

# Conceptualizing corporate identity in a dynamic environment

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The study revisits the meaning of Corporate Identity (CI) in practice to identify its key dimensions, gain insights into the conceptualization and theoretical lenses of CI to provide clarity on how to measure the construct.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study is based on a comprehensive literature review and qualitative research of 22 semi-structured interviews with senior managers from 11 UK - leading companies, and three in-depth interviews with brand consultants who worked closely with these firms in cognate areas. The study employed thematic analysis and utilized Nvivo 9, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), to analyze the data.

**Findings** – The study identifies six key dimensions of CI in the UK industry; communication, visual identity, behavior, organizational culture, stakeholder management, and founder value-based leadership.

**Research limitations/implications** – The focus on UK leading companies limits the generalizability of the results. Further studies should be conducted in other sectors and country settings to examine the relationships identified in the current study.

**Originality/value** – This study identifies the salient dimensions of CI and provides novel conceptualizations and measurements for these dimensions. It also introduces a framework for the interrelationships between CI dimensions, their influence on corporate image, based on rigorous theoretical underpinning, which lays the foundation for future empirical testing.

**Keywords** Corporate identity; Communication; Visual identity; Management behavior, Employee identification; Leadership

**Paper Type** Research paper

## **Introduction**

Given the competitive intensity of today's business climate, superior performance is increasingly predicted on a firm's ability to manage critical intangible assets, i.e., corporate identity (CI) (Gambetti et al., 2017; Melewar et al., 2014). CI values, emotions, personality, behavior and communication, have become key elements of differentiation strategies which consequently impact the image and reputation, as well as their financial performance of a company. Accordingly, CI has been widely recognized as an effective strategic instrument and as a mean to achieve competitive advantage (Balmer, 2017).

Various conceptual research studies have addressed the theoretical foundation of CI resulting in different taxonomies and schools of thought (e.g., Balmer, 1995, 2012; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007; He, 2012; Survatjis and De Chernatony, 2016; Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). Although these taxonomies help structure CI, they also overlap, obfuscating its boundaries. In addition, some frameworks are too disperse and broad (i.e., Balmer, 1995; 2012), or lack theoretical rigor (Cornelissen et al., 2012; Kitchen et al., 2013). Practically, these ambiguities make the operationalization of the CI construct a challenge, and leads to a lack of valid, reliable, and parsimonious CI scales that could empirically reveal the construct's dimensionality and/or its relationship to other concepts (Cornelissen et al., 2012).

The lack of consensus on what constitutes the construct of CI is reflected also in the business world. While CI is considered of major importance to CEOs (Balmer, 2017), many executives admit to having little knowledge of how to manage, control or even explicitly define the concept (Melewar et al., 2005). Given these problems, CI will remain underdeveloped until its key dimensions have been identified and operationalized. It is no longer sufficient to advise practitioners or researchers that the key to successful brand distinctiveness is through CI without providing information on what key dimensions actually constitute CI, hence the rationale for this research. Specifically, we assess: (1) how UK organizational managers perceive CI; (2) what are the key dimensions of CI and their conceptualization (3) the nature of the relationship between CI dimensions Based on research outcomes we then identify directions and challenges for management and research.

This study makes two contributions. First, it addresses a call to investigate further the concept of CI (Balmer, 2017) by exploring the concept of CI from a managerial perspective, clarifying its salient dimensions and providing new conceptualization to them, which is important especially as most CI models are too abstract to be operationalized without clearer theoretical underpinning (Abratt and Mingione, 2017; Cornelissen *et al.*, 2012). Second, drawing on an interdisciplinary, dynamic approach, a consolidative model is presented for understanding the relationship between the key dimensions of CI, underpinned through theories of corporate communication, leadership, organizational identification, organizational culture, and stakeholder management.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The nature and meaning of CI***

During the past three decades, various CI definitions have resulted resulting in diverse views as to its meaning (Kitchen et al., 2013) Originally, research focused upon definitions that considered visual cues indicating corporate visual identity (CVI). For example, Abratt (1989, p.414) defined CI as: *'an assembly of visual cues - physical and behavioral by which an audience could recognize the company and distinguish it from others'* However, Balmer (2017) argue that CI does not only involve these visible outward representations, as the meaning of CI needed to be extended to incorporate the set of intrinsic characteristics that gives the company coherence. Balmer (2001, p. 248), for example defines CI as *'what an organization is'* referring to the inherent character underpinned by the corporate personality and experienced through everything an organization says, makes or does (i.e., total corporate communications). Similarly, Gray and Balmer (1998, p.696) define CI as *'the unique characteristics of an organization'*, proposing its principle components to be company strategy, philosophy, organizational design and culture. Hatch and Schultz (1997), from an organizational behavior perspective, also acknowledge organizational culture within which local meaning and organizational symbols are embedded. They refer to organizational identity as *'what [organizational] members perceive, feel and think about their organizations. It is assumed to be a collective, commonly-shared understanding of the organization's distinctive values and characteristics'* (Hatch and Schultz, 1997, p. 357).

Other scholars, such as Van Rekom (1997, p.411), albeit from a marketing and communication perspective, referred to CI in relation to external audiences and regards this as central to the communications process in an organization. He adroitly defined CI as '*the set of meanings by which an object allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it*'. In the same vein, Van Riel and Balmer (1997) acknowledge the roles of communication, behavior and symbolism as the means by which the company makes itself known to the world (Schmeltz, 2014).

Melewar (2003) and his co-authors (Melewar *et al.*, 2005; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006) broadened the meaning of CI to include a mix of elements that make an organization unique. Using a multidisciplinary approach, they conceptualized CI as a hierarchical construct. The original specification of an organization's CI by Melewar (2003) includes all means of communication, culture, business mission, goals, strategies, organizational structure, degree of centralization of control, products or services, markets and industries served, offices and retail outlets. Recently, Nguyen *et al.* (2016) explored the concept of CI in the Chinese context, employing Melewar and Karaosmanoglu's (2006) model. They identified new elements pertaining to name, status, organizational culture, self-expression, affiliation/network, innovation, strategy and visual design considered relevant to companies operating in China. Melewar's (2003) model is considered one of the most comprehensive CI models and the closest attempt to operationalise CI as it provides clear, concise and unambiguous guidance for defining the construct, specifying its domain (Churchill, 1979) and laying the foundation for subsequent scaling (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003).

Similarly, from a multidisciplinary approach, Simões *et al.* (2005) developed a CI scale that considered only the internal controlled perspective of CI and measured three internal elements of CI; consistent image implementation, mission dissemination and visual identity implementation. Recently, a stream of work in CI focused on the umbrella notion of corporate marketing and considered related concepts, including corporate strategy (He and Balmer, 2013), corporate brand identity (Coleman *et al.*, 2015), corporate heritage (Burghausen and Balmer, 2015), corporate reputation (Harvey *et al.*, 2017), with a call for more research to explore the relationship between CI and other corporate marketing concepts (Balmer, 2017; He and Balmer, 2013).

Accordingly, several points can be made. First, CI involves identifying what an organization stands for, understanding its central or distinctive characteristics, and communicating internal organizational attributes to a broad range of stakeholders (Schmeltz, 2014), while stressing the construct's strategic nature (Abratt and Mingione, 2017). Second, the meaning of CI has evolved from partial views of the concept (e.g., visual design) to an interdisciplinary approach in which CI has dominated the thinking of some researchers (Melewar *et al.*, 2014; Nguyen *et al.*, 2016). These can be summarized under four main theoretical perspectives: graphic design, marketing, organizational studies and interdisciplinary (Simoes *et al.*, 2005). Third, CI encompasses a wide range of dimensions and elements with differing emphases; this range provides a challenge to the achievement of a general agreement on what constitutes the construct and particularly to the classification of the components of CI (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2012; Bravo *et al.*, 2016, 2017).

## **Research Methods**

The use of qualitative methods is appropriate for studying complex processes (Eisenhardt, 1989). Using secondary data and multiple interviews also helps develop rich insights and provide the basis for greater transferability of the findings to other contexts (Eisenhardt, 1989). Due to the vague definition of CI and its uncertain linkage to related concepts, we therefore adopt qualitative and inductive approach and employ semi-structured interviews as the main sources of data for the present study, because asking open-ended questions is very appropriate to elicit opinion and attitude data from informants (He, 2012; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

To achieve the study's research objective, the authors conducted 22 interviews with focusing on marketing managers, members of the brand team responsible for CI management, and general managers since CI issues are viewed as sources of competitive advantage, thus should be the focus of senior management and positioned at the centre of an organization's strategy formation (Balmer, 2017; He and Balmer, 2012). Also, three in-depth interviews were conducted with Brand consultants who worked closely with these firms in cognate areas (Table 1). Two interviewees from each company were selected based on the logic of purposeful sampling (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and interviewed for between 60 to 90 minutes and tape recorded.

<<<Insert Table 1>>>

A broad cross-section of companies was chosen for this research (Table 1), in line with Melewar and Karaosmanoglu's (2006:850) suggestion, because part of the investigation aimed to analyze whether the choice of components and identity were related to the industry in which the company operates or any other company-specific influence. Selected companies were identified based on the following criteria (i) have global reach in order to have established CI and communication functions/departments responsible for managing it; Arvidsson (2010) view large companies as first-adopters and trendsetters when it comes to corporate communication; (ii) have UK headquarters in order to facilitate face-to-face interviewing process; and (iii) be among market leaders within their respective industry and have high reputed corporate brands, e.g., rank high in reputation survey<sup>1</sup> (Global Fortune 500, Manager Magazine, TIME).

Questions focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of CI, elements of CI mix, and supportive factors in the management of the CI. The interviews started with broad 'grand tour' questions that enabled informants to present responses in their own terms. Questions were interspersed with prompts to gain greater insight into specifics i.e. details on particular programs and topics and questions were adjusted as needed.

Following the interviews, further information provided by the informants or sourced by the authors was examined. Drawing on secondary data and more than one interview by each company helped develop rich insights and provided the basis for greater transferability of the findings to other contexts (Eisenhardt, 1991). This involved website and published documents audit (these included corporate aims, vision, mission, values, etc).

The process of the data analysis/ synthesis was iterative and corroborative in nature (Foroudi et al., 2017). We iterated among data, emerging theory, and relevant literature to develop a deeper understanding of the key elements of CI and the dynamics of the relationship between them. Our initial approach was a first-order analysis (Van Maanen, 1979) involving a

---

<sup>1</sup> The Reputation Quotient is a widely-used scale for assessing corporate reputation. The scale was developed initially developed by Fombrun and Shanley (1990) and revised by Fombrun *et al.* (2000). Importantly, its reliability and validity have been proved by many studies. (Please see some examples of those studies in *Corporate Reputation Review*, 2002, Vol. 4, No. 4).

thorough coding of the interview and meeting transcripts (Van Maanen, 1979). We used Nvivo 9, a computer-based qualitative software (CAQDAS), designed to aid in coding and analyzing text throughout the entire process. The first-order concepts helped unveil key elements of the informants' meaning systems but not the deeper patterns or relationships in the data. To discern themes that might constitute the basis for developing the relationships between the elements of CI, we used a more structured second-order analysis to view the data at a higher level of theoretical abstraction (Clark et al., 2010). We used constant comparison techniques and the software program to assist in discerning second-order themes that subsumed the first-order concepts (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In the third stage of our analysis, the second-order themes were assembled into aggregate dimensions. This process involved the relatively straightforward task of examining the relationships among first-order concepts and second-order themes that could be distilled into a set of more simplified, complementary groupings. Ultimately, themes were consolidated into more general dimensions of analysis that captured the overarching concepts relevant to CI and the relationships between its elements. Lastly, we conducted 'member checks' with our informants to gain confidence that the emergent analytical framework was sensible to and was affirmed by those living the termed 'successful CI management'.

Also, several methods were incorporated to improve research quality (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In particular, researchers each provided independent interpretations of the findings; following multiple interviews respondents had the opportunity to provide feedback on initial findings, all of which reinforced outcome reliability. In addition, only one researcher conducted all the interviews, which reduced the potential for bias.

## **Findings and discussions**

### ***Nature and Meaning of CI***

The findings revealed three different perspectives related to the meaning of CI, which appear to result from variations in the operations and industries of companies involved in the research, as reported by PR, brand and strategy consultants in follow-up interviews. Firstly, an *external* perspective, where many interviewees acknowledged CI as the external representation of the organization to its various stakeholders, mainly customers. This included visual expression through corporate logos, as well as other elements such as use of color, staff uniforms, etc. This view is reflected by one manager from an automotive company who explained that:

The ultimate representation of corporate identity is what we call the blue oval, the oval name in the script is used if you want to summarize it [organization] in one thing... that is the core of our CI.

Also, from the same perspective, a few interviewees associated CI with corporate image while others associated it with reputation as stated by an interviewee from a health care company: '*Our corporate identity is the overall perception that any of our stakeholders have, our patients, or surgeons, government body, etc*'. This corroborates early definitions of CI offered in the practitioners' literature on CI (e.g. Ackerman, 1988). Notably, this view was critiqued by Balmer and Greyser (2003) who showed that some practitioners focused on visual aspects of identity to the neglect of other factors related to organizational intrinsic value. Secondly: some interviewees perceived CI from an *internal* perspective considering corporate values, culture, and behavior when defining organizational identity.

[CI] is the combination of our values and culture that defines the way this organization makes decisions and positions itself. (Interviewee, Multinational Bank).

Thirdly, a few interviewees offered a more *holistic* meaning to CI, for example: '*The way of doing things*' (Marketing Communication Manager, IT company), and '*it [CI] is about the clarity about what the business stands for*' (General Manager, Food & Beverage company, Food & Beverage company). In this sense, interviewees pointed to internal aspects of the organization as well as the visual expressions and communications used to convey their CI, which all made their organization (in their view) unique and differentiated from others.

These results are supported by the literature. From academic and management perspectives, Survatjis and De Chernatony (2016) argue that CI should be incorporated into internal and external organizational elements; whether visible or not visible to stakeholders. Accordingly, CI could be depicted as an 'iceberg' with two equal levels; above and below the surface (Lambert, 1989) which corroborates current scholarly work.



## *Dimensions of CI*

Table 1 shows the overarching dimensions that emerged from our analysis which include communication, visual identity, behavior, culture, stakeholder management, and founder leadership. The following section discusses the emergent dimensions and their constituent themes, while acknowledging their interactivity.

### *Communication*

Strong consensus existed among interviewees that corporate communication directed towards different stakeholders was an important CI dimension. Interviewees were asked about the categorization of marketing, organizational and management communication. The majority of interviewees stated that, in practice, they did not use this categorization, rather they divided communication functions and activities into internal (mainly directed to employees) and external (mainly directed to customers and publics including government). These findings are consistent with Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) who reported senior managers' opinions regarding the subdivisions of corporate communications which they saw as 'a little artificial' since interconnections and associations among these kinds of communication make it difficult to differentiate them.

In terms of external communication, interviewees used phrases such as "walk the talk" and "actions speak louder than words" to describe expectations that corporate behavior should match communications. That is, interviewees generally acknowledged that firms should develop accurate advertising, annual financial statements, and so forth. Indeed, today, misrepresentation can be met with harsh criticism, extensive publicity, and sometimes even legal penalties (Karaosmanoglu *et al.*, 2016).

In terms of internal communication, interviewees noted the significance of communication flow among people in disseminating information about corporate values, purpose, and direction, to ensure that employees were aware of and committed to achieve organizational objectives, which influences corporate image. This makes sense as image creation often takes place when employees interact with external stakeholders (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa,

1997), which reiterates the significance of internal communication and employee behavior in manifesting CI and creating corporate image.

Well, obviously the biggest ambassadors of any brand are the people who work for you. So what they think, what they say about the company is very important, and we make sure that everybody is fully briefed and informed about corporate goals and activities (Corporate Communication Manager, Food and Drug company)

All the companies interviewed cited various channels and instruments for conveying CI and information about objectives, goals, missions, etc., such as integrating 'push' channels (i.e., newsletters, internal reports, e-mails) with 'pull' and interactive channels to offer employees the opportunity to express themselves and underpin allegiance between companies and employees. This corroborates the position of communication scholars (Du et al., 2015) who call for stakeholder management of communication and stress the importance of internal communication, which can be as important as external communication (Bravo et al., 2017).

We have lot of different ways to communicate with our people, whether through the intranet, internal magazines, internal face to face leadership meetings, we have regular employee forums and open discussion (Interviewee, food and drug company)

Further, interviewees described Word-of-Mouth (WOM) communication from close environment as powerful in influencing stakeholders' perceptions of the company and motivating consumers to try company products and services. An interviewee expressing the concern that his organization had about WOM communication stated that:

It [WOM] is incredibly important. According to the research we have done, we asked customers: what are the sources of information that can influence you? Twenty five percent of people who responded to that survey replied by: A recommendation from a friend or relative. Consumers would take the opinion of friends or relatives, or aggregated opinion of strangers, and that is hugely important. There is also research which says that people would talk more about negative experience than positive experience. (Marketing Communication Director, Automotive company)

Thus, managers in UK companies fully understand the importance of interpersonal uncontrolled corporate communication in influencing purchase intentions and corporate image. This is well known in the literature of consumer behavior, stakeholders tend to rely on recommendations from others who have experiences about a company and its products and service (Cornelissen, 2000; Dacin and Brown, 2002). One reason for the growing importance of uncontrolled communication was related to the increasing scrutiny of public media, which reflect the relevance of intermediary WOM.

### *Visual Identity*

Interviewees agreed that CVI played a role in corporate and brand identification, conveying the strengths and qualities of the firm and driving familiarity with and recognition of the company. Interviewees identified various components of CVI, some of them appeared to be more important than others, thus were categorized into sub-dimensions: CVI system (CVIS) and applications of CVIS. Besides, consistency of visual identity was reflected by interviewees to be another important sub-dimension. In terms of CVIS elements, not surprisingly, corporate logo was the most important aspect of symbolism highlighted by interviewees, which plays a significant role in manifesting the underlying aspects of their organizations, communicating and reinforcing corporate values and emphasising specific attributes of CI.

The tint [logo], which is the kit, is a very deliberate visual. It is actually explicit to be sports kits which reflect our business: very strong, focused, dynamic, vision, so that a clear expression of how we see ourselves as the business (Corporate Communication Manager, Food and Drug company)

This finding implies that corporate logo is a tool which, if successfully managed, can be used to convey the desired features the organization wishes to express to its stakeholders. This is consistent with Foroudi *et al.* (2017) who outline how organizational symbolism such as the logo has the potential to help organizations express their characteristics and communicate the embodiment of a corporation including its values, standards and distinctiveness.

Company name was also perceived as a central element of CVI, which carries connotations about the organization that can evoke feelings of trust, confidence, security, strength, durability, speed, status and exclusivity.

It [company name] conveys durability, it conveys a family name of the organization; a principle element employees would recognise about ourselves (Marketing Communication Director, Automotive company)

Choosing the right colour could identify and differentiate an organization's identity. For example, an interviewee reported: *"In Europe now, we use an orange additional colour which contrasts with blue and makes [us look] more modern which is relevant nowadays."* (Marketing Communication Director, Automotive company) This reiterates the view of several scholars (Melewar and Saunders, 2000) who argue that company name help emphasises specific identity attributes, such as openness to communication, or a serious business face.

Other elements of CVI, were reflected by few interviewees and coded as applications of CVIS, included architecture. For example, the buildings (with their internal and external structure and decoration) were important to communicate the purpose of the organization and its main activities. They believed that the environment where transactions take place was powerful in creating an image about the organization among employees, and other stakeholders.

There is a whole bunch of investment has gone into the building in 2001. The design of the building is important in terms of the way the company looks, the way that people come and interact with one another. Also important is the kind of eating space, and space we have for meeting, the way our brand is reflected around the building with decorations and signage. Generally, it [architecture] is very important. (Communication Manager, Food and Beverage Company)

A further point emerging in respect to CVI was consistency. As the most tangible aspect for expressing the organization, visual identity was recognized as a visual common thread that

runs through the way organizations expressed themselves, and thus should be applied with a considerable degree of consistency.

As being a true multinational, one of the sections of our intranet is the CI guidelines from which people can download logos, typefaces, pontoon references, suggested approach to signage, even to sort of furniture and poster. We try to have a relatively uniform approach to how we present ourselves whenever we are in the world (Corporate Communication Manager, Tobacco company)

Collectively, the corporate logo, name, typeface, architecture, and other elements noted by some interviewees (e.g. employees' uniform) were typically considered components of the firm's visual identity. The consistent use and exposure of these visual expressions in all forms of marketing and advertising were widely believed to help in public learning about the company, over the long term, the consistent presence of the firm's visual identity was believed to affect the public's perception of the firm

### *Behavior*

Three behavioral factors appeared to be key elements of CI: corporate social behavior towards different stakeholders including the environment and community, employee behavior via their identification to organization value, and top managers' behavior via their representation and symbolic leadership. Interviewees emphasized the importance of corporate social behavior (towards employees, consumers, communities in which organizations operate in, the world at large) and considered it a facet of corporate behavior. Corporate responsible behavior and operations were believed to reinforce CI and reflect the personality of the brand/company organization.

The CSR activity represents really the personality of the brand, because the things that we do in our CSR world underpins and supports the portrayal of the brand (Food & Drug Company)

Brown and Dacin (1997) argued that CSR associations were important for influencing a consumer's opinion of a company and thus may impact product evaluations.

Interviewees recognized employees as ambassadors representing a potential interface between the company and its external stakeholders, which could impact upon stakeholder perceptions. Due regard was accorded to the importance of employees accurately understanding and communicating corporate values and goals in their daily behavior. Employees' beliefs, norms, and values, derived from organizational goals and culture, influenced actions and informal messages they communicated.

I think it is important that your employees not only work for organizations but also live the value set of the organization and express it. I do think there has to be coherence about what the company says and what it does, and what employees do (Marketing Communication Director, Automotive company)

Notably, our data indicated that effective delivery of corporate goals including social initiatives were contingent upon employees' willingness to collaborate and based on the premise that, generally, employees' involvement in corporate social and environmental activities is voluntary. In this respect, organizations strive to enhance employees' experiences of their working life and self-esteem, which in turn impacts their perceptions of and identification with the organization, and accordingly compliance with corporate social initiatives.

We actively encourage our employees to engage in the community in which they live, and that is seen as an important element of our responsibility. We have [company name] global week of caring, which is generally the second week of September, where we encourage all our employees globally to engage with their communities through projects that are organized by themselves or by the company. Also, we reward best behaviors and we publicize it among employees (Sustainability Manager, Automotive company)

The role of employee identification behavior, as revealed by the findings, is supported by Johnson and Ashforth (2008) who are that employee engagement in voluntary actions is stimulated when they recognize areas of similarity in objectives and beliefs and become more identified with their organization (Boros, 2008). This leads to higher employee motivation and commitment to organizational goals which could be translated into co-operative and

citizenship-type behaviors such as engaging in volunteering programs (Lee, 2011; Piehler et al., 2016) relative to CSR objectives (Balmer, 2017; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017).

Another salient element of CI was senior management leadership by defining corporate values and communicating goals and vision, which in turn may motivate employees and influence their attitudes and behavior.

I do believe that organizations take their lead from the senior executives in each of the locations in which they operate. And, therefore, if the tonality of executives' behavior or style is one which is relatively congruent to our values, then I believe it is very quickly spread out in the organization (Corporate Communication Manager, Tobacco company)

Thus, top management could create an environment in which employees can identify with their organizations and exemplify values through behavior (Balmer, 2017; Schmeltz, 2014). For example, the findings revealed the importance of senior management in enacting the strategic organizational core and emphasizing corporate social activities as crucial to company survival and growth.

We have a CSR statement in which the CEO said that we have got a double project which is both economic; so making a profitable business, and also social; having a sustainable business and behaving responsibly towards our people, towards our environment, towards our community in which we are operating (CSR Manager, Food and Beverage company)

In this statement, the word 'said' signs the importance of the use of language by managers to justify organization engagement in CSR. It shows top management attempt engage regularly in symbolic representational leadership in terms of actions and words (Balmer, 2017; Schmeltz, 2014), which influences how employees interpret and respond to corporate social initiatives (Sharma, 2000). Thus, top management could foster a sense of identity and commitment to corporate goals and aspirations. This also ties with the sensemaking literature which argues that CSR activities could be a result of internal organizational embedded cognitive and linguistic processes rather than external demands (Aguinis and Glavas, 2017; Basu and Palazzo, 2008). Thus, the salience of this representational leadership sub-dimension spans CI and CSR literature streams. In this example also, the CEO engaged in economic

justification for corporate actions; expressing that the key contribution to the common good lay in increasing profit, and highlighting tangible contributions to stakeholders (e.g. environment, community).

### *Culture*

In general, interviewees agreed on the relevance of culture to CI. Interviewees described culture as organizationally shared values, beliefs, and behavior that stem from CI and shape how firms conduct their business. In this sense, culture was considered fundamental and distinctive in relation to organizational character (De Roeck et al., 2013; De Roeck and Maon, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2016). Interestingly, most interviewees were able to define the characteristics of their specific corporate culture. For example, a corporate communication manager from a Tobacco company stated what the culture represented: *“I would say: inherent work hard, play hard culture. There is a lot of autonomy and independence”*.

Almost all interviewees claimed the existence of dominant cultures in their organizations and indicated that employees shared a common set of assumptions, values, and beliefs which presented them with a cognitive ‘schema’ or ‘logic’ that aids responsiveness in modalities consistent with organizational values (Lee et al., 2013; Sørensen, 2002).

Across the whole business, mission, purpose, values and culture are the same...  
The mission statement and the criteria we set for ourselves in the organization are very close to the culture itself. (General Manager, Food & Beverage company)

This view aligns with the integration paradigm (Deshpandé and Farley, 1999) where culture is something the organization *has* that can be managed as an independent variable.

Our analysis indicated one key element contributed to establishing organizational culture: organizational values, contrary to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), and social values were one of the pillars of corporate values. Further, mission statement, organization founder, history, and COO materialized as dimensions on their own right rather than components of culture, as explained below.

It is just ingrained in our brand and always has been. CSR is part of the organization, it is found in the values, it is part of the brand values and it has



affected the brand positively. Our brand identity and CI and CSR are ingrained as one. (Marketing Manager, Telecommunication company)

This statement affirms the importance of cultural values in the development of corporate social behavior (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2010; Schmeltz, 2014), and suggests that interviewees tend to adopt and internalize CSR into their company's strategic goals which represents an important prerequisite for building strong CI, as suggested by Hillestad et al. (2010). Further, using the word 'our' indicates employees' organization identification as they adopt the fundamental and unique values of their organizations as defining characteristics of themselves (Clark et al., 2010). Thus, the arrangement of an organization's common values, supporting ideas, positions, habits, and norms converged to give a corporate culture its character (Abratt et al., 2012). A company's values demonstrated corporate commitment towards its stakeholders and the environment in which it operated.

### *Stakeholder Management*

Most interviewees perceived mission statements as an important organizational factor, comprising a firm's identity, though a few considered such statements as symbolic representations used for impression management and PR purposes, echoing a point made by Bartkus and Glassman (2008), yet did not necessarily indicating a firm's actual objectives or guidelines for decision making. Interviewees also viewed mission statement as central to the interpretation and legitimization of corporate social behavior, in terms of providing an internal economic focus that emphasizes maximizing both financial performance objectives and the broader corporate social and environmental platform (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2010).

...the mission of the company considers making profit in a sustainable way, our people, our planet and the community around us. So corporate social responsibility is the social part of the corporate mission. (CSR Manager, Food & Beverage company)

As evidenced here, mission statements provide a way to legitimize social responsibility as part of CI, and serve as internal policy and/or reference point that can direct both

management and employee decisions and actions toward social issues (Morsing, 2006; Simoes and Mason, 2012). (nb: it should be said here that ‘management are also employees, not in some separate hallowed hall’ (Kitchen, 2013). From a stakeholder management stance, in general, a mission statement seems to be important for coordinating corporate utilitarian and moral objectives across the company. Statements help align collective organizational thinking and behavior, resulting in a homogeneous corporate culture with embedded social values.

### *Founder Value-based Leadership*

Gleaned from ten interviewees, the founder played a leadership role and had impacted organizational culture, identity, behavior and commitment to dedicated social areas, even decades later (Christensen et al., 2014; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017). The following statements illustrate this:

The principals and founders put these five principles in place in 1947: responsibility, efficiency, quality, mutuality, freedom. Those are consistent throughout the organization... (Senior Public Affairs Manager, Food & Beverage company)

‘I think that the founder’s values are very much still embedded in the company, we are not a premium volume manufacture, but we still try to make vehicles that give people something they previously thought they could not afford. I think this is reflected in the culture of the organization’ (Marketing Communication Director, Automotive company)

For long-established companies, the findings indicated that corporate culture has become ‘an odyssey’ in the organization’s history and origins. That is, the views, ideas, and values of the founder tend to be embedded in corporate culture and lived by employees even decades later as testified below:

I think that he helped shape the company because he recognized that we have to be sustainable and he had a phrase -‘we have to be affordable financially and affordable socially and environmentally’. I think he was one of the first executives

in the car industry to address green issues. So in that way he exercised leadership on issues related to social and environmental responsibility (Marketing Communication Director, Automotive company)

[Founder name] had a number of ideas and values; he was one of the first people who, a hundred years ago, emphasized social improvement, he built worker housing, and very much encouraged people to believe that they should improve themselves from the point of view of education.... I think it is reflected in the culture of the organization today. (Sustainability Manager, Automotive company)

In this example, the founder of the company, through his value-based leadership and role as a ‘cultural architect’ (Hillestad et al., 2010), influenced and formed a culture emphasizing social responsibility in general, and environmental awareness in particular, by taking a leading position in the development of say environmentally friendly cars in the automotive industry, (aside, of course the term ‘environmentally friendly’ has to be seen in what was acceptable at that time). This position reinforces the role of leaders as crucial moral inculcators, particularly due to their main impact on corporate culture (Kakabadse et al., 2005). This also supports the view of Hillestad et al. (2010) who claim that companies gain trustworthiness by engaging in CSR and environmental awareness activities enforced by founders who generally take a leadership position.

The findings also reveal that the unique characteristics of value-based founders who symbolize messages that contain numerous references to moral justifications, provide meaning and stimulate followers, thereby helping them identify with corporate goals, including social responsible outcomes (Christensen et al., 2014; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017), which is supported by several scholars who demonstrate the influence of transformational leadership on CSR (e.g., Bass, 1990; Vlachos et al., 2013).

### *History*

The findings revealed mixed results regarding the role of history in shaping and developing CI. For the majority of companies, interviewees did not acknowledge history as a key

element of culture. One reason was due to mergers and acquisitions (M&A) which had reduced the impact of history on overall CI.

[Company name] has grown through a series of mergers and acquisitions of businesses in different countries. So, it does not have the same sense of a shared identity and a shared history and a shared culture'. (Marketing Communication Manager, IT company)

Further, an interviewee (General Manager, Food and Beverage company) denied the importance of history to CI, since the connection between the characteristics of CI and history could run the risk of stagnation. That is, a continuous referral to what was or has always been, could mean that the firm locks in on an identity that may have become dysfunctional although it is strongly supported in the organization. Blomback and Brunninge (2009) noted that this risk is particularly present in companies that actively addresses history and keep it alive through corporate communication.

For few interviewees, CI was tightly connected to corporate history, particularly those characterized by longevity and living up to their values and promises over time, viewed history from both retrospective and forward-looking perspectives. Such companies regarded history as a differentiating attribute and heritage which helped make the company relevant to the present, and prospectively, the future. Besides, these interviewees considered their corporate history a source of pride which created a sense of belonging and shared values. This in turn affected employees' behavior (commitment, loyalty and identification), and built trust and reputation over time. This view was expressed by an interviewee from a Food and Drug Company:

[Company name] is for 160 years and that is very much part of its heritage. That heritage is an important thing because we are a health and beauty company which gets passed on from mother to daughter. That longevity helps to shape how people feel about the brand. So there is much more a sense of belonging to [company name] (Corporate, PR and Communications Director, Food and Drug company)

This is evidence of the fact that stakeholders' perceptions of organizations are formed over long periods of time, so the history of organizational activities (reflected in its products, communication, behavior, and others) is the key to the foundation of identity, which has a lasting impact on reputation. For such companies, history was also strongly related to another element of CI, the founder of the company, as explained earlier.

### *Country of Origin*

The findings revealed mixed views regarding the importance and influential role of COO in shaping CI. Few interviewees explained that customers are more likely to evaluate positively products originated from or produced in nations that have a favourable image. Also, consumers attached stereotypes and reputation to products of specific countries. For example, common associations were made about automotive such as: *"American companies were followers rather than leaders of innovation and technology"*, *"Japan were seen as not very reliable"* and *"Italy was perceived to have a rust problem"*, as described by a Marketing Communication Director from an Automotive company. Another interview stated:

...around the world we are known for our news output, and I think that perception is that we are British and can be quite stuffy and dry (Head of Communications, Digital Media and Strategy, Broadcasting company)

Thus, these companies maintained national identity as an important part of CI. However, for the majority of organizations, the impact of COO was declining due to globalisation since multinational companies operate in many different countries and consequently adapted their operations to local situations in such countries. Also, the effect of COO seemed weaker in companies which had gone for mergers and acquisitions, as well as companies which operated overseas for a long term with an organisation structure characterised by decentralisation. This view was reflected by a General Manager from a Food Company of American origin:

...we are fairly decentralised as a business, so we have a very small head office. It is on a trading estate. Also, bear in mind that our brands have been in the UK from the 1930s, so I don't think country of origin is important to our brand.

Another interviewee reported:

The [company name] side is a British company and the [company name] side is a German company. But we don't consider ourselves to be one or the other at all. We are extremely international. People tend to move a lot around the business. So you get a huge mix that really works in having the same culture across the business (Marketing Communication Manager, Food and Drug company)

Thus, these companies could be characterised as multinational companies that operate in different countries and have overcome the COO effect by adapting their activities to local conditions in these countries (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

### *Brand Structure*

The findings revealed different views concerning the relevance of brand structure for CI. Few interviewees stressed the importance of their monolithic branding strategy in order to differentiate themselves from competitors. The importance of brand structure was pointed out by interviewees representing companies with monolithic structure. In these companies, brand structure was considered vital in establishing their identity and maintaining their image in the marketplace. This in turn strengthens customer loyalty, employee identification, and for such companies is fundamental in offsetting the growing power of retailers.

I think it [brand structure] is important; because our brand is shaping a lot our pride of engagement especially in the countries that [company name] is well known. I come from France, and [company name] is the biggest brand out there. So obviously it is shaping our identity because of the image associated with the products. (Director of Corporate Affairs, Food and Beverage company)

Other interviewees, representing companies with endorsed and branded structure, felt it was not important for CI since consumers were unaware of the manufacturing company behind the brands and that brand identity was the main focus of consumers.

[Company name] brand is so strong, it has been now for 160 years. The fact that we are a part of [mother company name] group is, I think, much more significant for a limited number of stakeholders such as perhaps investors, analysts, people

in government, as opposed to our customers. (Communication Manager, Food and Drug company)

This comment typically reflects the characteristics of endorsed CI structure, where the parent company remains visible, though the subsidiary company is a strong brand that keeps its own style (Ind, 1997). Similarly, an interviewee from a tobacco company with a brand structure reflected the insignificance of brand structure.

For us, we are like Unilever or P&G in the sense that we sell brands as a manufacturer. We are [company name], and so our logos always appear in the right hand side in the top of every one of our packs, the [company name] logo, which is simply a way we enforce our identity externally. But, I don't expect most of our consumers would notice that, even though the logo is on there. (Corporate Communication Manager, Tobacco company)

Thus, brand structure seems to be a key element of CI for companies with a monolithic brand structure where corporate logo is the same as product; however, this element is not relevant for companies with an endorsed or brand structure where the brand identity is more important to consumers than the overall CI. More discussion. Figure 1 summarizes the interrelationship between CI dimensions and their components.

## **Conclusion, and theoretical implications**

The main contribution of this study lies in exploration of the CI concept and explication of the interrelationship between its dimensions. First, we contribute to the CI literature by identifying its key dimensions and their components from practitioners' perspective supported by a comprehensive review of scholars' views. The findings of this study advance knowledge on the conceptualization of CI elements, an as yet underemphasized area (Cornelissen et al., 2012). Based on the findings, this study introduces a model for the interrelationship between CI dimensions, and offers suggestions to operationalize the main concepts of the model, which will allow subsequent examination of the relationships between CI and other corporate marketing concepts. The model also highlights potential linkages to acknowledged areas/theories (i.e., corporate communication, leadership, organization

identification, organizational culture and stakeholder management), which invites CI researchers to expand the scope of existing CI dimensions to additional disciplines and to adapt their operationalization to account for this broader scope.

In particular, this study reinforces the idea that communication is considered a fundamental dimension of CI (Balmer, 2017; Gambetti et al., 2017), and suggests that it include internal, external, WOM communication and consistency among medias and messages. By considering internal communication, and its role in enhancing employees' identification, engagement in social behavior, this study answers the call from the literature for viewing employee communication through a stakeholder lens (Bravo et al., 2012; Du et al., 2015). Informed by the findings and discussion, this study conceptualizes communication in terms of its breadth and consistency among medias and messages, and the extent to which the company manages WOM communication.

Second, this study contends that VI is one of the key dimensions of CI which provides an organization with visibility and recognisability, symbolizes an organization for external stakeholder, and hence contributes to its image and reputation (Foroudi *et al.*, 2014; Bravo *et al.*, 2016, 2017). Based on the findings, VI includes CVIS, applications of CVI and consistency among visual representations. This corroborates the view of scholars who address CVI from the design level, which emphasizes the functionality and effectiveness of specific elements of visual identity; considering such visual expressions as a means to an end. Elements of CVI Design includes (1) CVIS (e.g., logo/symbol, name, slogan, colour, typography) (Melewar and Saunders, 2000; Foroudi *et al.*, 2014) and (2) applications of the CVIS, such as corporate aesthetics (e.g., stationery, promotional literature) and exterior and interior design of company buildings (e.g., headquarters, plants, retail stores, offices) (Van den Boshe *et al.*, 2005, 2006a, 2006b). The findings also support scholars view who address CVI from the operational level, where CVI focuses on translating a desired CI into a consistent visual self-presentation (Melewar and Saunders, 2000; Van den Bosch *et al.*, 2006b:873). This is based on the development of CVI guidelines and the way guidelines are applied, resulting in a more or less consistent visual expression of the organisation. Accordingly, this study conceptualises CVI in terms of the functionality of CVIS and its application in conveying what the company stands for and accompanying consistency.



Third, this study demonstrates that corporate social behavior, top management behavioral leadership and employee identification are components of behavior which is a key dimension of CI. Further, we extend the CI literature on management behavior by documenting the significant representational role of CEOs and top managers which conveys CI. Through interviews analyzes, we identify links to the behavioral school of leadership (Stogdill, 1963) which emphasizes the degree to which managers (as leaders) act as the spokespersons for the organization; speak as representatives of the organization; represent the organization at meetings and/or publicize its activities (Abdul Hamid *et al.*, 2012; Stogdill, 1963). Thus, the salience of this representational leadership sub-dimensions spans CI and leadership literature streams. Also, we seek to bridge the schism between the organizational identity and CI literature streams. We argue that employee identification with an organization constitutes a strong conceptual foundation and measure for employee behavior (Kitchen et al., 2013; Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007), and explains the impact of employee behavior, as an element of CI, on extra-role behavior, e.g., voluntary and social bahavior (Balmer, 2017; Johnson and Ashforth, 2008; Newman et al., 2016). This position reinforces the view that corporate social initiatives can be largely understood from employee perspectives (De Roeck and Maon, 2016; Piehler *et al.*, 2016).

Fourth, the findings reveal that organizational values are the main component of culture, where companies having overarching values and predominant cultures. This study suggests that in, the context of CI, conceptualization of culture should focus on values (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2010), utilizing the competing values framework (CVF) (Cameron, 2008; Deshpandé and Farley, 1999, 2004), given that values are considered central to understanding an organization's culture and seen as a reliable and assessable representation of organizational culture (Schmeltz, 2014; Singhapakdi et al., 2015).

Further, we argue that stakeholder management via mission dissemination among employees is an important dimension of CI since it may contribute to reinforcement of consistent behavior (Kitchen et al., 2013), internally diffuse a sense of purpose and singularity of the company, and motivate employees' identification and commitment to organizational goals (Atakan and Eker, 2007; Linnenluecke and Griffiths., 2010). The founder was another

dimension of CI which is cited in CI models (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006), and has an influence on corporate behavior through organizational culture and employee identification with organizational values (Schmeltz, 2014; Vlachos et al., 2013). However, the extant literature has paid insufficient attention to conceptualize this element. The findings of this study advance CI literature by emphasizing the role of value-based founder and proposing transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Christensen et al., 2014) as a potential conceptualization and theoretical foundation to measure this dimension, the founder, of CI construct. Other dimensions which the findings reveal to be relevant to only few companies are history, country of origin and brand structure.

This investigation confirms the multidimensional nature of CI. CI appears to be a rich concept and that the theoretical lens of CI spans various research areas, with theories complementing each other. Thus, grounding the analysis of CI in one field provides a significant, though partial, view. This study is the first to integrate the literature of marketing communications and branding, visual/graphic design, employee identification and leadership. By articulating such theories underpinning CI dimensions, this study advances CI literature, which is dominated by theoretical metaphors and paradigms (Stuart, 1999; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; He, 2012; Balmer, 2017), and moves CI research to an empirical plane, based on a clearly specified theoretical underpinnings, as Cornelissen *et al.* (2012) recommended. Despite considerable support found for each theory, a collective understanding derived from all theories have not been explored so far in the same study, which is a key point of differentiation here.

### **Managerial implication**

This research should help managers in developing and managing CI. Based on our findings, the nature of CI suggests that CI should, in formal terms, be accorded a higher profile in terms of an organization's strategic deliberations and confirms its central role in the creation of corporate image. Also, the nature of the relationship between CI dimensions would suggest that the CI should be considered, managed, and monitored in more explicit and on-going terms than is possibly the case within many contemporary organizations.

Prior to developing and managing CI, managers must be aware of the dimensions required to convey the construct. This study offers a clear guidance as to what CI comprises. The dimensionality of the framework (Figure 1) gives managers the conceptual mechanism to depict CI, while the findings, based on best practices, offer them particular activities to construct and manage their initial ideas concerning each dimension. Although many components considered in the CI framework may already been managed by a business, this research stresses the need for their integration and consistency. For example, managers need to consider the way the font, logo and other visual identity tools are applied, and the consistency and overall visual presentation in their business. A deeper view of visual aspects should also be adopted. Indeed, visual aspects need to be assigned a meaning. In addition, symbols need to 'personify' the company's values.

Considering CI as being synonymous with visual identity alone would be an oversimplification. Managers need to consider several issues, such as whether they use adequate channels of communication (including internal, external and WOM) to their full potential. In fact, CI already exists, whether or not there is an active and deliberate effort to develop it. However, in order to gain a competitive advantage, corporations should have clear guidelines about the corporate image they desire and how it can be achieved. Identity emerges from a company's capacity to understand and manage internal and external reality. It would be false to assume that there is a one-way linear link between CI and corporate image. Also, it seems necessary to integrate uncontrolled communications, particularly, WOM, in the CI construct. This helps understand the receiver perspective which is important in order to reveal how organizational cues are gathered and interpreted. Also, it allows the company to respond accordingly.

Managers need to know whether they are focusing adequately on their employees' behavior, the level of employee identification they wish to achieve, and what human resource initiatives do they have in place to enhance employee identification and support their desired CI. Guided by the research framework, it is crucial that CI and marketing managers build cross functional ties and strong working relationships with their human resource colleagues to ensure that employees have strong sense of belong to their organization, feel strong ties, and are glad to be part of their companies.

CI must be cohesive and employees, who are important players in the CI manifestation, should be aware of relevant organizational values (norms about what is important, how to behave and appropriate attitudes), and agree on the mission. This could be achieved by companies having a well-defined mission, and senior managers regularly communicate and share the mission and discuss the values with employees, yet achieve general agreement on the mission, identification with values and commitment to achieve organizational goals including corporate social initiatives towards the society and different stakeholder groups. Also, organizational values should be conveyed to attain consistent behaviors among employees, accordingly managers should be aware of the type of organisation culture in place to support their CI. Top managers and CEOs should be mindful of the behavioural leadership which affects employees' identification and external image, by acting as spokesperson, publicizing the activities of the organization and representing the organization in external and external meetings.

Whilst the interrelationships between CI dimensions highlight how dimensions synergistically 'feed' off one other, it is important that managers consider the adverse effect of correlated dimensions. The reason being a neglected CI dimension could act as a millstone and burden other dimensions. It is also important managers acknowledge, in the context of driving corporate image, that each dimension makes a significant contribution to making CI manifest. This implies more informed CI managers will adopt a holistic approach due to the concept's synergistic properties which needs to carefully orchestrate all dimensions to drive corporate image. This calls for managers to plan for the sum and not just the parts when building CI. This should become the intended routine in every organization. In so doing a strong internal and external image is developed. Furthermore, consistent behaviors among employees are likely to occur aligning with the company's mission and values.

Despite its relevance for advancing understanding of the meaning and elements of CI, we acknowledge that our research is not without limitations. Although qualitative, inductive research offers the potential to generate rich theoretical insights, it depends heavily on judgment and interpretation. In developing our model, we emphasized that mission statement was considered a key element of CI which is critical in stakeholder management and

legitimizing corporate social initiatives in corporate culture and providing a point of reference for decision-making which governs corporate and employees' behavior. An alternative possibility is that mission statement was primarily an image management tool used to influence stakeholders.

Also, the data of the present study came from only large and reputable companies, which have unique CI. Although the findings can be transferred to other contexts with similar features, caution should be taken to generalize the findings. Further, there are limitations for face-to-face interviews to elicit informants' attitudes and evaluations, especially when they are asked evaluative questions on fundamental and strategic organizational issues, such as identity. This opens promising avenues for future research.

Further research is needed to test the framework, and empirically examine the proposed relationships between CI elements. Despite the considerable theoretical support found for each individual proposition, the proposed relationships have not been tested in the same study. Thus, further research is necessary to inform whether these theories together provide a more complete explanation for CI than either theory does on its own. Also, doing so would reveal the construct's dimensionality and help assess the construct's influence on other corporate-marketing concepts (e.g., reputation and financial performance).

## References

- Abdul Hamid, M., Ab Rahman, N. N., and Nor, N. M. (2012), "Leadership behaviour and performance: a case study of Takaful representatives in Malaysia", *African Journal of Business Management*, Vol. 6 No. 6, pp. 2291-2298.
- Abratt, R. (1989), "A new approach to the corporate image management process", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 63-76.
- Abratt, R. and Mingione, M. (2017), "Corporate identity, strategy and change", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vo. 24 No. 2, pp. 129-139.
- Abratt, R. and Kleyn, N. (2012), "Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration. *European Journal of Marketing*", Vol. 46 No. (7/8), pp. 1048-1063.
- Aguinis, H. and Glavas, A. (2017), "On corporate social responsibility, sensemaking, and the search for meaningfulness through work", *Journal of Management*, DOI:0149206317691575.
- Arvidsson, S. (2010), "Communication of Corporate Social Responsibility: A Study of the Views of Management Teams in Large Companies", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 96 No. 3, pp. 339-354.
- Atakan, M. and Eker, T. (2007), "Corporate Identity of a Socially Responsible University: A Case from the Turkish Higher Education Sector", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 76, pp. 55-68.
- Balmer, J. M. (1995), "Corporate identity the power and the paradox", *Design Management Journal*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 39-44.
- Balmer, J. M. (2001), "Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing-seeing through the fog", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35 No. 3/4, pp. 248-291.
- Balmer, J.M. (2012), "Strategic corporate brand alignment: Perspectives from identity based views of corporate brands", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 46 No. 7/8, pp.1064-1092.
- Balmer, J. M. (2017), "Advances in corporate brand, corporate heritage, corporate identity and corporate marketing scholarship", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 51 No. 9/10, pp. 1462-1471.
- Balmer, J. M. and Greyser, S. A. (2003), *Revealing the Corporation: Perspectives on Identity, Image, Reputation, Corporate Branding and Corporate-Level Marketing*. London: Routledge.
- Bass, B.M. (1990), "From transactional to transformational leadership: learning to share the vision", *Organisational Dynamics*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 19-31.
- Bass, B.M. (1990), "From transactional to transformational leadership: learning to share the vision", *Organisational Dynamics*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 19-31.
- Basu, K. and Palazzo, G. (2008), "Corporate Social Responsibility: A Process Model of Sensemaking". *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 122-136.
- Blombäck, A. and Brunninge, O. (2009), "Corporate identity manifested through historical references", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp.404-419.
- Boroş, S. (2008), "Organisational identification: theoretical and empirical analyses of competing conceptualizations", *Cognitie, Creier, Comportament*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 1-27.
- Bravo, R., Matute, J. and Pina, J.M. (2012), "Corporate social responsibility as a vehicle to reveal the corporate identity: A study focused on the websites of Spanish financial entities", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 107 No. 2, pp.129-146.

- Bravo, R., Matute, J. and Pina, J. M. (2016), "Corporate identity management in the banking sector: effects on employees' identification, identity attractiveness, and job satisfaction", *Service Business*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 687-714.
- Bravo, R., Matute, J. and Pina, J. M. (2017), "Corporate identity management and employees' responses", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 1-13.
- Burghausen, M. and Balmer, J. M. (2015), "Corporate heritage identity stewardship: a corporate marketing perspective", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 49 No. 1/2, pp. 22-61.
- Cameron, K. (2008), "Handbook of Organizational Development". In T.G. Cummings (ed.). *Handbook of Organizational Development*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 429-445.
- Christensen, L. J., Mackey, A. and Whetten, D. (2014), "Taking responsibility for corporate social responsibility: The role of leaders in creating, implementing, sustaining, or avoiding socially responsible firm behaviors", *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 164-178.
- Clark, S. M., Gioia, D. A., Ketchen Jr, D. J. and Thomas, J. B. (2010), "Transitional identity as a facilitator of organizational identity change during a merger". *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 397-438.
- Coleman, D. A., de Chernatony, L. and Christodoulides, G. (2015), "B2B service brand identity and brand performance: an empirical investigation in the UK's B2B IT services sector", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 49 No. 7/8, pp. 1139-1162.
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008), *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Cornelissen, J. (2000), "Corporate image: an audience centred model", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 119-125.
- Cornelissen, J., Christensen, T. L. and Kinuthia, K. (2012), "Corporate brands and identity: Developing stronger theory and a call for shifting the debate". *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol 46 No. 7/8, pp. 1093-1102.
- Dacin, P. A. and Brown, T. J. (2002), "Corporate Identity and Corporate Associations: A Framework for Future Research", *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol. 5 No. 2/3, pp. 2-3.
- De Roeck, K. and Maon, F. (2016), "Building the theoretical puzzle of employees' reactions to corporate social responsibility: An integrative conceptual framework and research agenda", *Journal of Business Ethics*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3081-2>.
- De Roeck, K., Maon, F. and Lejeune, C. (2013), "Taking up the challenge of corporate branding: an integrative framework", *European Management Review*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp.137-151.
- Deshpande, R., & Farley, J. U. (1999), "Corporate Culture and Market Orientation: Comparing Indian and Japanese Firms", *Journal of International Marketing*, Vol. 7 No. 4, 111-127.
- Deshpandé, R. and Farley, J.U. (2004), "Organizational culture, market orientation, innovativeness, and firm performance: an international research odyssey", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp.3-22.
- Du, S., Bhattacharya, C.B. and Sen, S. (2015), "Corporate social responsibility, multi-faceted job-products, and employee outcomes", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 131 No. 2, pp.319-335.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989), "Building Theories from Case Study Research", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 532-550.
- Foroudi, P., Foroudi, P., Hafeez, K., Hafeez, K., Foroudi, M.M. and Foroudi, M.M. (2017). "Evaluating the impact of corporate logos towards corporate reputation: a case of Persia

- and Mexico”, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp.158-180.
- Foroudi, P., Melewar, T. C. and Gupta, S. (2014), “Linking corporate logo, corporate image, and reputation: an examination of consumer perceptions in the financial setting”, *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 67 No. 11, pp. 2269-2281.
- Gambetti, R. C., Melewar, T. C. and Martin, K. D. (2017), “Guest editors’ introduction: ethical management of intangible assets in contemporary organizations”, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 381-392.
- Gray, E. and Balmer, J. (1998), “Managing corporate image and corporate reputation”, *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 695–702.
- Harvey, W. S., Tourky, M., Knight, E. and Kitchen, P. (2017), “Lens or prism? How organisations sustain multiple and competing reputations”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 51 No. 4, pp. 821-844.
- Haski-Leventhal, D., Meijs, L. C., Lockstone-Binney, L., Holmes, K. and Oppenheimer, M. (2017), “Measuring Volunteerability and the Capacity to Volunteer among Non-volunteers: Implications for Social Policy”, *Social Policy & Administration*. DOI: 10.1111/spol.12342.
- Hatch, M. and Schultz, M. (1997), “Relations between organisational culture, identity and image”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 5/6, pp. 356–365.
- He, H. (2012), “Corporate identity anchors: a managerial cognition perspective”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 46 No. 5, 609-625.
- He, H. and Balmer, J. (2013), “A grounded theory of the corporate identity and corporate strategy dynamic: A corporate marketing perspective”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47 No. 3/4, pp. 401-430.
- He, H. and Balmer, J. (2007), “Identity studies: multiple perspectives and implications for corporate-level marketing”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 41 No. 7/8, pp. 765-785.
- Hillestad, T., Xie, C. and Haugland, S. (2010), “Innovative corporate social responsibility the founder’s role in creating a trustworthy corporate brand through ‘green innovation’”, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp. 440-451.
- Ind, N. (1997). *The Corporate Brand*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Johnson, S.A. and Ashforth, B.E. (2008), “Externalization of employment in a service environment: the role of organizational and customer identification”, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp.287-309.
- Kakabadse, N.K., Rozuel, C. and Lee-Davies, L. (2005), “Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder approach: a conceptual review”, *International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics*, Vol. 1 No. 4, pp.277-302.
- Karaosmanoglu, E., Altinigne, N. and Isiksal, D.G. (2016). “CSR motivation and customer extra-role behavior: Moderation of ethical corporate identity”. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 10, pp.4161-4167.
- Kitchen, P. J., Tourky, M. E., Dean, D. and Shaalan, A. S. (2013), “Corporate identity Antecedents and components: Toward a theoretical framework”, *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 263-284.
- Lambert, A. (1989), “Corporate identity and facilities management”, *Facilities*, Vol. 7 No. 12, pp.7-12.
- Lee, E.M., Park, S.Y. and Lee, H.J. (2013), “Employee perception of CSR activities: Its antecedents and consequences”, *Journal of business research*, Vol. 66 No. 10, pp.1716-1724.
- Linnenluecke, M. K., & Griffiths, A. (2010), “Corporate Sustainability and Organizational Culture”, *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 357-366.



- Melewar, T.C. (2003), "Determinants of the corporate identity construct a review of literature", *Journal Marketing Communications*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 195-220.
- Melewar, T. C., Gambetti, R. C., & Martin, K. D. (2014), "Special Issue on: Managing Intangible Ethical Assets: Enhancing Corporate Identity, Corporate Brand, and Corporate Reputation to Fulfill the Social Contract", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 162-164.
- Melewar, T.C. and Karaosmanoglu, E. (2006), "Seven dimensions of corporate identity a categorization from the practitioners", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 No. 7/8, pp. 846-869.
- Melewar, T.C., Karaosmanoglu, E. and Paterson, D. (2005), "Corporate identity concept, components and contribution", *Journal of General Management*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 59-81.
- Melewar, T.C. and Saunders, J. (2000), "Global corporate visual identity systems: using an extended marketing mix", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34 No. 5/6, pp. 538-550.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills.
- Moingeon, B. and Ramanantsoa, B. (1997), "Understanding corporate identity: the French school of thought", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35 No. 6, pp. 383-95.
- Morsing, M. (2006), "Corporate Social Responsibility As Strategic Auto-Communication: On the Role of External Stakeholders For Member Identification", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 171-182.
- Newman, A., Miao, Q., Hofman, P. S., & Zhu, C. J. (2016), "The impact of socially responsible human resource management on employees' organizational citizenship behaviour: the mediating role of organizational identification", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 27 No. 4, 440-455.
- Nguyen, B., Melewar, T. C., Japutra, A., Han, S. H., Chen, C. H. S. and Yu, X. (2016), "An investigation of the corporate identity construct in China: Managerial evidence from the high technology industry", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, DOI: 10.1080/13527266.2016.1143382.
- Piehlér, R., Piehlér, R., King, C., King, C., Burmann, C., Burmann, C., Xiong, L. and Xiong, L. (2016), "The importance of employee brand understanding, brand identification, and brand commitment in realizing brand citizenship behavior", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50 No. 9/10, pp.1575-1601.
- Schmeltz, L. (2014), "Identical or just compatible? The utility of corporate identity values in communicating corporate social responsibility", *International Journal of Business Communication*, Vol. 51 No. 3, pp. 234-258.
- Sharma, S., 2000, "Managerial interpretations and organizational context as predictors of corporate choice of environmental strategy", *Academy of Management journal*, Vol. 43 No. 4, pp.681-697.
- Simões, C.S., Dibb, S. and Fisk, R.P. (2005), "Managing corporate identity: an internal perspective", *Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp.153-168.
- Simões C. and Mason, K. J. (2012), "Informing a new business-to-business relationship: Corporate identity and the emergence of a relationship identity", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 46 No. 5, pp. 684-711.
- Simões, C. and Sebastiani, R. (2017). "The nature of the relationship between corporate identity and corporate sustainability: Evidence from the retail industry", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 27 No. 3, 423-453.
- Singhapakdi, A., Lee, D.J., Sirgy, M.J. and Senasu, K. (2015), "The impact of incongruity between an organization's CSR orientation and its employees' CSR orientation on employees' quality of work life", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 68 No. 1, pp.60-66.

- Sørensen, J. B. (2002), "The Strength of Corporate Culture and the Reliability of Firm Performance", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 47 No. 1, pp. 70-91.
- Stogdill, R. M. (1963), *Manual for the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire--Form XII*, Bureau of Business Research, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- Stuart, H. (1999), "Towards a definitive model of the corporate identity management process", *Corporate Communications Journal*, Vol. 4, pp. 200-207.
- Suvatjis, J. Y. and De Chernatony, L. (2016), The Six-station Model of Corporate Identity: Developing and Assessing the Model, In *The Future of Branding*, Rajendra K. Srivastava, and Gregory M. Thomas, Sage Publications, London: UK
- Van den Bosch, A. L. M., De Jong, M. D. T. and Elving, W. J. L. (2005), "How corporate visual identity supports reputation", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 108–116.
- Van den Bosch, A. L. M., De Jong, M. D. T. and Elving, W. J. L. (2006a), "Managing visual corporate identity: exploring differences between manufacturing and service, and profit-making and non-profit organisations", *Journal of Business Communications*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 138–157.
- Van den Bosch, A.L.M., Elving, W.J. and De Jong, M.D.T. (2006b), "The impact of organisational characteristics on corporate visual identity", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 No. 7/8, pp. 870-885.
- Van Maanen, J. (1979), *Qualitative methodology*. Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Van Rekom, J. (1997), "Deriving an operational measure of corporate identity", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 5/6, pp. 410-22.
- Van Riel, C. B. M. and Balmer, J. (1997), "Corporate identity the concept, its measurement and management", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 5/6, pp. 340-355.
- Van Riel, C. B. and Fombrun, C. J. (2007), *Essentials of Corporate Communication: Implementing Practices for Effective Reputation Gestion*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.
- Vlachos, P. A., Panagopoulos, N. G. and Rapp, A. A. (2013), "Feeling good by doing good: Employee CSR-induced attributions, job satisfaction, and the role of charismatic leadership". *Journal of business ethics*, Vol. 118 No. 3, pp. 577-588.

**Table 1: Job Titles of Interviewees and Industrial Sectors**

Interview date	Job Title	Nature of Business	Number of Interviewees	Interview approx. length
	Marketing manager	Will be added lateron	2	
	Creative Services (Brand Identity) Manager for Marketing Team		1	
	Marketing Communications Director Manager		2	
	Communications Manager		2	
	Corporate communications Manager/Director		3	
	Head of Communications, Digital Media and Strategy		1	
	Director of Corporate Affairs		1	
	Head of Mass Market		1	
	Group Corporate Relations Manager		1	
	Group Head CSR Communication Manager		2	
	Head of CSR / Director of Sustainability		3	
	Citizenship Manager		1	
	General manager		1	
	Public Relations/Branding/Strategy consultant		3	
Topics discussed:				
	–The understanding of core competence			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– The factors that influence core competence</li><li>– Their experience of what they understand the tangible/ intangible assets and its influence on core competence</li><li>– Discussion of digital technology and whether it influences on competence</li><li>– Discussion of marketing capability and the main perceived impacts on core competence</li></ul>
--	--

**Figure 1: Interrelationships between CI dimensions and their impact on Image**

