are needed.

The interfaces between the external and internal perspectives of a corporate reputation have been explored (eg Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Carter and Deephouse, 1999) but such studies have not been able to measure both perspectives simultaneously using the same or similar measures. Testing for gaps and linkages between the two would be facilitated by a measure validated for both perspectives.

How reputation is measured will depend on how it is defined. In their work the authors see 'reputation' as something that is dependent upon actual experience of the organization, as compared to 'image' for example, which is often used to refer to an opinion that is independent of actual experience. The authors were also influenced in their thinking by definitions of reputation that emphasize the affective nature of the construct such as 'the net affective or emotional reaction . . . to the company's name' (Fombrun, 1996: 37).

DIRECT MEASURES OF REPUTATION

There exist a number of strategies for measuring corporate reputation. Respondents can be asked quite simply to rate 'the reputation' of a firm from poor to

good (Goldberg and Hartwick, 1990). Such measures are not designed to explain why one firm has a better reputation than another. A number of generic scales (scales that can be applied to a wide range of organizations) exist that can be used to compare firms in more detail. Respondents to *Fortune*'s America's Most Admired Companies annual survey are asked to rate companies on eight criteria: quality of management, quality of products and services, innovativeness, long-term investment value, financial soundness, employee talent, use of corporate assets, social responsibility and overall company results. The measure has been useful in academic research (see for example Sobol and Farrelly, 1988 and McGuire, 1988), but *Fortune*'s criteria have also been criticized because they have no theoretical foundation as measures of the reputation construct and for being focused on financial performance (Fryxell and Wang, 1994). The authors would add their own view that not all organizations they would want to assess are 'for profit'. An improvement has been that of Fombrun *et al.* (2000), whose dimensions include an emotional appeal factor (admire, respect, trust) that can assess how members of the public feel about a firm, rather than just how they perceive its performance financially. Similar approaches to that of *Fortune* can be seen in UK's *Management Today* Britain's Most Admired Companies and *Asian Business* Asia's Most Admired Companies. Other measures have been developed to assess reputation from the perspective of customers (eg van Riel and Balmer, 1997).

The work reported here aims to develop the options available for measuring reputation and to validate a generic scale capable of assessing both internal and external perspectives, distinguishing between them and between the perspectives that either group might have of other organizations.

THE PERSONIFICATION METAPHOR AS A MEASUREMENT APPROACH

Corporate reputation is a complex construct. Metaphor is often useful to make what is complex accessible for researcher and respondent alike (Black, 1962). The device of equating the company with a person is an accepted way of aiding an understanding of the target concept using something with which one is more familiar (Morgan, 1983). The authors' approach adopts the personification metaphor and will draw on a number of literatures to identify potential traits that will identify what they label as 'corporate character' as their measure of the perceptions of employees and customers. The authors define corporate character as 'how a stakeholder distinguishes an organization, expressed in terms of human characteristics'. The authors chose the label of 'character' as, although it is similar to the term 'personality', their definition differs from definitions of brand personality that are in turn more concerned with brand image than with corporate reputation. The word also evokes the idea that it is useful to identify what makes an organization different in the eyes of different stakeholders. The authors' decision to adopt the personification approach was guided by their objectives to create a measurement tool that was generic, diagnostic and equally applicable to both employees and customers. It is not therefore a direct measure of reputation, but an example of a projective technique or an indirect measure.

In adopting this approach the authors are focusing on the emotional attachments that stakeholders have with an organization, for example, do they trust the company rather than do they think it is financially successful. The authors' choice of approach was influenced by the strong tradition of similar work. The personification metaphor (organization as person) has been used extensively to assess both internal and external

views of reputation or of allied constructs in a number of literatures. These were used as a starting point to identify dimensions and measurement items that might be useful to delineate the construct.

The Organization as Person Metaphor in Assessing External Views

There has been a tradition of assessing the customer's view of retailers using the 'organization as person' metaphor since Martineau (1958) first coined the expression 'the personality of the retail store'. Work followed aiming to identify the factors that could contribute to a store's image or reputation (eg Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974). Most studies, however, derived their own, context-specific, scales rather than attempted to develop a generic scale. Markham (1972: 62) was early in suggesting the use of a generic 'personality' scale to compare the customer's perception of any company with that of its competitors. He used bipolar scales, with items such as extrovert-introvert, efficient-inefficient, dishonest-honest, flexible-rigid, slow-fast, inventive-conventional.

The use of the 'brand as person' metaphor became a common device in researching the image of product and service brands (King, 1973; Hanby, 1999). The respondent is typically asked to imagine that the brand 'has come to life as a person' and can be asked to suggest what newspaper the person would read, what car it would drive and so on, until a picture is formed of the respondent's perception of the product or organization. What has been widely labeled as 'brand personality' has been seen as being accessible for researchers more through qualitative than through quantitative means (Durgee, 1988; Hanby, 1999) as it has been argued traditionally that brands have too diverse a range of imagery to be captured easily with a single scale. For example, British Airways has been described as 'reliable and

predictable', while competitor Virgin was described as 'exciting' (Knox et al., 2000). Other researchers have proposed generic, multidimensional scales to measure the image of any brand. In a similar way to Markham's approach, Batra et al. (1993) used the idea that the dimensions of human personality could also apply to measuring the personality of brands. They used Anderson's (1968) 555 human personality traits as a source and added three pairs of adjectives ('old' or 'young', 'masculine' or 'feminine', 'upscale' or 'downscale') from the literature on retail store image. Seven factors were defined using 35 items. Similarly Biel (1993) used 28 human descriptors to define brand image, including: 'family-oriented', 'responsible', 'rugged', 'peaceful', 'masculine', 'leader', 'gentle', 'feminine' and 'fancy'. In one of few large-scale studies, Aaker (1997) identified five dimensions for 'brand personality', each with a number of traits: Sincerity (eg honest, cheerful), Competence (eg reliable, successful), Sophistication (eg charming, upper class), Excitement (eg daring, imaginative) and Ruggedness (eg masculine, tough). The scale has been widely applied to assess the customers' view of a brand (eg Siguaw et al., 1999; Aaker and Williams, 1998; Aaker, 1999; Farhangmehr and Azevedo, 2000; Aaker et al., 2000).

Reputation is important in a business-to-business context where what has been referred to as the 'atmosphere' between organizations is seen as shaping the nature of transactions (Hakansson, 1982: 21). Positive atmospheres are seen as harmonious and based on trust and cooperation (Ford, 1997; Nielson, 1998). Similar descriptors are common in the marketing channels' literature, where creating trust between a principal and agent is seen as relying on having an image for 'honesty and empathy' (Kumar et al., 1995), for being 'fair, benevolent and helpful' (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The channels' literature also reflects

negative aspects of corporate personality and behavior with relationships and firms being characterized as 'coercive and conflictual' (Geyskens *et al.*, 1998) and 'dominant and punitive' (Kumar *et al.*, 1998).

Personification has also been used in the reputation literature. Bernstein (1984: 208) suggested the reputation of an organization could be captured along a number of dimensions including 'integrity, innovation, social responsibility, reliability and imagination'. The elements of a superior reputation have been explained using words such as 'trustworthy and innovative' (Winkleman, 1999). Stakeholders in an organization may be interested in aspects of corporate character including 'trustworthiness, responsibility, reliability and credibility' (Fombrun, 1998). Social responsibility and innovativeness are two of the dimensions used in the *Fortune* rankings.

The Organization as Person Metaphor in Assessing Internal Views

The personification metaphor has been popular in describing the internal view of organizations. Argyris (1957) talked of the 'corporate personality manifesting energy'. Firms are advised to audit their 'personality or character' to understand their dominant mindset (Furnham and Gunter, 1993; Goffee and Jones, 1998). Senge (1990) distinguishes the 'learning' organization from the traditional 'authoritarian, controlling' organization, in describing 'corporate character'. Organizations can be thought of as having gender (Hofstede, 1991; Alvesson and Billing, 1992). Questionnaires exist to measure the culture of an organization using scale items that reflect human characteristics such as 'concern, aggression, creativity/innovation, supportiveness, dominance, risk taking, competitive, careful and socially responsible' (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991; Xenikou and Furnham, 1996).

Organizations are seen as having their negative as well as their positive sides.

They can be 'controlling' to the point where they become totalitarian (Schwartz, 1987). They can become 'sociopathic', exhibiting antisocial behaviors, which, while not necessarily immoral, are typical of an organization given to insincerity and negative actions and to being manipulative (Daneke, 1983). Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) identified five different styles of 'neurotic' behavior in organizations labeled as 'paranoid, compulsive, histrionic, depressive and schizoid'. They argue that any such traits will always be present to a greater or lesser extent. When they become exaggerated they become neuroses, promoting aberrant behaviors that society or individuals find unacceptable. They link these behaviors back to the fantasies of key organizational members, particularly those of dominant senior executives.

Lloyd (1990) presents a contrasting perspective, the 'nice' company, where 'niceness' is manifest in 'empathy towards society, good corporate manners and industrial neighborliness'. This contrasts with companies which might be motivated in the first place by a will to survive but in the second by greed. They bully, for example paying suppliers late. Their unethical behavior becomes institutionalized and sanitized with labels such as 'toughness and shrewdness'. Chatman and Jehn (1994) found differences between the cultures of different types of organization when measured using a culture scale that is similar in content to that of brand personality scales. Their seven dimensions are labeled: Innovation (eg risk taking, experimenting), Stability (eg predictable, security), People-oriented (eg fair, respect individuals' rights), Outcome-orientation (eg results and achievement-oriented), 'Easygoingness' (eg calm, reflective), Detail orientation (eg precise, analytical) and Team orientation (eg collaborative).

How employees are treated will influence their perception of corporate charac-

ter. For example, during an organizational change process, listening to employees' objections in a 'sincere, sympathetic' manner is important in developing trust so that employees can perceive their employer as 'competent, knowledgeable, open and concerned' (Fox and Amichai-Hamburger, 2001).

Dimensions of Human Personality

As organizations are composed of people, the authors deduced that the dimensions of human personality could offer a third source for measures of corporate character. Human personality can be described using the 'Big 5' dimensions, commonly labeled as: Agreeableness, Extroversion, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism (eg Costa and McCrae, 1992; Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Agreeableness reflects 'trust' (Costa and McCrae, 1995), a construct that is often used in assessing the internal and external reputation of companies. The human personality dimension has also been labeled as likeability, friendliness, social conformity, or love and is negatively associated with 'aggression and arrogance' (Barrick and Mount, 1993). Extraversion is frequently associated with being 'sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative and active' (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Hogan (1986) interprets extraversion as including two components, *Ambition* (initiative, surgency, ambition and impetuous) and Sociability (sociable, exhibitionist and expressive). Openness to Experience has been interpreted as intellect and culture in the context of human personality (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Digman, 1990). Some traits that are usually associated with this dimension include: being 'imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent and artistically sensitive' (Barrick and Mount, 1991) and a need for variety and unconventional values (McCrae and John, 1992). Conscientiousness has also been labeled as confor-

mity or dependability. Some researchers claim that conscientiousness reflects mainly dependability and, as such, being 'careful, thorough, responsible and organized' (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Digman (1990) also provides evidence suggesting that in addition to those traits, conscientiousness involves volitional variables, like 'hard-working, achievement oriented and persevering'. Neuroticism has also been called emotional stability, stability, or emotionality with associated traits of being 'anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, worried and insecure' (Barrick and Mount, 1991). With the exception of neuroticism, many of the items associated with the dimensions of human personality appear relevant as descriptions of organizations.

EXISTING SCALES AND APPROACHES

Table 1 provides an introduction to the authors' own scale development by summarizing much of the previous work that they found and were able to build upon. There are three different approaches in the literature to measuring how people see the organizations they deal with as internal or external stakeholders. Direct measures ask respondents to rate an organization's reputation in summary form (eg reputation as an employer is good or bad). Projective techniques often rely upon the 'organization as person' metaphor and upon the use of descriptors that are used to differentiate between people to describe how an organization is seen (if the organization came to life as a person, would it be sincere?). Both such techniques rely upon the idea that the same scale can be applied to a wide range of organizations, in other words they are intended to be generic and this allows comparison between studies. Qualitative techniques avoid these assumptions, may be based upon a suggested structure to guide the researcher but assume little about the way stakeholders perceive an organization. They can provide much richer data

Table 1:   Various Approaches to Measurement

	External focus	*Internal focus*
Generic Direct	Reputation (eg *Fortune*; Fombrun *et al.*, 2000)	Culture (eg Hofstede, 1991)
Generic Projective	Brand personality (eg Markham, 1972; Aaker, 1997; Batra *et al.*, 1993; Biel, 1993) Retail store image (eg Berry, 1969; Cavusgil *et al.*, 1991)	Culture (eg Chatman and Jehn, 1994; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991)
Qualitative	Reputation (eg Bernstein, 1984); Brand personality	(eg King, 1973; Durgee, 1988)

than can be obtained from more generic approaches. Qualitative techniques can also be used as the basis for a quantitative survey (eg van Rekom, 1997; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). The same qualitative approach may be relevant to both internal and external studies of the same organization but the results may not be easy to compare with those of others. Finally there are a number of both direct and projective techniques that can be used to assess both perspectives (see for example van Riel *et al.*, 1998).

The authors felt that there was a gap in the literature for a generic scale that provided a more diagnostic picture than could be obtained from most generic techniques but which was capable of measuring both internal and external perspectives to allow for comparisons.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT
The approach the authors used to create a scale is a trait approach that classifies or scales objects using terms (traits) derived from everyday language. A human personality trait for example is defined as any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which an individual differs from others (Guilford, 1973: 23). An organizational trait will also reflect that which is used in common parlance to distinguish one organization from another or which differentiates between the views of people about the same organization. As can be judged from

the forgoing review, there are a number of sources for items of potential value for a corporate character inventory and to help identify a framework of dimensions for the construct.

Dimensionality
The traits of corporate character will be words or phrases that are commonly used to describe an organization, drawn from those used to describe people. From the literature, the authors expected the construct to be multidimensional (for example, work on human personality and brand personality has typically identified five or more dimensions). The initial challenges in defining a scale to measure such a construct will then include identifying the likely dimensions of the target construct and potential scale items for each dimension.

The authors identified potential dimensions of corporate character first by looking for those common to both prior work on the internal and external perspectives of an organization and which were reflected in the human personality literature. The most obvious was that labeled 'agreeableness' in human personality, 'sincerity' in the brand image literature (Aaker, 1997) and 'people oriented' in the literature reflecting the internal view, that of culture (Chatman and Jehn, 1994). A second potential dimension reflects 'conscientiousness' in human personality, 'efficient-inefficient' in corporate reputation (Markham, 1972) and

'competence' in branding (eg Aaker, 1997). A third dimension surrounding the theme of 'innovation' in both reputation (eg Bernstein, 1984) and culture (eg Xenikou and Furnham, 1996) is allied to 'openness to experience' in human personality. In the literature on service quality the dimensions of credibility (trust), reliability (dependable), competence and courtesy (Zeithaml et al., 1990) are used to assess both internal and external views. The only negatively valenced dimension of human personality is Neuroticism. No obvious parallel exists in the branding and reputation literatures, but the same label is used to describe a negative organizational personality dimension (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984). Words or phrases used to describe these four dimensions were taken from the various literatures, concentrating on those common to validated scales, as potential items for the proposed instrument.

The authors' overall approach to the detail of scale development mirrors the various stages recommended by Churchill (1979) and Spector (1992). Such approaches have been criticized as lacking an input from the respondent (eg Smith, 1999) and the authors were careful to include their views as part of the process. The authors' approach had five stages.

Stage 1: Item Generation
Both deductive and inductive approaches are used to generate dimensions and items to describe them. Hinkin (1995) suggested that an inductive approach may start with qualitative interviews and use content analysis of relevant sources to identify themes and therefore possible items and dimensions, while a deductive approach starts with a theoretically based definition of the construct and its dimensions. The authors used both types of method. Having identified four potential dimensions of corporate character from the different literatures that they expected to be relevant,

qualitative research was undertaken to expand upon the initial list of items associated with each and to reduce the risk that potentially useful items and dimensions were being excluded.

Senior managers in 14 European and American commercial organizations were asked to describe how they managed corporate reputation. A total of 12 saw the promotion of 'core values', 'principles' or 'creeds' as central to this task. Examining the documents describing these the authors found items that were similar to or which complimented the items identified from their evaluation of the literature, for example, 'reliability, caring, innovation, trust, social responsibility, honor, honesty, integrity and fun'. The most commonly used items were those concerned with integrity.

Four focus groups were conducted to provide external views and three to provide internal views of two organizations. Two student groups and two employee groups of five–six individuals were invited to discuss their impressions of a business school. Two logos were used as stimuli. Each group member was asked to offer three positive and three negative adjectives to describe the type of organization that each logo might suggest and these were used as the basis for a discussion that generated further items. New items suggested included 'prestigious, elitist, interactive, distinguished, fresh, motivational, soft, welcoming, pretentious, boring, suffocating, laid-back, formal'. Next, two focus groups were organized in a business formed as the result of a merger. The coming together of two different cultures had caused problems, which provided the focus for the groups. Each member was asked to use adjectives to describe the original companies. Similar items emerged to those already collected, but new terms including 'aloof, controlling and unfriendly' were generated. Finally and following Saxe and Weitz (1982), one

focus group of 'experts' (researchers famil-
iar with the reputation field) was asked to
suggest items that employees and custo-
mers might use to verbalize the four
dimensions identified from the literature.
Items including 'supportive, concerned and
dominant' were added to the inventory.
The experts were also asked to discuss the
dimensions and items generated thus far.
The absence of a dimension reflecting the
idea that organizations have gender was
commented upon leading to the addition
of both 'masculine' and 'feminine' as items.
Other views included the idea that four
dimensions may not be enough to reflect
the diversity of themes that had emerged.
A number of items clustered around the
theme that both employees and customers
would be attracted towards more presti-
gious organizations and this was suggested
as a potential fifth dimension.

Stage 2: Validation of Generated Items
To validate the lists of items from the first
stage the authors content analyzed mission
and vision statements and corporate adver-
tising. Mission and vision statements can
express 'corporate character' (Campbell
and Tawaday, 1990) or 'personality'
(Want, 1986). To identify the items used
by companies, the authors analyzed state-
ments from 49 *Fortune 500* companies in
three different sectors (retailers, airlines and
banks) taken from their websites. The three
sectors were selected as having a large
number of representatives in the *Fortune
500*, so that any items could be checked
across a sector and because all three were
service sectors, the main focus of this
study. The authors also analyzed the copy
used in corporate advertising in business
magazines (such as *The Economist*) includ-
ing job adverts, to ensure that they had
reflected the main themes used to promote
corporate character internally and exter-
nally. Since both types of material will
contain only idealized items, the work was

used more to confirm than to generate
items. Mission and vision statements
tended to emphasize items concerned with
the competence of the organization, for
example 'reliability', or that companies saw
themselves as a 'leader' in their field. Not
surprisingly, firms were also concerned to
promote the idea that they were 'honest
and open' in their dealings with all stake-
holders. Social responsibility was a
common theme. In corporate advertising
the word 'innovation' was prominent,
with seven companies in one edition of
The Economist alone using the word in their
corporate advertisements. Items concerned
with the theme of agreeableness were also
prominent including 'collaborative, under-
standing and helpful'. A number of compa-
nies used the item 'sophisticated' to
describe their approach.

The literature review and qualitative
phase had identified nearly 200 items, too
many to be included in a questionnaire. A
total of 20 doctoral students and 10 faculty
in two business schools were invited to
assist in a refining process. Each was given
the list of items and asked to select any
item that was difficult to associate with the
personality of an organization that they
had worked for or of which they were cus-
tomers. Items identified by more than 80
per cent of participants were eliminated.
They included items from the literatures
on human personality (pleasure-seeking,
aloof, bossy, liberal, shy, mischievous,
quiet), marketing (cheap, value for money)
and culture/human personality (neurotic).
Obvious examples of duplication were
removed. In total, 113 items were retained
from this stage.

Finally, each person was asked to allocate
each remaining item into one of the five
expected dimensions: Agreeableness, Con-
scientiousness, Innovation, Neuroticism
and the one dimension to emerge from the
qualitative phase labeled 'prestige', to
ensure that sufficient items existed to assess

each of the expected dimensions and that there was some evidence that the dimensions could be identified reliably. Respondents consistently allocated 58 of the 113 items to the same factors indicating that sufficient items were retained to cover the expected dimensions. Agreeableness appeared as the dimension where there was most agreement. No further changes were made in item selection. Items were then randomly ordered in a pilot questionnaire.

Stage 3: Pilot Study

The main purpose of the pilot study was to validate the initial instrument containing 113 personality trait items. In total, 980 questionnaires were distributed to staff and graduate students at two business schools using internal mail or face-to-face interview. Of these, 719 usable questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 73 per cent. The respondents were asked to assess the image of their respective business school by imagining that it had 'come to life as a person' and to rate each item on a five-point Likert-type scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to indicate whether the item described such a person. Included in the student sample were a substantial number whose native language was not English (24.6 per cent). As the authors wished to eliminate any items with culturally specific meanings, their responses were given particular attention. For example one word 'Western' meant different things to respondents from different countries, something that was flagged up in face-to-face interviews and confirmed by the non-normal distribution of the responses. Many of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, again to identify why any item might be eliminated on grounds of unclear or multiple meaning.

The resulting data were subjected to factor analysis with varimax rotation. The scree plot suggested a seven-factor solution. The same number had eigenvalues higher

than 1. To avoid eliminating potentially useful factors, a nine-factor solution was adopted to screen the full data set. Any item that did not load onto any factor above 0.4 was eliminated. (The authors did not set the cut-off point higher as they did not want to eliminate items that might prove useful in the main survey.) Items identified with a high level of missing data and/or highlighted in the face-to-face interviews as not relevant in describing an organization were also eliminated. In total, 93 items were retained after this stage. Many of the items that had been eliminated were from the human personality literature. These proved relatively difficult to associate with an organization.

Stage 4: Scale Construction (Main Study)

Sample

Surveys were then conducted of the employee and customer views in 49 different business units of 13 corporate organizations using a questionnaire of 93 items. The organizations were: three industrial services companies, seven retailers, one bank, one manufacturer and one financial services company. The sample of organizations was not random as the authors needed to negotiate access for the survey of employees but they set out to include a wide range of types of company as well as a number from within a single sector (to judge whether the scale would be capable of differentiating between similar organizations). None of the corporate names coincided with any consumer product brand names that might have biased the results towards product image. The customer samples were drawn from those who were actual (not potential) customers as the authors believed that measuring reputation implies interviewing those with experience of the organization. As the internal perspective can vary with the part of the organization the employee works within and as

the authors were particularly interested in the customer interface in the context of reputation management, employees were surveyed only if they had a role that involved some customer contact. A total of 4,626 responses was obtained, of which 2,565 were customers and 2,061 customer-contact employees. The response rates varied with the methodology used. For most companies, interviews with customers were made face to face, yielding a high response rate of above 80 per cent. Employees were normally surveyed by distributing questionnaires at their workplace and collecting them a day or two later. Response rates varied from 33–80 per cent. In companies in business-to-business markets questionnaires were circulated by post and followed up by repeat mailing to achieve response rates of above 50 per cent.

Analysis and results

Factor analysis is the most commonly used analytical technique for data reduction and refining constructs (Ford *et al.*, 1986) in order to represent the item data in as few dimensions as possible (parsimony) while identifying factors that are meaningful. The database was factor analyzed for all respondents and separately for customers and staff using varimax rotation. The scree plot indicated that a seven-factor solution represented the combined or the individual customer and employee databases and this was selected.

A rationale for the retention and deletion of individual items was decided at both theoretical and empirical levels. First, items were considered for elimination using a number of criteria: their factor score did not load above 0.4 onto one of the seven factors in both the staff and customer data (eg original); they loaded above 0.4 onto more than one factor (eg humorous, elitist); they had very high (above 0.9) or low (below 0.2) inter-item correlations; there was evidence of significant skewness and/or kurtosis (eg independent, sporty); the Cronbach alpha score for a factor was improved if the item was deleted (eg feminine). Items with high levels of missing responses were also considered for elimination (eg wholesome), as representing items that were difficult for respondents to associate with corporations.

Five major factors and two minor factors emerged from the retained items, accounting for 72 per cent of total variance. The seven factors (in order of importance) were labeled as: Agreeableness, Enterprise, Competence, Chic, Ruthlessness, Machismo and Informality. The Cronbach alphas for the individual scales were: 0.91, 0.88, 0.82, 0.78, 0.73, 0.59, 0.51, respectively. The first five factors had reliabilities above the normally accepted critical point of 0.7 (Nunally, 1978). The last two, Machismo and Informality, each had only three items and low reliabilities but were retained for their potential importance, as it could be dangerous to rely upon only Cronbach alphas to reject potential dimensions.

Each of the five strongest factors was subjected to facet analysis, to identify lower order or sub-factors (eg Costa and McCrae, 1992; Aaker, 1997). By identifying and then measuring separate facets, additional information can be obtained about the target over and above that which could be obtained from the main factors (Costa *et al.*, 1991). Facets were identified using non-orthogonal factor rotation of the items loading onto each of the five factors. Items loading onto more than one facet were eliminated.

The final scale consists of 49 items describing 16 facets (including the two minor factors). The final lists of factors, facets and items and naming of the first two are shown in Table 2. The labels were chosen to try to capture the underlying meaning of each facet and factor using nouns rather than adjectives. The labels were checked with a small sample of

Table 2:   The Corporate Character Scale: Dimensions, Facets and Items

Dimension	Facet	Item
Agreeableness	Warmth	Friendly, pleasant, open, straightforward
	Empathy	Concerned, reassuring, supportive, agreeable
	Integrity	Honest, sincere, trustworthy, socially responsible
Enterprise	Modernity	Cool, trendy, young
	Adventure	Imaginative, up-to-date, exciting, innovative
	Boldness	Extrovert, daring
Competence	Conscientiousness	Reliable, secure, hardworking
	Drive	Ambitious, achievement oriented, leading
	Technocracy	Technical, corporate
Chic	Elegance	Charming, stylish, elegant
	Prestige	Prestigious, exclusive, refined
	Snobbery	Snobby, elitist
Ruthlessness	Egotism	Arrogant, aggressive, selfish
	Dominance	Inward-looking, authoritarian, controlling
Informality	None	Casual, simple, easy-going
Machismo	None	Masculine, tough, rugged

respondents to identify any improvements or changes to the labeling process.

Stage 5: Scale Validation

To confirm construct unidimensionality, validity and reliability, the authors evaluated the seven sub-scales using confirmatory factor analysis. In each case, measures of GFI, AGFI and NFI exceeded 0.95, demonstrating good levels of fit (Hulland et al., 1996; Schumacker and Lomax, 1996; Jaccard and Wan, 1996). Means and standard deviations for each factor are given in Table 3. There were no examples of significant skewness or kurtosis with any retained item.

Construct validity is best assessed using several methods such as internal consistency, factor analysis and group differences. Internal consistency is the most popular form of reliability assessment using Cronbach's alpha (Carmines and Zeller, 1979: 44). Reliability scores were above recommended levels of 0.7 (Nunally, 1978) for the five main dimensions for both customers and employees, Table 3. But maximizing reliability alone may not improve construct validity. For example, if scale items are duplicated, Cronbach alpha improves without any improvement in construct validity. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) assists in the elimination of redundant items, items that could improve Cronbach alpha if they were retained. CFA analysis was then used both to eliminate any redundant items and as a check for construct validity. Finally, relying upon factor analysis without theoretical guidance can mislead, but four of the main factors identified here had emerged from an analysis of the literature. Cronbach and Meehl (1955) recommended that the trade-off between reliability and construct validity is best judged by studying distinctive subgroups of items within a test and identifying facets, which the authors have done for the five main dimensions.

Content validity is ensured by having a representative collection of items and sensible methods of test construction. The role of factor analysis in construct validity is to

Table 3: Inter-correlations, Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities

Variables	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mean				3.63	3.63	3.00	2.82	2.45	3.38	2.76
SD				0.49	0.48	0.63	0.52	0.58	0.66	0.68
α				0.88	0.78	0.84	0.76	0.77	0.64	0.74
1. Agreeableness	3.47	0.67	0.91		0.63	0.41	0.34	−0.37	0.32	0.07
2. Competence	3.74	0.62	0.82	0.61		0.45	0.48	−0.12	0.05	0.25
3. Enterprise	2.96	0.76	0.88	0.44	0.62		0.53	−0.08	0.24	0.16
4. Chic	2.84	0.58	0.78	0.38	0.46	0.52		0.09	0.11	0.26
5. Ruthlessness	2.93	0.66	0.73	−0.43	−0.05	−0.05	0.08		−0.23	0.27
6. Informality	2.92	0.69	0.51	0.30	−0.05	0.10	0.06	−0.23		−0.15
7. Machismo	2.96	0.70	0.59	0.04	0.31	0.35	0.25	0.32	−0.11	

Note: Correlations below the diagonal are for employees ($n = 2061$). All correlations are significant at the 0.05 level or better. Correlations above the diagonal are for customers ($n = 2565$). All correlations are significant at the 0.05 level or better.

determine the internal structure for sets of variables whereas in content validity it is only a guide to revise an instrument for the better. In the pilot study, factor analysis was used for content validation rather than for construct validation. During the item generation process, both qualitative and quantitative research were used to generate valid items which were relevant to the context, the various dimensions of corporate character.

Predictive validity concerns whether a scale is useful in predicting important social and psychological outcomes (Costa and McCrae, 1992). To assess the predictive validity of the scale further, the authors included a measure of satisfaction in the questionnaire. Reputation and customer satisfaction have been seen as closely related (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Anderson and Fornell, 1994: 253; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998: 82). Any valid measure of reputation should be able to identify such linkages. For both employees and customers, satisfaction was defined as overall satisfaction with the organization, rather than with any aspect thereof (eg Wanous and Lawler, 1972: 96). Following (Yi, 1990), a single item measure was used to assess both staff and customer satisfaction.

Each of the seven dimensions of corporate character correlated significantly ($p < 0.01$) with satisfaction for both staff and customers, Table 4. Agreeableness and Competence were the two most strongly correlated dimensions and Informality was only just significantly correlated. Stepwise regression showed that all dimensions contributed significantly to explaining the variation in the Satisfaction data for either staff or customers or for both. Chic did not add significantly to the explanation of staff satisfaction, while Enterprise did not add significantly to the explanation of customer satisfaction. Agreeableness and Competence accounted for the majority of variation in both cases.

At the level of the individual organization, the dimensions varied in their relative importance in explaining satisfaction. For example, in the case of one fashion retailer, Chic was the most important dimension in explaining customer satisfaction, while in the case of a department store it was Competence. Generally, Agreeableness was the most important dimension, being the dimension explaining the most variation in the satisfaction data for 12 organizations.

Table 4: Correlations of Scale Dimensions with Satisfaction

	Agreeableness	*Enterprise*	*Competence*	*Chic*	*Ruthlessness*	*Informality*	*Machismo*
Staff	0.665	0.486	0.659	0.316	−0.243	0.062	0.376
Customer	0.572	0.301	0.543	0.340	−0.194	0.051	0.290

Factor Comparability

It is important that any factors extracted from a non-homogenous population should be stable across significant subpopulations (Everett, 1983). 'Factor comparabilities' are determined by correlating two sets of factor scores based on factor scoring matrices derived from two independent sub-samples (Nunally, 1978), for example, the two genders for a personality test. The authors compared the factor structure across three pairs of sub-samples, a random split across the combined database, males and females across the entire database and, finally, employees and customers.

Table 5 shows the results from three subgroup analyses. First, the 4,626 cases were randomly split into two even-halves of 2,313 cases to compute a split-half comparability coefficient. Factors were extracted using varimax rotation of the 49 items and compared with each of the five factors from the second split-half, yielding a five-by-five matrix. To produce the matrix, items are treated as cases and factors are treated as variables and correlation analysis is conducted across the two samples.

The comparability coefficient can be biased by the number of variables (Everett, 1980: 167; Chan *et al.,* 1999: 380) and by the equality of the sample sizes of the two groups. Human personality researchers recommend as a rule of thumb a cut-off point of 0.9, where there are many variables in each factor being tested (eg McCrae and Costa, 1996). In management studies acceptable results are claimed for factor similarity scores of over 0.6 or when

the coefficient is higher than the off-diagonal figures (Cavusgil *et al.*, 1991: 26). Table 5 shows the comparability scores to be above 0.95 for the random split-half analysis and that all are above the off-diagonal scores. The outcome by gender has five of the seven comparability scores above 0.9, one on 0.89 and one (for informality) at above 0.8. All off-diagonal scores are below 0.8. In the staff/customer group analysis only Agreeableness scores above 0.9.

The result for Competence is the lowest at 0.71, but still above the 0.6 threshold and the off-diagonal figures. It appears then likely that staff and customers rate organizations slightly differently on this one dimension (specifically the scores for the item 'hardworking' were different between the two subgroups for individual organizations).

The Cronbach alpha scores for the two groups on the factor, however, are similar and 0.8, indicating the factor is equally reliable for both groups. There is then an acceptable level of similarity between all the overall factor structures tested across key subgroups.

Usefulness of the Seven Factors: Face Validity

Face validity is often used interchangeably with content validity and assessed before collecting data (Verbeke, 2000). Nunally (1978) however distinguishes face validity as concerning judgment about an instrument after it is constructed while content validity concerns the plans for selecting items. The results of this work were dis-

Table 5: Factor Comparability Coefficient for the 49 Personality Items

		Agreeable	Enterprise	Competence	Chic	Ruthlessness	Informality	Machismo
(1) Random Split Half: Even Numbers (n=2313)								
	Agreeableness	**0.99**	0.09	0.06	−0.71	−0.19	0.04	−0.33
	Enterprise	0.09	**0.99**	0.08	−0.40	−0.01	−0.10	−0.09
Odd (n=2313)	Competence	−0.03	0.07	**0.92**	0.06	−0.04	−0.48	−0.02
	Chic	−0.66	−0.41	−0.07	**0.99**	−0.02	−0.41	0.20
	Ruthlessness	−0.21	−0.03	−0.03	−0.02	**0.98**	−0.12	−0.03
	Informality	0.07	−0.09	−0.42	−0.40	−0.18	**0.98**	−0.29
	Machismo	−0.34	−0.14	0.07	0.20	−0.03	−0.28	**0.96**
(2) Gender Split: Male (n=2096)								
	Agreeableness	**0.89**	0.03	0.60	−0.21	−0.68	0.00	−0.30
	Enterprise	0.09	**0.93**	0.08	−0.05	−0.49	−0.06	−0.07
Female (n=2530)	Competence	0.52	0.11	**0.94**	−0.30	−0.50	−0.18	−0.25
	Chic	−0.03	0.11	−0.09	**0.90**	−0.06	−0.24	−0.07
	Ruthlessness	−0.76	−0.47	−0.54	0.13	**0.90**	−0.12	0.18
	Informality	0.35	−0.01	−0.02	−0.26	−0.33	**0.81**	−0.24
	Machismo	−0.28	−0.15	−0.28	0.00	0.17	−0.22	**0.93**
(3) Employee/Customer Split: Employee (n=2061)								
	Agreeableness	**0.98**	0.12	0.07	−0.70	−0.16	−0.03	−0.26
	Enterprise	0.02	**0.86**	0.05	−0.43	0.12	0.01	−0.09
Customer (n=2565)	Competence	0.19	0.32	**0.71**	0.13	−0.10	−0.62	−0.11
	Chic	−0.69	−0.40	0.08	**0.89**	−0.09	−0.10	0.13
	Ruthlessness	−0.14	−0.02	−0.03	0.05	**0.89**	−0.30	−0.08
	Informality	0.11	−0.23	−0.61	−0.46	−0.06	**0.83**	−0.24
	Machismo	−0.32	−0.09	0.03	0.27	−0.11	−0.29	**0.89**

Note: Comparabilities for varimax rotated solution. All are significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed test. Figures in bold on the diagonal represent the coefficient of factor loadings between the two samples. Item no.=49.

cussed with the managers, employees and customers of the organizations surveyed as a further test of face validity for the factors. The process often took the form of a workshop where groups were presented with the overall profile for their organization and asked to interpret the results. Nearly 100 focus groups were conducted in the organizations where the surveys were conducted. The focus groups typically comprised five–seven middle and senior managers. Individual interviews were also conducted with customers and employees. Respondents could relate to each dimension and to the profiles. The results stimulated a large amount of feedback. The overall scores for Agreeableness

and Ruthlessness and the scores for the individual items defining them tended to create the most comment. Respondents were asked to suggest explanations for any high or low scores. Predominantly the explanations centered on examples of micro behaviors by employees. If an organization's culture can be defined as 'the way we do things around here', then the measures appeared to be related to the respective cultures of the organizations surveyed.

DISCUSSION
The dimensions of corporate character reflect, inevitably, the nature and content of scales established in the disciplines the

authors consulted for their original list of items and the items they identified therefrom. The four dimensions that were originally expected largely emerged together with one of the dimensions that was suggested during the qualitative phase. There were some interesting surprises, however, in the detail of the items that were associated with each dimension. The importance of the major dimension of Agreeableness reflects an emphasis in the branding and reputation literatures on trust and social responsibility, respectively. There is a long-standing debate as to whether commercial organizations should seek to be socially responsible, as their primary economic role is to make returns for the shareholders, who may wish to be philanthropic with their own money, but on their own terms (eg Friedman, 1970; Mulligan, 1992). Being seen as socially responsible is closely associated with being seen as trustworthy within the dimension of Agreeableness. Agreeableness correlates strongly with satisfaction and indicates that being seen to be socially responsible is something that enhances the reputation of any organization. It is not an option for profit-seeking organizations. Being seen as a good corporate citizen helps build the intangible asset that is reputation. Social responsibility is an essential aspect of corporate character.

Agreeableness is also a key dimension of human personality. The similarity of the dimensions identified for organizations suggests the potential for an organization to be seen as more agreeable if it concentrates on hiring customer-facing employees with a high score on the equivalent human personality dimension. Agreeableness is seen as the antithesis of being aggressive and arrogant in the human personality literature (Barrick and Mount, 1993), but in the reputation context both of these latter traits load into a separate factor, labeled here as Ruthlessness (a label that appeared to be more

appropriate than Neuroticism in the context of an organization). The Ruthless organization is inward looking, but at the same time controlling. A food retailer scored highly on this dimension. Staff had little opportunity to use their initiative and customers felt trapped into the regimented shopping experience in their stores. Hiring more agreeable employees will not necessarily reduce any reputation for being ruthless, as the two are distinct dimensions of corporate character.

Ruthlessness was the one negatively valenced dimension to be identified. It correlated negatively with both staff and customer satisfactions but more strongly with the former. It reflects the individual items identified in previous work in the organizational behavior literature (particularly in the concept of organizational totalitarianism (eg Schwartz, 1987)) and in the reputation literature, but the items and the dimension are not apparent in the branding literature. Probably brands would not promote the idea of being Ruthless and brand imagery would depend more on company controlled promotional campaigns. Here the authors are concerned with actual experience with an organization where reality is more relevant than imagery. As in human personality, organizations can have less desirable aspects to their corporate character. Inward looking, the opposite of extraversion in human personality, helps to describe a different concept in the context of an organization. Employees, in interviews with them, often associated high scores on both items with the way individual managers behaved towards them. Customers, not surprisingly, tended to focus on examples of undesirable behaviors by customer facing employees.

The dimension labeled as Enterprise echoes the human personality dimension of Extroversion, but the Enterprising organization is also seen as innovative and exciting, the former trait being frequently

mentioned as a positive indicator of corporate reputation. The association of being seen as 'young' with the factor (labeled here as the modernity facet together with the items of 'cool and trendy') is also interesting. It implies that any organization wishing to be seen as enterprising should employ younger looking rather than older looking people as customer facing staff. This however raises important issues of ageism and equal opportunities at work.

The Competence dimension is almost identical to the dimension of the same name in Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale, even down to the facet level. The same dimension is relevant to both corporate and product branding. Competence was also the second most useful dimension in explaining staff and customer satisfactions. The dimension is clearly relevant to both contexts. Organizations should consider this dimension carefully in managing both their corporate reputation and product imagery.

The Chic dimension was relatively important for some of the retail organizations in this survey. The dimension is similar to that labeled as 'Sophistication' in product branding (Aaker, 1997). One particular item in Aaker's scale 'feminine' was, however, seen as sexist by a number of respondents to the survey and did not load within any factor defined here. The same underlying concept is probably underpinning both Chic and Sophistication measures. In the context of an organization, the dimension contains more emphasis on prestige. Both employees and customers of the companies surveyed appeared to value their associations with a prestigious organization. There is a less attractive side to the dimension, that of snobbishness. Organizations that wish to emphasize Chicness in their reputation management need to be concerned that this does not alienate those potential customers and employees who do not wish to be seen themselves as snobbish.

The authors have chosen to retain two minor factors, Machismo and Informality, even though they were not strongly defined, were not generally predicted from the literature and did not explain much of the variance in the data set. Machismo reflects the gender dimension to corporate character expected by the expert panel and is similar to one factor in the branding literature (Aaker, 1997) but it did not emerge as a well-defined factor here.

Stakeholders saw both Machismo and Informality as relevant when the data were presented back to them. Both dimensions appeared to have face validity. The idea of a more 'informal' organization evokes a picture of a company that allows its employees to 'dress down' and to address each other and customers informally. Interactions between customer and employee are not rule bound. Businesses such as the Swedish furniture company IKEA emphasize their informal culture in their corporate advertising and, as a result, staff might be seen as more approachable. Machismo reflects a different style of organization, one that is tough with both its staff and with its customers. In the survey, an organization in the construction industry scored high on this dimension. It is then essential in the authors' view that these minor factors do not go unreported as they may prove to be more important in certain contexts or in specific cases. The authors included a large number of potentially useful items, but this does not guarantee dimensions that are potentially useful, for example, in other cultures, have not been excluded. Different dimensions of brand personality have been identified in different cultures (Aaker *et al.*, 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

The authors defined corporate character in terms of the human characteristics that are commonly associated with an organization. By assessing the dimensions identified in

existing reputation, branding, culture and human personality scales, the authors expected the construct to be multidimensional. From this and other preliminary work, the authors expected five or more dimensions of corporate character to emerge from a factor analysis of the responses to the data items gathered from the same literatures and from the qualitative phase. Three of the five main dimensions were much as predicted. Agreeableness emerged as the strongest factor and it correlated most strongly with customer and staff satisfaction. Competence also emerged as expected. Innovation/Openness to experience was the third hypothesized dimension but, while the dimension labeled Enterprise did contain a facet that reflected innovation, other facets, particularly that labeled Modernity are associated with the dimension (Table 2) and diverge from what the authors had expected. The authors expected a negatively valenced dimension, the equivalent of Neuroticism in human personality and this did emerge in the dimension they labeled as Ruthlessness, but with somewhat different items from those associated with the human personality dimension. The dimension correlated more strongly with staff satisfaction (negatively) but it is also clearly relevant to the perceptions of customers. No similar dimension to Ruthlessness has previously been reported in the reputation or branding literatures.

The dimension the authors labeled as Chic was not expected from the literature survey and could have emerged as strongly as it did because of the presence of a number of retailers in the organizations surveyed. It was found to be important, however in the qualitative phase. The dimension is also similar to one identified in work on brand personality and it helped explain customer and staff satisfaction across the whole sample. The authors therefore believe that it is generally relevant.

The scale has been shown to be reliable for both the customers and customer facing employees of a diverse sample of organizations. As such it offers potential for comparing the customer and employee views of organizations and specifically in the context of exploring linkages between them. The scale offers a basis for comparison between the reputations of organizations in similar or different sectors. Linkages between reputation and other variables such as the loyalty of both employees and customers can be explored. The scale could also be useful in assessing the image held by other stakeholders such as suppliers, the media and the financial community, but this needs further work to explore validity in different contexts. If gaps between internal and external views of reputation are the cause of crises, the scale could be invaluable in identifying potential crises before they are manifest.

There are a number of practical implications. Companies wishing to recruit staff should recognize the type of image they present to potential employees and, if necessary, endeavor to present themselves more explicitly to the labor market so as to attract the best match of applicant. There would be little point in attracting the highly introverted to apply to work in an Enterprising organization, unless the organization wishes to change its identity. Customers want to know what type of company they are dealing with, particularly when they contact them for the first time. The dimensions of corporate character identified here will help corporate communications executives to assess and develop their communications strategies. For example, a content analysis of a written communication would reveal which if any aspect of corporate character was being promoted or ignored.

Personifying an organization has proven to be a useful approach, but as a methodology it is not without criticism. One issue is

the level of analysis (Rousseau, 1985) because views about individuals in an organization may dominate individual responses (eg the employee's view of a line manager) rather than the organization as a whole. Metaphor can illuminate but it can also deceive if the metaphor is taken too literally, as metaphors are, literally, false (Hunt and Menon, 1995). Organizations are not human beings and do not share their characteristics (Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999). Organization as person is the metaphor the authors have used to illuminate the complex phenomenon of corporate reputation using the device of corporate character; the two are not synonymous. What is important is the understanding that the metaphor evokes, for example, to recognize that if one organization is rated higher than another on one facet then that difference can have a useful meaning. The scale has potential value as a diagnostic tool by identifying aspects of corporate character that are more important to a firm, but these need to be interpreted to identify what in the firm needs to change. Frequently this means changes in working practices and individual behavior.

Finally, in producing a generic scale, first, the authors have assumed that all organizations can be represented using the same dimensions and that the internal and external perspectives have enough in common to be assessed using the same dimensions. That the scale was developed using a wide range of organizations is evidence that it has value as a generic scale, but there may be dimensions of corporate character that are specific to certain organizational types that have been omitted. Secondly, the authors have identified those dimensions that are relevant to *both* customers and employees. In doing so they may have ignored any that might be specific to each subgroup. Finally, what are relevant dimensions today may not be so in years to come. Certainly the items used to describe each dimension may change as language evolves. There would be clear benefits from testing the scale in many different contexts and revalidating it over time.

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