# Antecedents and Outcomes of Customer Perceived Ethicality: A Meta-Analysis

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## Abstract
The aim of this meta-analysis is to analyse direct relationships and produces latest empirically generalize statements about the relationships between brand communication and customer perceived ethicality, customer perceived ethicality and brand equity, customer perceived ethicality and brand awareness, customer perceived ethicality and brand association, customer perceived ethicality and brand affect, customer perceived ethicality and customer value, customer perceived ethicality and perceived quality, customer perceived ethicality and satisfaction, customer perceived ethicality and commitment, customer perceived ethicality and attitude, customer perceived ethicality and brand image, customer perceived ethicality and brand loyalty, customer perceived ethicality and brand trust, customer perceived ethicality and purchase intention, customer perceived ethicality and corporate social responsibility. The present meta-analysis consists of fifty eight quantitative articles and two fifty one observations and the result shows a significant, positive and the strongest relationship between customer perceived ethicality and brand association whereas impact of brand communication on customer perceived ethicality and influence of customer perceived ethicality on brand equity, brand awareness, brand affect, customer value, perceived quality, satisfaction, commitment, attitude, brand image, brand loyalty, brand trust, purchase intention and corporate social responsibility are also found positive and significant.

Keywords: Customer Perceived Ethicality, Antecedents, Meta-Analysis

## Introduction
The globalization has greatly informed buyers about firm's process of making and selling products (Iglesias *et al.* 2013). When a firm manages whole process honestly and sincerely to meet buyers needs then they feel happy and can easily differentiate between ethical and unethical firms (Lu *et al.* 2015). Scholars such as Donoho *et al.* (2001) suggested that in every part of the world customers respect ethical companies. Hence, a large number of companies assert that they are ethical, for example manufacturer of the Toyota Prius implements ethical and nature friendly activities in their business, likewise the American apparel manages its supply chain system ethically and another company Pret a Manager helps society by giving food to the people without home (Gibbons, 1973). Ethical behaviour plays a vital role in building a firm's popularity (Bromley, 2001) while

unethical conduct hurts the firm's popularity in the eyes of customers and buyers reject firms that are involved in unethical activities (Grappi *et al.* 2013). The bad results of unethical conduct might be seen in the company's market share, poor financial condition due to no repeat purchase, buyer's criticism, and a firm may pay price as a punishment (Schramm, 2004). That's why, for the last few years growing concerns related to unethical behaviour have put pressure on companies to organize all business functions ethically (Singhapakdi and Vitell, 2007).

The ethical behaviour of a company effects buyer's usage pattern (Brunk, 2012). Therefore, management encourages ethicality (Vickers, 2005) because they realize that ethical behaviour is essential for sustainable growth (Brunk, 2012; Yamoah *et al.* 2016; De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2007). Moreover, Solomon (1993) added that the demand of business ethical behaviour is not only in response to customer's anger or criticism by media or fame minded parliamentarian task force but also from managers because they want to protect their firms from daily conflicts. As a result an idea that has extensively taken the attention of scholars is known as customer perceived ethicality which expresses buyer's thinking about a firm's ethical standards (Brunk, 2010).

Interestingly many scholars are in favour of customer perceived ethicality but five studies have opposite views. According to them buyers are not only different in their reactions to unethical or ethical actions but also are greatly vary in understanding difference between ethical and unethical behaviours (Wagner *et al.* 2008; Chung and Khan, 2008). These scholars suggested that unethical behaviour will not be only responsible to change in buyer's mind; instead buyer's own happiness might be more important than any thought of the strong social effect of unethical action (Whalen *et al.* 1991). It is a known fact that un/ethical actions not have a similar level of intensity while few actions have widespread results and conclusion, others are comparatively small (Chung and Khan, 2008). Similarly, an international level research on buyer's ethical usage habits showed that 53% of the buyers under investigation were in favour to solve environmental and societal problems but majority of them did not show interest to take action against those companies which have unethical behaviour (BBMG, 2012, 2013).

In spite of consumer perceived ethicality importance, so far, there isn't any research paper published on the meta-analysis of the same topic. This study is unique in a way that it is the first attempt to examine the antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality in meta-analytic perspective. Firstly, the reason is that meta-analysis combines and generalizes the results of various relevant past studies which have different research methodologies and varying sample size and type (Robinson and Dickersin, 2002). Secondly, meta-analysis balances possible biases towards selected studies due to research limitations (Difference in size and types of sample, methodological variances). Thirdly, meta-analysis helps in the evaluation of correct effect sizes of all associations between variables under research (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001). Therefore, the main purpose of this meta-analysis is to broaden understanding about antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality for all stakeholders.

## Theoretical Paradigm about Ethical Behaviour
### The theory of planned behaviour
The Ajzen (1991, 1988) theoretical frameworks has appeared very important and famous to learn human being behaviour (Ajzen, 2001). In short, in accordance

with these theories, there are three types of believes which lead human being behaviour. First, behavioural belief specifies possible results or further characteristics of the behaviour. It also provides encouraging or discouraging attitude with regard to behaviour. Second, normative belief indicates normal assumptions of different individuals. It is produced due to societal pressure or individual norms. Third, control belief shows elements which might cause or inhibit execution of the behaviour. On the whole, attitude with respect to behaviour, individual norm and belief of behavioural control guide to the development of a behavioural intention.

Furthermore, Ajzen (2002) in his theory of planned behaviour concluded that behavioural intentions and attitudes are made on the basis of faith regarding possible outcomes or characteristics of the behaviour. Therefore, when a buyer perceives that a company's behaviour is in line with its belief then favourable attitude about company is formed.

## Modified theory of planned behaviour

Many scholars studied the significance of customer perceived ethicality. The formation of complete research framework of buyer ethical decision making is a great achievement in the domain of ethicality. By advancing the Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) theory of reasoned action and the Ajzen (1985) theory of planned behaviour, Shaw and his friends proposed the modified theory of planned behaviour by connecting self-identity (person's self-regarding specific action) and ethical obligation (individual belief of right doing) to the research framework (Ozcaglar-Toulouse *et al.* 2006; Shaw *et al.* 2000; Shaw and Shiu, 2002; Shaw and Shiu, 2003). This research framework assumes that ethical obligation and self-identity facilitate to correctly guess buyer's purchase intention for ethical business. In accordance with modified theory of planned behaviour Shaw *et al.* (2000) concluded that company's ethical behaviour and self-identity improves buyer's purchase intention.

## Integrative social contract theory

This theory produces knowledge about unease between companies and buyerson privacy. It depicts that an individual of a society and businesses behave ethically if their actions are regulated by shared rules. It talks about specific complexity of an industry circumstances and directly tells the shared knowledge of stakeholders in specific business deal. For example, this theory is specifically suitable for knowledge about direct promotional activities as it shows the unique nature of privacy rules, such as in the America and excluding few carefully selected irregularities like television cable record. Most of the promotional activities are managed through self-regulation by implementing business policies. In summary, a social contract occurs when buyers share their particulars with the company. Buyers trust in the company because it is assumed that the company ethical behaviour prevents them otherwise breaking of an agreement may hurt both sides in the future (Culnan, 1995; Milne, 1997).

## Identity theory

In accordance with Tajfel (1982) identity theory buyers fulfil their desires for the morale that supports societal allowable behaviours and also back companies ethical behaviour. That is, buyers who purchase goods or services from ethical

firms, they might think that they are also contributing indirectly in community support campaigns. As a result, customer perceived ethicality increases satisfaction with the company.

## Consumer behaviour theory

In the consumer behaviour theory Dwyer *et al.* (1987) states that company ethical marketing practice produces various responses. Trust is one of its important response, which is considered as a company's sword or promise is trustworthy and will perform it duties in business deal.

## Equity theory

In the light of equity theory customer perceived ethicality is assumed as an investment in the development of brand equity because company's unethical behaviour perceived as injustice, consequently damage brand loyalty (Román and Ruiz, 2005).

## Conceptualization
## Customer Perceived Ethicality (CPE)

In modern world, people are continuously watching organizational activities in order to know that either their activities are right or wrong. Customers are also well informed and concerned about an environment and a society (Strong, 1996). Currently, few scholars have found that in the present socio-economic situation, buyers are increasingly awarding great value to those firms or brands which consider ethics seriously (Singh *et al.* 2012; Story and Hess, 2010; Maxfield, 2008). Numerous researchers stated that it is beneficial for a company if its stakeholders think that the company behaves ethically (Story and Hess, 2010) because buyers and the remaining stakeholders are more and more desiring and believing that companies should take care of their ethical promises at organization, strategic and functional levels (Maxfield, 2008) and should communicate its ethical activities to all stakeholders (Szmigin *et al.* 2009) and in response to this action, firms need favour and acceptance from buyers (Vitell, 2015).

  Ethical actions consist of standard procedures, correct and perfect knowledge about goods and services (Park *et al.* 2017). For instance, in garment sector, ethical concerns might include child labour, stressful working environment, make use of banned chemicals in manufacturing etc. they result not only bad reputation but also cause buyer's rejection of firm's offerings (Klein *et al.* 2004; Farah and Newman, 2010) and lowering firm's profit in the long run (Koku *et al.* 1997). Hence to deal these increased ethical issues, Brunk (2010) proposed a concept of customer perceived ethicality, suggesting that buyer has a tendency to think a brand (goods, services or firm) as an ethical if the same brand is right-minded industry player which obeys ethical rules, follows standard operating procedures, takes care of a society, does not harm others, assesses good and bad effects of its action and practices major and minor appraisal rules in its activities. It also indicates a buyer's personal opinion about ethics of a particular product or business and a level of firm's capability of turning ethics into its actions (Brunk, 2012).

### Brand communication

The term brand communication is considered as a marketing tool by which a company shows their goods or services to buyers, whereby this impact can be increased by high noise level of the same products so that buyers buy these products in order to meet their needs. In today business environment, media experts apply brand communication to create brand identification, enhance popularity and set a level to which a firm makes an effort to carry on or be better than ever before. Brand communication can be performed either directly (e.g. internet, sales person) or indirectly (like television, radio etc.) (Sahin *et al.* 2011).

Company's ethical actions act as a symbol of standard and uniqueness for buyers. The fast and two way communication feature of the internet technology has forced companies for transparent business (Eggers *et al.* 2013). These knowledgeable consumers need persistent ethicality from their favourite brands and will not be happy to receive unethical companies actions (Holt, 2002). According to Morhart *et al.* (2015) extensive brand communication significantly influences on the customer perceived ethicality. In line with Groves (2001); Liao and Ma (2009) effective brand communication is necessary for customer perceived ethicality.

$H_1$: Brand communication has a positive effect on customer perceived ethicality

### Brand equity

The term brand equity is an indicator of the value and usefulness of a firm or product (Kamakura and Russell, 1993). Brand equity is considered as a value addition to products due to its brand name (Park and Srinivasan, 1994; Rangaswamy *et al.* 1993). Today many people still think that brand equity is a market driven asset which is produced through building strong and long term relation between firm and buyers (Davcik *et al.* 2015; Hooley *et al.* 2005; Srivastava *et al.* 2001).

In a multi-cultural research, Torres *et al.* (2012) confirmed that a firm's social initiatives positively effect on international brand equity. According to Lai *et al.* (2010) brand equity of a business is positively affected by the customer perception of a business involvement in the best interest of a society. The proposed link between customer perceived ethicality and brand equity is also conceptualized by the above stated equity theory (Román and Ruiz, 2005).

$H_2$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand equity

### Brand awareness

The word brand awareness explains a buyer's characteristic to recognize the firm or product and to recall it easily; either in the presence of hint or in the absence of support. The strong brand awareness provides three significant benefits. Firstly, buyer will be aware of the firm or product. Secondly, buyer will think about the firm or product at the time of purchase. Thirdly, buyer will give priority to buy a product having strong brand awareness. As a result, the product or the firm can be easily remembered and it is identified by buyers, as well as product or firm will have a great opportunity of being chosen as compared to unidentified and unknown firm or product (Sun and Ghiselli, 2010). In accordance with, Lai *et al.* (2010) if buyer thinks that firm takes care of society then its brand awareness increases. Likewise, Keller (2003) argued that a firm's ethical behaviour such as concern about society has a possibility to enhance brand

awareness.

$H_3$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand awareness

**Brand association**

As stated by Keller (1993) brand association is a bundle of hints in a buyer's mind which makes a good, powerful and distinctive relationship about product. Brand association provides many benefits such as exposes characteristics of a brand, helps in expansion and makes positioning of a brand so that to differentiate a brand from its competitors (Nel *et al.* 2009). In the present era the relationship between ethicality and brand association is an important marketing objective (Smit *et al.* 2007). Morhart *et al.* (2015) also pointed out significance of customer perceived ethicality on brand association.

$H_4$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand association

**Brand affect**

Interestingly, now a days large number of studies have given a special importance to a desire of obtaining powerful, favourable emotional responses (Payne *et al.* 2009). It may happen, if the firm or the product is perceived from a comprehensive point of view, in which the product becomes the practical (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). In the line of this thinking Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) explained that the term brand affect is the capability of a brand to create a favourable emotional response in a buyer after using the goods or services. According to Singh *et al.* (2012), brand affect is related to buyer's mood, feeling and attitude. This favourable emotional reaction is produced by the customer perceived ethicality. Also, Sung and Kim (2010) showed a favourable association between ethical brand and brand affect. Similarly, Singh *et al.* (2012) noted that customer perceived ethicality influences on brand affect.

$H_5$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand affect

**Customer value**

Customer value is based on a buyer's total evaluation of the usefulness of goods or services on the basis of benefits versus cost (Zeithaml, 1988). Buyer thinks greater customer value if product's benefits are greater than price. Customer value is important for company's existence and development because value is significant precursor of favourable words, frequent buying and buyer satisfaction (Palmatier *et al.* 2007).

In accordance with Pelton *et al.* (1999) customer perceived ethicality results in establishing the belief that the company has three abilities: team spirit, honesty and sharing, which are perceived necessary for business deal that provides customer value. As Grisaffe and Jaramillo (2007) also confirmed that ethical behaviour is linked with the faith that company is the leading player, financially strong and well respected. These characteristics are connected to the buyer thinking of customer value.

$H_6$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Customer value

**Perceived quality**

Perceived quality refers to a personal judgment about available goods or service and personal thinking that quality of goods or services varies (Hyun and Kim, 2011). A personal assessment about the quality of goods or services is decided by subjective experiment, desires, and usage rate. As long as buyer has a strong

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connection with the goods or service then perceived quality will lead to product differentiation and competitive edge, as a result, buyers prefer the product over competitors, and then buy the same product in future (Nel *et al.* 2009).
Importantly, research on product quality found that quality is influenced by customer perceived ethicality (Abdul-Rahman *et al.* 2014; Besterfield *et al.* 2003). Similarly, Enquist *et al.* (2007) suggested that ethicality adds value to quality. Dandy (1996) also supported that ethical behaviour and its promotion by the brand is the way that leads towards high quality.
$H_7$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Perceived quality

## Satisfaction
According to Oliver (1980) satisfaction is defined as buyer perception that advantages of a product are same or greater than expectations. Importantly, researchers also have confirmed that a favourable ethical environment encourages opinion about job and buyer centric attitude in the workforce which ultimately enhances buyer's satisfaction (Mulki *et al.* 2008; Kidwell and Valentine, 2009; DeConinck, 2010). For example in banking sector, Salmones *et al.* (2009) found a powerful and significant relation between ethical obligations and buyer's satisfaction. As stated above the identity theory of Tajfel (1982) also supports the relationship between customer perceived ethics and satisfaction.
$H_8$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Satisfaction

## Commitment
The word commitment is defined as the connection of a buyer to a company (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). According to Meyer and Allen (2004) commitment is the desire of consistent behaviour. It is a psychological condition of a buyer having several characteristics such as normative, calculative and affective commitment. However, normative is a special form of a commitment which is related to the buyer's perception of an ethical behaviour of the company and this behaviour influences on buyer's commitment with the same company (Meyer and Allen, 1991).
$H_9$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on commitment

## Attitude
The concept of attitude towards a brand is defined by Mitchell and Olson (1981) as a buyer's total assessment about product. It implies that brand attitude generally depends on buyer's own judgement in respect of a product. Furthermore, Shimp (2010) also explained it as a true predictor of consumer buying behaviour about product. Researchers found a positive relationship between customer perceived ethicality and attitude in conventional business setting. For instance, misleading firm's course of actions can negatively influence on buyer's attitude in conventional market (Jehn and Scott, 2008). As well as in modern marketing environment such as online business, Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) confirmed that ethical characteristics of the firm's website such as order fulfilment, privacy and safety impact on buyer's attitudes regarding the same firm's website. The link between customer perceived ethicality and attitude is also theorized by Ajzen's (2002) in his theory of planned behaviour.
$H_{10}$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Attitude

### Brand image

Buyers make an image of a brand in their minds on the basis of understanding, confidence and recognition with the brand (Nandan, 2005). According to Aaker (1991) brand image consists of important links that buyers connect with the brand. These links help buyers in purchasing because they are stored in their mind (Sherry, 2005). For instance, in a retailer context, Champion et al. (2010); Chowdhury *et al.* (1998) suggested that brand image of a retailer lies in the eyes of a beholder, which is made after experiencing different characteristics of a retailer such as feature and benefits, cost and ambience. Interestingly, previous studies in retail sector have proved that ethicality increases brand image among buyers (Blumenthal and Bergstrom, 2003). Similarly, Burke and Berry (1974) also confirmed that over the last four decades' customer perceived ethicality has been positively related with brand image, and discovered that the company's attention to society can increase the retailer image and better financial performance. Furthermore, Cacho-Elizondo and Loussaïef (2010) also suggested that ethical behaviour of retail companies have a favourable effect on brand image.

$H_{11}$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on brand image

### Brand loyalty

Foroudi *et al.* (2018) defined brand loyalty as a buyer's love for the product. Similarly, Coelho *et al.* (2018) also suggested that brand loyalty represents a strong relationship between buyers and the company which leads towards repeat product purchases of the same company.

Mandhachitara and Poolthong (2011) confirmed that customer perceived ethicality positively effects on brand loyalty. For example, in the financial sector, Valenzuela *et al.* (2010) discovered that ethical behaviour of the company has a positive effect on brand loyalty because ethical activities differentiae the company in a society and their goods or services are considered beneficial. In the equity theory Roman and Ruiz (2005) also idealized the association between ethical/unethical behaviour and brand loyalty.

$H_{12}$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on brand loyalty

### Brand trust

The concept of brand trust represents a buyer's belief that goods or services are reliable and honest (Singh *et al.* 2012). Likewise, Sahin *et al.* (2011) defined brand trust is the desire of a common buyer to belief on the capability of a product with respect to perform its functions. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) the concept of brand trust is the belief that business co-workers are honest and truthful.

Researchers suggested that brand trust is an important element impacting on the success of digital business (and also very common cause for buyers to avoid online purchasing) and brand trust can be achieved by ethical behaviour of a retailer because company's ethical online activities improve buyer's trust. Therefore, if a buyer thinks that the company's online business is ethical then it might decrease the severity of a buyer's perception of risk and ultimately enhances buyer's trust on the company's online business (Yang *et al.* 2009). As mentioned above both the consumer behaviour theory (Dwyer *et al.* 1987) and the social contract theory (Culnan, 1995; Milne, 1997) also conceptualize the link

between customer perceived ethicality and brand trust.
$H_{13}$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand trust

## Purchase intention

Phung *et al.* (2019) defined that the term purchase intention is the buyer's desire to select the specific product or brand as compared to competitors and also a little chance of switch to competitors. Similarly, in an online context, purchase intention is defined as the degree of intensity of a buyer's want to buy a particular product through internet (Salisbury *et al.* 2001).

According to Shaw and Shui (2002) ethical buyers intend to purchase ethical brands because their purchase intention depends on their ethical responsibility, personality or interest in ethics. Customer perceived ethicality is positively related with customer intention for the product or the firm (Golob *et al.* 2008; Reidenbach and Robin, 1990). In another study, Fiske and Pavelchak (1986) suggested that when a buyer perceives that brand has an ethical behaviour then a buyer's intention for the same brand is positive. In general, researchers noticed that customer perceived ethicality is a main determinant in buyer's strong purchase intention due to company's favourable social activities (Sheehan, 2013; Golob *et al.* 2008). Shaw *et al.* (2000) in his theory of planned behaviour also supported the relationship between customer perceived ethicality and purchase intention.
$H_{14}$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Purchase Intentions

## Corporate social responsibility

The term corporate social responsibility is the company's obligation to take care of financial, legal, moral and charitable needs of people at a certain time Carroll (1979). For instance, after seeing customer's low buying power (OECD, 2014), new studies give an idea that either reduction in prices or promotions help achieving corporate social responsibilities and also strengthens buyers relation with the same company (Andrews *et al.* 2014; Winterich and Barone, 2011). According to Arnold and Valentin 2013; Stanaland *et al.* 2011, customer perceived ethicality is a precursor of corporate social responsibility.
$H_{15}$: Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on corporate social responsibility

**Figure1**.

## Research Methodology

The research methodology consists of two steps, information exploration and information gathering. In the first step the relevant research papers were explored through Google Scholar; Springer, Emerald; Science Direct; Taylor and Francis, Sage as well as conference papers presented in proceedings such as European Marketing Association Conference, International Conference on Management Science and Engineering Management and Academy of Marketing Science were also incorporated. The relevant studies were obtained from above sources by typing the two key-words; firstly, customer perceived ethicality and brand, secondly customer perceived ethics and brand as document titles and abstracts in the search box. This exploration produced 100 correct articles.

## Data Collection
The 32 articles were found out of scope for this meta-analysis because they were qualitative studies. These theoretical articles were not suitable to achieve goals of the present meta-analysis or did not have correlations (r) among antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality. In addition, 10 more research articles, in spite of utilizing statistical relationship for instance ARIMA regression model, forecasting estimates, had not been taken in the sample for the reason that lack of ability to utilize conversion for examining their effects. Finally, 58 valid quantitative research papers were selected for the present meta- analysis. These papers produced 251 correct observations for investigation in this meta-analysis.

## Effect Size
To analyse data, the value of correlation coefficient (r) was utilized as a metric variable in determining the effect size between variables under investigation. In case, if the articles did not have correlation r value, the available statistics (for example F- test, Z test or beta values) were changed into correlation coefficient (r), through method recommended by Hedges and Olkin (1985). At the same time as correct value of the effect size is important, the calculation of the fail-safe number (fail safe D k ((r/0.05)-1)) is also significant. The computation of fail-safe number was performed for confirming significant association between variables because it indicates the number of papers to disprove the results of the evaluation (Rosenthal and Rubin, 1982).

## Analysis and Findings
### Descriptive Analysis
Table 1, shows descriptive results of the present meta-analysis, 58 research papers were analysed which consisted of 54 published and 4 unpublished studies. Out of 54 published studies, 47 studies were published during the years 2010 to 2020 and 7 studies were published in the years 2009 & before. On the other hand, only 4 unpublished studies were found in the years 2010 to 2020.

## Table 1

## Direct Effect Test
In the present meta-analysis all the relations were codified and changed into person correlation coefficient; (r). The sample sizes of all related effect sizes were noted. Table 1 shows the direct effect results of antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality: a meta-analysis.

## Table 2

## Results
The association between customer perceived ethicality and brand communication was analysed. This analysis consisted of 5 observations and the sample size of 1397 responders. It has been found that there is a positive association between customer perceived ethicality and attitude because r = 0.292, p = 0.000 and FSN = 3. Therefore, it confirms the previous studies results that a good brand communication is considered as an element which affects customer perceived ethicality (Groves, 2001; Liao and Ma, 2009).

The connection between customer perceived ethicality and brand equity value was imagined positive and significant because past studies concluded that customer's feeling of firm's involvement in ethical actions affects positively on firm's brand equity (Lai *et al.* 2010). In this meta-analysis 11 observations and a sample size of 11004 respondents were investigated. It indicates r = 0.244 and p=0.000. In addition, the number of studies with negative or insignificant effects that is required to disprove is FSN = 3. Thus, it verifies $H_2$, i.e. there occurs a positive and significant relationship between customer perceived ethicality and brand equity.

The linkage between customer perceived ethicality and brand awareness was assumed positive and significant because previous studies concluded that customer perceived ethicality is a significant characteristic for a brand (Wood and Muñoz, 2007) and this characteristic may be a kind of significant starting point to improve brand awareness. In the present meta-analysis 13 observations and a sample size of 3219 respondents were analysed. It shows r = 0.413 and p=0.000. Moreover, the number of studies with negative or insignificant effects that is necessary to refute is FSN = 17. Hence, it validates $H_3$, i.e. there is a positive and significant association between customer perceived ethicality and brand awareness.

The relationship between customer perceived ethicality and brand association was predicted positive and significant. Table 2 shows that in the current meta-analysis, six studies were analysed that reported 9 effect sizes. It displays r = 0.560 and p=0.000. Moreover, the number of studies with negative or insignificant effects that is necessary to refute is FSN = 22. Hence, it supports $H_4$, i.e. there exists a positive and significant association between customer perceived ethicality and brand association. These findings also confirm the previous studies outcome that ethicality positively affects brand association (Lee, 2013).

Moreover, it was estimated that a customer perceived ethicality positively associate to a brand affect because researchers in the previous studies found that buyers who understand that the brand takes ethical practice into consideration are almost certainly gets happy and feels pleasure with that product (Glomb *et al.* 2011; Payne *et al.* 2009). The statistics in the table 2 of the present study also confirms the association between customer perceived ethicality and brand affect is positive (r = 0.382), significant (p =0.000) and consistent (FSN =20).

The attachment between customer perceived ethicality and customer value was believed positive and significant because past studies established that ethicality is related with faith that the company owns leading brands of the business, is very respectable, business leader as well as substantial monetary centre. These characteristics are associated to customer value (Grisaffe and Jaramillo, 2007). In the existing meta-analysis 8 observations and a sample size of 2532 respondents were investigated. It confirms a positive and significant relationship between customer perceived ethicality and customer value because r = 0.396 and p=.000. In addition, the number of studies with negative or insignificant effects that is required to disprove is FSN = 10.

The relation between customer perceived ethicality and Perceived quality also examined. The outcome of 11 studies produced 30 observations and total sample size of 4908. It also exhibited correlation value r = 0.377, p = 0.000 and a fail-safe-number = 33. It proves that there is a positive and significant relationship between customer perceived ethicality and perceived quality. In addition, it also

verifies the outcomes of past studies that quality relies upon ethical actions (Abdul-Rahman *et al.* 2014; Besterfield *et al.* 2003).

The association between customer perceived ethicality and satisfaction was imagined positive and significant because in the study, Salmones *et al.* (2009) found that ethical characteristics strongly and significantly influences on satisfaction with a brand. The investigation of 21 observations also proves a positive correlation (r = 0.412) which is significant (p = 0.000) and has a suitable (FSN = 28).

The relationship between customer perceived ethicality and commitment was expected positive and significant for the reason that buyers respect ethical organization in a community and this improves various attributes particularly commitment (Brunk and Blumelhuber, 2011). The figures in table 2 also verifies this argument, with r = 0.318 and p =0.000 and a fail-safe-number = 18.

The association between customer perceived ethicality and attitude was analysed. This analysis consisted of 17 observations and the sample size of 4486 responders. It has been found that there is a positive association between customer perceived ethicality and attitude because r =. 0.244, p = 0.000 as well as FSN = 5. Therefore, it confirms the previous studies results that ethical business positive effects attitudes. For instance, misleading firm's policies could affect buyer's attitude in business (Jehn and Scott, 2008).

The link between customer perceived ethicality and brand image was predicted positive because ethicality favourably effects on brand image (Cacho-Elizondo and Loussaïef, 2010). The inquiry of 14 observations indicates a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.337) which is significant (p = 0.000) and consistent (FSN = 12).

The association between customer perceived ethicality and brand loyalty was assessed. The association between the same two constructs was expected positive because past studies suggested that firm's ethical practice such as truth; accountable, knowledgeable, trustworthy positively impact on brand loyalty (Singh *et al.* 2012). In the present meta-analysis 14 studies were evaluated that produced 25 observations and had a total sample size of 12042 responders. The table 2 shows r = 0.416, p = 0.000 and FSN = 13. Hence, it supports $H_{12}$. Therefore, it is proved that there exists a positive and significant relationship between and customer perceived ethicality and brand loyalty.

Furthermore, it was imagined that customer perceived ethicality positively associate to a brand trust because ethics in company's offering could be an important forecaster of brand trust (Yang *et al.* 2009). The information available in the table 2 proves that the association between customer perceived ethicality and brand trust is strongly positive (r = 0.532), significant (p = 0.000) and consistent (FSN =14).

In addition, the relationship between customer perceived ethicality and purchase intention was supposed positive and significant. Table 2 expresses that in the current meta-analysis, 8 studies were examined that exhibited 14 effect sizes. It also indicates r = 0.404 and p= 0.000. Furthermore, the amount of studies with negative or insignificant effects that is needed to disprove is FSN = 18. Hence, it confirms $H_{14}$, i.e. there is a positive and significant relationship between customer perceived ethicality and purchase intention. These results also validate the past research findings of shaw and shui (2002) which suggests that ethical buyers mostly make decisions for brand selection on the basis of their

ethical promises and personality or as a matter of ethics.

Finally, the connection between customer perceived ethicality and customer social responsibility was imagined positive and significant for the reason that by taking part in ethical actions, companies could enhance the buyer's assessment of its customer social responsibility actions (Stanaland *et al.* 2011) for instance social activities, ethical goods/ services and protection of environment, these lead towards favourable evaluations of the organization (O¨ berseder *et al.* 2013). The figures in table 2 also verifies this argument, with r = 0.496 and p =0.000 and a fail-safe-number = 19.

## Table 3

The table 3 represents the summary of hypothesis testing. The first column shows the hypothesis among customer perceived ethicality and the variables under investigation which are obtained through detailed literature review. The second column indicates the latest empirical generalize correlation coefficient values (r). The third column shows p value of each hypothesis. The last column tells the decisions about all hypothesis which are based on p value. It can be clearly seen that all proposed hypothesis are accepted at significance level 0.05 because the value of $p < 0.05$.

## Figure 2.

## Discussion

The major finding of this article is the relationship between customer perceived ethicality and brand association. It is inferred that company's ethical behaviour is vital in creating and maintaining strong, long term relationship with customers.

Our finding shows that brand communication effects on customer perceived ethicality. It implies that consistent and comprehensive brand communication is considered as an important factor that affects customer perceived ethicality. Therefore, truthful, transparent and correct advertising message of a firm about its goods and services help developing customer perceived ethicality. This study indicates that ethical behaviour helps building brand equity which plays a key role in company success by attracting customers as well as human capital. This study also validates that customer perceived ethicality impacts on brand awareness. It means that companies that are considered ethical should use their brand name and logo with customers during advertising campaign so that to enhance their brand awareness which leads to improve buyer preferences to their brand.

Importantly, our research specifies that customer perceived ethicality impacts on brand affect. It is concluded that powerful ethical perception enables companies to build and sustain emotion and affect toward their products. This study affirms that company's ethical behaviour is linked with customer value. It means when a company has high ethical reputation then customer will think increased value received from the same company. Interestingly the current paper indicates that customer perceived ethicality influences on perceived quality. It is summarized that customer perceived ethicality is created by evaluating overall business performance which is more likely related to buyer thinking of the business quality.

Our finding confirms that customer perceived ethicality effects on satisfaction. It means that company ethical practice plays a key role in making and retaining long term customer relationship which in turn increases customer satisfaction.
This study further confirms the effect of customer perceived ethicality on commitment. It is concluded that customers with high level of ethical perception show strong commitment towards company and most possibly choose their favourite company's product over competitors as well as recommend it among their friends. This study indicates that customer perceived ethicality impacts on attitude. Hence, it is inferred that ethical behaviour shapes more suitable attitude about company. Thus, to obtain favourable customer attitude, company should perform ethically by clearly showing business policies and also keep away from misleading business practices.

The finding of our study indicates that customer perceived ethicality influences on brand image. It means that business ethical behaviour can build unique brand image as compared to competitors. This distinctive image is a result of implementing ethical policies in purchasing as well as manufacturing of products which leads a way to achieve prize and obtain certification. This study strengthens our knowledge about a loyalty variable that customer perceived ethicality acts as an antecedent to brand loyalty. It signifies that company's ethical behaviour helps encouraging buyer retention strengthen repeat purchases and promote recommendation.

This study confirms that customer perceived ethicality effects on brand trust. It suggests that buyer believe in the firm's ethical behaviour develops brand trust which reduces risk in purchasing company's goods or services that are hard to determine before purchasing. The finding of present study shows that customer perceived ethicality effects on purchase intentions. It means that a buyer thinking about the company's ethical behaviour is significant which encourages them to make as an inherent part of the group so that to do exact behaviour to achieve the confidence of others.

Finally, this study also confirms that customer perceived ethicality effects on customer social responsibility so company should keep ethical polices and compliance plan on high level which helps achieving customer positive response towards company social activities.

## Conclusion
The present meta-analysis discussed a detailed review of antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality. The finding proves that the suggested conceptual model truly indicated a significant and positive direct relationship between brand communication and customer perceived ethicality, customer perceived ethicality and brand equity, customer perceived ethicality and brand awareness, customer perceived ethicality and brand association, customer perceived ethicality and brand affect, customer perceived ethicality and customer value, customer perceived ethicality and perceived quality, customer perceived ethicality and satisfaction, customer perceived ethicality and commitment, customer perceived ethicality and attitude, customer perceived ethicality and brand image, customer perceived ethicality and brand loyalty, customer perceived ethicality and brand trust, customer perceived ethicality and purchase intentions, customer perceived ethicality and corporate social responsibility.

### Theoretical implications

The important goals of this meta-analysis are (1) To give insights of antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality by meta-analysis; (2) To deal with likely unfairness and limitation in selected past studies; (3) To uncover real conclusion of the association between brand communication and customer perceived ethicality as well as customer perceived ethicality and related variables. The number one goal is achieved by this meta-analysis. For this, 58 correct studies out of 100 was selected which produced 251 observations. Moreover, 15 hypothesis of direct effect were also tested and found significant and positive relationships between customer perceived ethicality and the related constructs. So this meta-analysis produces original conceptual analysis which leads towards complete insight into relationship between antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality.

The number two goal related with unfairness and limitation of past studies which is also accomplished by the present meta-analysis. It is true that meta-analysis is better than traditional research methodology because meta-analysis combines all effect sizes of the selected articles and then produces single generalize effect (Robinson and Dickersin, 2002). In the same manner Hunter and Schmidt (2004) suggested that as compared to conventional research methodology, the meta-analysis produces generalize results. Moreover, the use of meta-analysis structure equation modelling (SEM) has made possible to evaluate conceptual model by combining various studies, samples and research methodologies (Cheung, 2015). Therefore, the current study consolidated all variables related to customer perceived ethicality, decreased the heterogeneity of the past studies finding. Hence, the results of the present study are much reliable than previous studies with respect to heterogeneity.

Finally, this study also successfully obtained the number three goal by displaying findings and discussing direct relationships between customer perceived ethicality and relevant constructs. For this purpose, hypothesized model was analysed and found a significant and positive direct relationship between brand communication and customer perceived ethicality as well as confirmed significant and positive direct link between customer perceived ethicality and other variables under investigation. Importantly, the strongest, significant and positive direct association of customer perceived ethicality was found with brand association.

### Managerial Implications

The present meta-analysis has some suggestions for managers. As you are familiar that in today's highly linked world, where each stakeholder can observe untruthful and / or profit loving behaviour of a company, and quickly spread this information by using different digital and traditional sources, therefore, a lot of companies are implementing ethical practices. So, managers should reject both recruitment on low salary and unknowledgeable workforce (Hennig-Thurau, 2004), instead educated and skilful workforce should be recruited which shows great extent of ethics and sympathy. In other words, managers should allocate budget to ensure that companies are strictly adhere to ethical principles in everyday activities.

Manager should seriously implement ethics in business while developing goods or services as well as in promotion to customers because (Lee Thomas *et al.* 2011)

ethical actions strengthen relationship between buyer and company.

## Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present meta-analysis examined antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality based on quantitative articles. In future meta-analysis should propose a technique to analyse qualitative articles. Furthermore, the future meta-analysis should find new databases so that to get new articles which will provide new variables and will support in developing extended model. The last challenge of this meta-analysis is adverse effect because information obtained empirically by different researchers with different research design. Therefore, few variables need more consideration about their association as an antecedents or outcomes with customer perceived ethicality because findings of the same behaviour such as brand trust or perceived quality may vary for one study to another. Future research should make better consolidation of these variables.

In spite of above mentioned limitations, the present meta-analysis still provides unique and comprehensive information regarding antecedents and outcomes of customer perceived ethicality by exploring new conceptual arguments on the selected topic.

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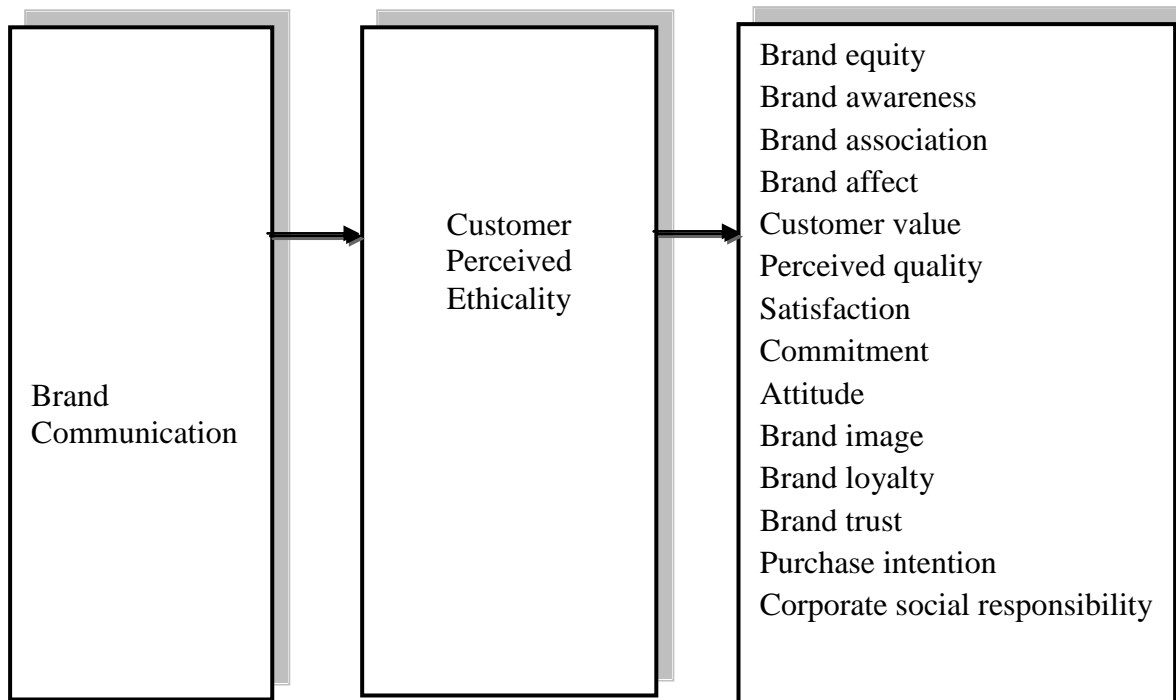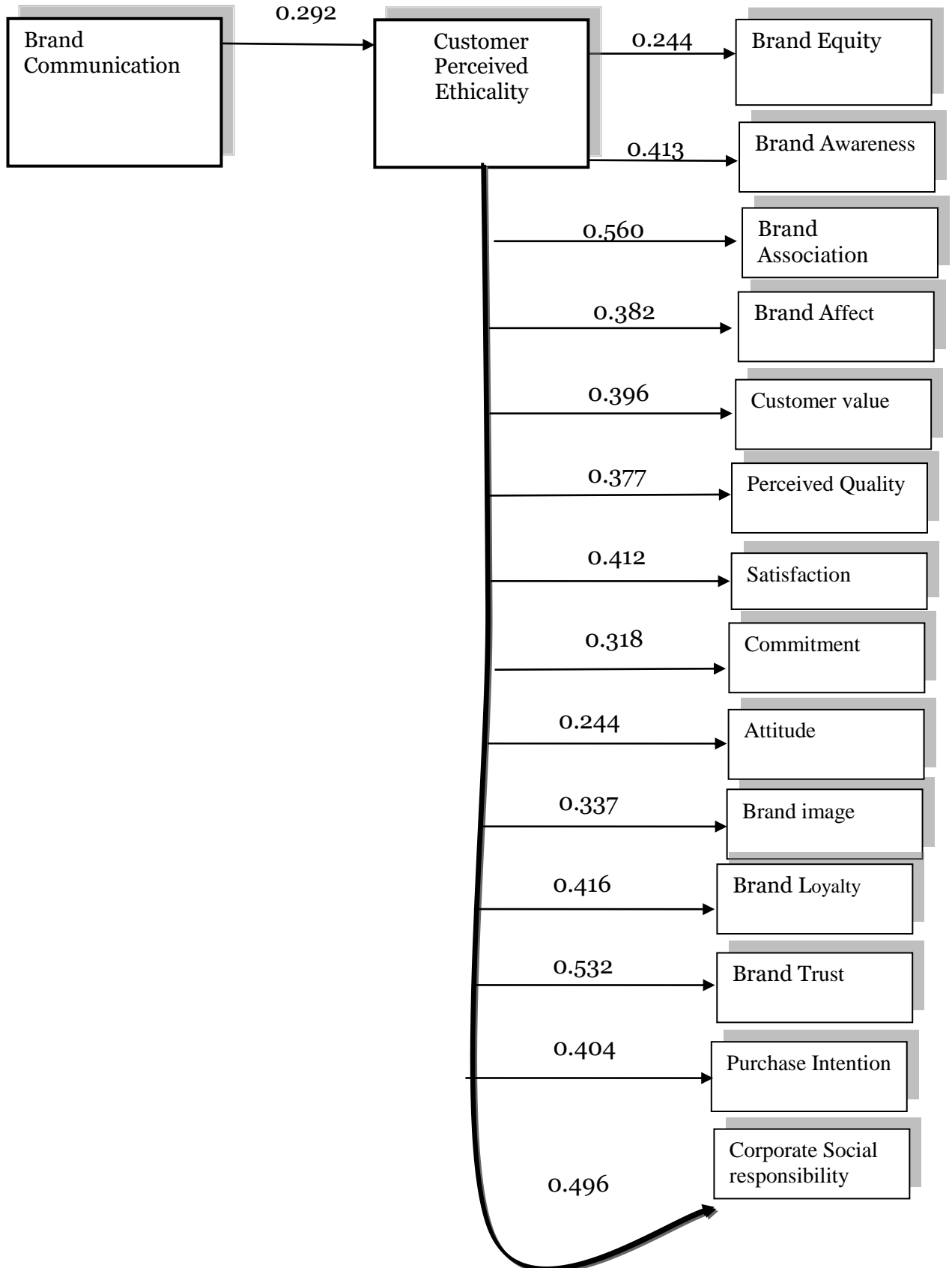
**Appendix: 1**
Figure1. Hypothesized model

**Antecedent**          **Outcomes**

Appendix: 2
Figure 2. Path diagram with correlation coefficients



Figure 2. Path diagram with correlation coefficients

**Appendix: 3**
Table 1: Descriptive Results

| Years of Publications | Number of Published Studies | Number of Unpublished Studies | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2009 & Before | 7 | - | 7 |
| From 2010 to 2020 | 47 | 4 | 51 |
| Total | 54 | 4 | 58 |

**Appendix: 4**
Table 2: Direct effect results of Antecedents and Outcome of Customer perceived ethicality

| Relations | (k) | (o) | N | $M_{N\alpha}$ | ICI (95%) | ICS (95%) | Q | $Sig_2$ | FSN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Equity | 5 | 11 | 11004 | 0.244 | 0.132 | 0.356 | 441.30347 | 0.00000 | 3 |
| Brand awareness | 7 | 13 | 3219 | 0.413 | 0.278 | 0.547 | 286.56971 | 0.00000 | 17 |
| Brand Association | 6 | 9 | 4711 | 0.560 | 0.363 | 0.757 | 1365.75973 | 0.00000 | 22 |
| Brand Affect | 10 | 18 | 24617 | 0.382 | 0.305 | 0.458 | 886.02008 | 0.00000 | 20 |
| Customer Value | 5 | 8 | 2532 | 0.396 | 0.283 | 0.509 | 82.63187 | 0.00000 | 10 |
| Perceived Quality | 11 | 30 | 14909 | 0.377 | 0.307 | 0.447 | 797.81709 | 0.00000 | 33 |
| Satisfaction | 7 | 21 | 8403 | 0.412 | 0.323 | 0.502 | 577.07943 | 0.00000 | 28 |
| Commitment | 7 | 25 | 7429 | 0.318 | 0.210 | 0.425 | 743.96716 | 0.00000 | 18 |
| Attitude | 6 | 17 | 4486 | 0.244 | 0.162 | 0.326 | 141.99780 | 0.00000 | 5 |
| Brand Image | 9 | 14 | 8368 | 0.337 | 0.239 | 0.435 | 515.70155 | 0.00000 | 12 |
| Brand Loyalty | 14 | 25 | 12042 | 0.416 | 0.319 | 0.512 | 1629.50349 | 0.00000 | 13 |
| Brand Trust | 17 | 35 | 19003 | 0.532 | 0.439 | 0.626 | 2731.14658 | 0.00000 | 14 |
| Purchase Intention | 8 | 14 | 5182 | 0.404 | 0.242 | 0.566 | 1786.79025 | 0.00000 | 18 |
| Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR) | 5 | 6 | 2870 | 0.496 | 0.336 | 0.656 | 133.82626 | 0.00000 | 19 |
| Brand Communication | 3 | 5 | 1397 | 0.292 | 0.158 | 0.426 | 26.82994 | 0.00002 | 3 |

*Note: (k) number of studies used from the analysis; (o) number of observations taken from the analysis of the studies; (N) number of accumulated samples of the assessed studies; $M_{N\alpha}$ = weighted average effect and corrected from the sample and the alpha obtained in the studies; ICI = confidence interval lower; ICS = confidence interval higher; (Q): test of heterogeneity at the individual and the aggregate levels; $Sig_2$ = significance level of Q, (\*) effect-size is significant*

Appendix: 5
Table 3. Summary of hypothesis testing

| Hypothesis | Coefficient | P | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brand communication has a positive effect on customer perceived ethicality | 0.292 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand equity | 0.244 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand awareness | 0.413 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand association | 0.560 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand affect | 0.382 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Customer value | 0.396 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Perceived quality | 0.377 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Satisfaction | 0.412 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on commitment | 0.318 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Attitude | 0.244 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand image | 0.337 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on brand loyalty | 0.416 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Brand trust | 0.532 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on Purchase Intentions | 0.404 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Customer perceived ethicality has a positive effect on CSR | 0.496 | 0.000 | Accepted |