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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this research

This dissertation is about 'corporate identity'. The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a method for finding a concise representation of an organization which will be recognized and supported by its employees, which can be used to introduce it to the outside world and which will be recognized by those already acquainted with the organization. In order to develop such a method it is necessary to provide an outline of the criteria underlying the concept of 'corporate identity' and to make the concept useful for corporate communication, directed at both external and internal audiences. If these requirements are met, they should help to ensure communication with an informative content. This informative content, in the end, reflects the central values of an organization. Subsequently, this dissertation will proceed to show how such values can be found empirically in an organization. The measurement results will be useful in management decisions on how to communicate with the outside world, and in management decisions on how to improve a corporate identity deemed unsatisfactory.

A major problem in the area of corporate identity is the lack of consensus as to the basic concept of 'corporate identity' (Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991). 'Corporate identity' seems to be a general-purpose concept that serves as an alibi for a variety of activities like designing a new logo, interior decoration, sales force training, all the way up to changing the corporate culture. Much of the terminology used within and around the identity activity is rather loose (Olins, 1995). Most authors do not define corporate identity explicitly. The only element which they appear to have in common is that 'corporate identity' means 'something that symbolizes the organization as a whole'. Whereas it is possible to represent a whole organization by just assigning a symbol to it, symbolizing the organization becomes more difficult if information has to be communicated on what the organization is about and if a certain degree of correspondence between the symbol and the organization itself is required. For instance, the Mercedes star itself, as an emblem for Daimler Benz, stands for the Daimler Benz organization. On the other hand, it can be perceived to embody certain values when representing the organization. Then the focus of interest changes from the symbol itself to the content of the symbol, i.e. 'to what the organization is'. This changed focus is equivalent to how Webster's dictionary (1990) describes 'identity' : 'who a person is or what a thing is'. In this dissertation, the definition of 'corporate identity' as 'what an organization is' is used until a more definitive definition has been developed in chapter 3.

The problem of 'symbolizing the organization as a whole' is a key problem in corporate communication. In order to communicate an organization's identity, one has to know what that organization is. This is a sine qua non for effective corporate communication (Van Riel, 1995). However, literature on how to establish an organization's identity empirically is virtually nonexistent. Summarizing, the main questions addressed in this dissertation are:

1. How can we develop a conceptualization of corporate identity which is suitable for communication purposes?
2. Using this conceptualization, how can corporate identity actually be measured?

This dissertation will develop a representation of an organization's identity which is suitable for communication purposes, and it will present a method of measuring an organization's identity empirically.

1.2 The role of corporate identity in corporate communication

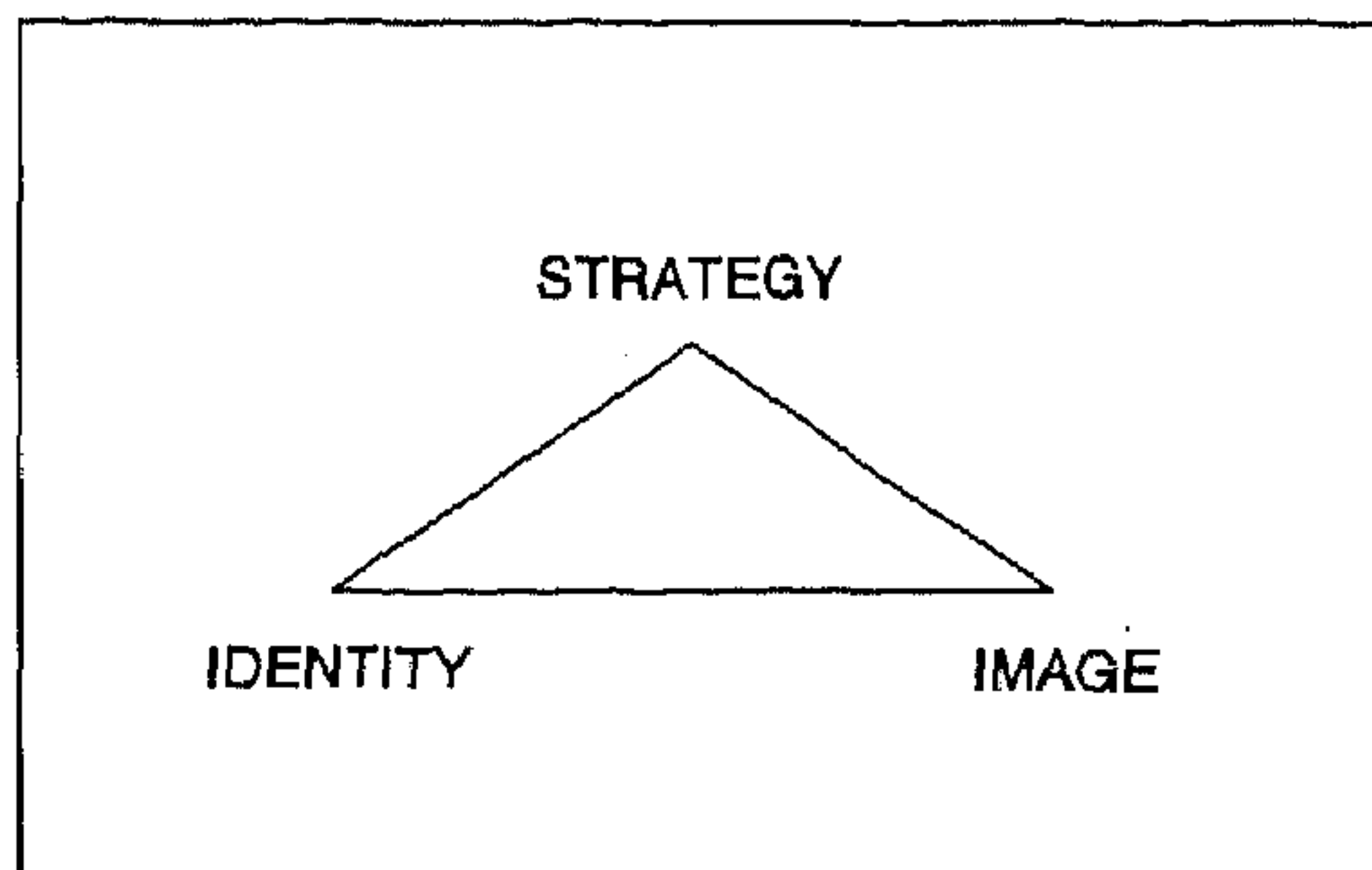


Figure 1.1 The identity-image-strategy triangle
(Source: Van Rekom and Van Riel, 1993)

Whenever an organization wants to communicate something about itself as a whole, it has to consider its 'corporate identity'. Van Riel (1995) defines 'corporate communication' as 'the instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with the groups upon which the company is dependent'. All forms of communication are taken into consideration for potential orchestration into a coherent whole. Everything an organization does, makes,

and sells, everything it says, writes down or displays should contribute to its identity (Olins, 1990). The basic philosophy underlying corporate communication is to direct the company's communications from within the 'corporate strategy, corporate identity and corporate image triangle' (Van Riel, 1994). Strategy can be described as 'the pattern or plan that integrates an organization's major goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole' (Quinn, Mintzberg and James, 1988). Image is not identity: it is the result of identity, the perception of others (Bernstein, 1995). Managers concerned about corporate image cannot ignore the organization's corporate identity. An organization's distinctive image starts with its corporate identity. The organization's identity is perceived and interpreted by stakeholders in terms of its image. This perception and interpretation by stakeholders may be critical to the survival of an organization. Based on the image they have of an organization, stakeholders may decide to start or finish business relationships with that organization, and it will influence whether they supply it with resources. Therefore, one of the tasks of strategic management to influence the image that stakeholders hold of the organization, directly and indirectly, by adapting an organization's corporate identity (Van Rekom and Van Riel, 1993).

The purpose of corporate communication efforts is to achieve a certain desired corporate image among target groups, including the own employees. Dowling (1986) defines 'image' as 'the set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it'. It is the net result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about an object and resides in the head of that person. 'Corporate identity' has been defined above as 'what an organization is'. By analogy to Dowling's definition of 'image', 'corporate identity' can be rephrased 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'. Whereas 'corporate image' resides in the heads of the stakeholders, 'corporate identity' resides in the organization.

The desired image may be different from the actual image. In order to reach the desired image an organization may need to provide and communicate meanings to the stakeholders which are different from those provided so far. A primary strategic decision concerns the degree to which a company wishes to exert influence on *what* will be communicated about a number of basic matters. If management wishes to influence the content of the innumerable messages the organization sends consciously, and perhaps unconsciously, into the world, management has to do so within the constraints within which a company can communicate with various target groups. These constraints are a function of what the organization actually is at a certain moment in time (its actual corporate identity or 'Ist-Identität', cf. Birkigt and Stadler, 1988), of what management wants it to be (desired corporate identity, Birkigt and Stadler's 'Soll-Identität'), and of what the stakeholders are willing to believe about the organization's identity. Most communication literature concentrates either on the communication strategy itself, or on image (cf. Van Riel, 1995, for an overview). This dissertation focuses on the first of these factors, the actual identity of an organization at a certain point in time ('Ist-Identität'), and points out the constraints on communication imposed by its existing identity. Within these constraints, it shows how a thorough understanding of the organization's identity can give managers valuable insights about the company's internal strengths and weaknesses that could form the basis for corporate image development and projection.

- **Actual corporate identity as a constraint on corporate communication**

The fit between an organization's actual corporate identity and its communicated corporate identity is a crucial factor determining the effectiveness of communication (Van Riel, 1995). Idealistic, PR-inspired messages tend to ignore the present cultural values and the employees' attitudes (Merkle, 1992). There is more risk in handling an identity badly internally than there is from external threats (Olins, 1995). Employees may dissociate themselves from corporate advertising campaigns, and even oppose them. The Commerzbank in Germany had to withdraw its slogan 'The bank that knows its customers'. The bank wanted to attract the general public, but the employees were not really willing to deal with numerous small private customers, and preferred the big business accounts (Keller, 1990). A Scottish engineering company thought it knew what it was and decided to run a series of corporate advertisements to tell the financial world about its size, development, profits and successful labour relations. The labour force had not been consulted. They read the advertisement, saw the reference to profits, put in a heavy wage demand (which was refused), and went on strike. Within six months the company had ceased trading (Bernstein, 1986, p.241).

The role of an organization's corporate identity as a constraint on corporate communication is primarily relevant in the short term. In the long term, management can influence the organization's identity, and, depending on management's chosen corporate strategy, can realize an improved or repositioned corporate image, or corporate images for different stakeholder groups.

- **Corporate identity as a source of inspiration**

A good reason to start corporate positioning from an organization's identity is the value of what the organization expresses. Organizations which are governed mainly or exclusively by external information run the risk of claiming a position that their competitors might equally claim if their operations are similar. However, if an organization is capable of incorporating differentiation into their culture and infrastructure at a deep level, it becomes more difficult for other companies to understand, and if they do, costly to duplicate (Laundy and Rogers, 1995). The organization's central value orientations, which permeate all its behaviour and are consciously or unconsciously present in the minds of an organization's employees, can form an excellent source of inspiration, especially if they are unique for the organization in question. This may sound obvious, but in practice it is not - exactly because the central values which permeate the employees' behaviour are so self-evident to them.

Summarizing, corporate communication can benefit from a thorough understanding of an organization's identity by determining the constraints within which a company can communicate credibly with its stakeholders, and by drawing inspiration from it.

1.3 Basic premises in the approach to corporate identity

Not only do the definitions of the concept of corporate identity vary widely, also the basic points of view from which authors approach this subject diverge. This section explains where this dissertation stands in terms of empirical focus, the conditionality of corporate identity and where it stands among the variety of disciplinary approaches.

1.3.1 The degree of empirical focus

Authors vary strongly in their degree of empirical focus. Only very few among them have made an attempt to measure an organization's identity. Many authors, especially in the strategic field, consider the existence of corporate identity to be dependent upon the existence of a more or less explicit strategy defining it. This view implies that identity can only be measured in the cases where such a strategy exists. Many authors have limited themselves to theoretical aspects of corporate identity, such as how to define it (Tanneberger, 1987), how to convert a desired identity into strategy (Birkigt and Stadler, 1988) or how to change an organization's identity (Mittmann, 1991).

Other authors have done more empirical work. Lux (1982) has worked out a method, actually an extensive checklist, which he uses to assess an organization's identity. Bernstein (1986) has developed a practical measurement method to assess an organization's desired identity in a relatively short time. Larçon and Reitter (1979) use a case-study like approach to analyze an organization's identity, showing how some French organizations have reached their specific solutions to problems in dealing with their environment, and Balmer (1995) analyzed organizations in a grounded-theory framework. Chapter 2 gives a more complete overview of the empirical work done so far. This dissertation also approaches 'corporate identity' from an empirical point of view: its purpose is to develop an operationalization of 'corporate identity', and a measurement method.

1.3.2 Conditional versus unconditional existence of corporate identity

Measurement of an organization's identity assumes that the organization to be measured has an identity. Not all authors agree that organizations always have an identity. Birkigt and Stadler (1988), for instance, include the clause 'strategically defined and operationally implemented' into their definition of corporate identity. According to these authors, if an organization has not defined a strategy regarding its corporate identity, it simply does not have a corporate identity. Larçon and Reitter (1979, p. 32) write that an organization has an identity, if it brings a coherent, stable and specific solution to the 'problem of the relationship between the actor (employee), his reference groups and the system as a whole'. Reitter and Larçon's condition implies, that first the relation between the employee and his reference groups and the 'system as a whole' must be investigated before an organization can be said to have an identity. Their view is an example of what Kammerer (1988, p. 64) calls 'conditional identity': an organization only has an identity if it fulfils certain conditions.

Not all authors subscribe to this view of corporate identity being dependent upon certain conditions. As Margulies (1970) put it: 'A company has an identity from the first moment it opens its doors, which it communicates in everything it says and does, controlled or not'. This view is shared by Merkle (1992, p. 71) and Olins (1984). The latter urges companies to remind themselves that, 'whether they like it or not, their identity exists - and the question that they have to answer is, whether they control it or it controls them'. Most authors focusing on empirical measurement do not seem to subscribe to the conditional view of identity. The kind of empirical procedures used by Bernstein (1986) or Lux (1988) can be applied to any entity specified before the research; there is no need to assume any kind of 'conditional identity'.

Corporate identity has been defined preliminarily as 'what the organization is', which implies that corporate identity can only be non-existent if the organization does not exist. A measurement instrument should be applicable to any organization, as specified by the one who wants it to be measured, however unarticulated or unplanned that organization's identity may be.

1.3.3 The disciplinary perspective; from a pure design to a corporate communication approach

Whereas in the beginning 'corporate identity' was a pure matter of design, increasingly it has become the target of holistic approaches. Different themes of interest dominate scholarly traditions in Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. Occasionally, language area and country of origin do have an impact. The majority of the literature in the field of corporate identity stems from the areas of design and communication. The word 'identity' is derived from the Latin 'idem', meaning 'same', and has probably a connection with the Latin 'identidem', meaning 'the same each time' or 'repeatedly the same' (Bernstein, 1986). The interpretation of identity from dictionary definitions, e.g. 'the fact of being the same in all respects' (Webster's Dictionary, 1990), 'absolute sameness' or 'the characteristic or condition of complete agreement, absolute or essential similarity, condition of being' provided design specialists with a strong argument to press companies to be consistent in their use of symbols (Van Riel, 1995).

When interest in corporate identity emerged, in the 1940s, corporate identity was associated primarily with design, in particular logo's, house style and staff clothing. An absence of interest in design was often interpreted as the absence of corporate identity. Illustrative is the remark by Selame and Selame (1975): 'Corporate identity is the visual statement to the world'. Corporate symbols obviously have a positive impact on recognition and maybe even on appreciation. However, conveying an organization's identity cannot rely upon visual means alone. People do not rely on visual elements alone, but use all their senses in order to construct their image of an organization (Tanneberger, 1987).

In the early eighties, awareness grew that design and communication were not enough to convey a complete and coherent image to stakeholders (Keller, 1990). The feeling grew that behaviour was an essential element of 'corporate identity'. The newer, more holistic conceptualization made the concept of 'corporate identity' converge with the concept of 'corporate culture' to some degree (cf. Körner, 1991). Authors thinking along these lines include Bernstein (1986), Birkigt and Stadler (1988), Ramanantsoa and Thiery-Basle (1988). In the different language areas there has been a historical tendency to apply different points of view. Although in the Anglo-Saxon world authors like Bernstein (1986) and Olins (1990) occupy prominent positions, no single-centred school dominates the field. This is different in Germany and France. In France work on corporate identity has been greatly influenced by the work of Larçon and Reitter (1979). They tried to understand and explain corporate identity with concepts from the literature of organization science. Internal organizational processes and driving forces are major factors in their conceptualization of corporate identity. Their conceptualization and definition of corporate identity seem to have given the lead throughout French literature. In German literature the strategically oriented work of Birkigt and Stadler (1988, which first appeared in 1982) fulfils a similar role. Many later German dissertations have been applications of the work of Birkigt and Stadler to specific branches, like the retail branch (Merkle, 1992) or to specific problem areas, like conveying an organization's identity through product design (Kammerer, 1988). The Dutch literature on corporate identity adopts a rather interdisciplinary perspective. A major Dutch contribution to the field is the concept of 'common starting points for corporate communication' (Van Riel, 1992). Other Dutch-speaking authors working in this area are Fauconnier (1988) and Blauw (1994).

The different approaches are integrated from the perspective of corporate communication, as illustrated by Van Riel (1994). In Van Riel's model, the choice of a communication policy is based on information about corporate strategy, the internal organization, the driving forces on corporate and business unit level and the environment. This way, corporate communication integrates the previous contributions from all the disciplines described.

This dissertation will tackle the subject of corporate identity from the corporate communication perspective. Its aim is to make a substantial contribution to corporate communication, and in this way to influence the corporate image. Therefore it cannot afford to concentrate on only one disciplinary area, as everything an organization says shows and does contributes to its image. Corporate identity, then, as it will be operationalized in this dissertation, includes the whole of what happens in an organization.

1.4 Albert and Whetten's criteria for corporate identity

Not all conceptualizations of corporate identity may yield measurement results equally suitable for communication purposes. Albert and Whetten (1985) formulated three requirements, that adequate statements of corporate identity should satisfy (see overview 1.1). The three requirements are not so far removed from Larçon and Reitter's (1979) requirements for the presence of a collective identity: they required coherence, stability and specificity for a collective identity to exist. For the purpose of defining corporate identity as a scientific concept, Albert and Whetten consider each of these three criteria necessary and as, a set, sufficient.

1.4.1 The criterion of 'claimed central character'

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1. **Claimed Central Character:**
features that are seen as the essence of the organization
 2. **Claimed Distinctiveness:**
features that distinguish the organization from others
 3. **Claimed Temporal Continuity:**
features that exhibit sameness over time.
-

Overview 1.1 Albert and Whetten's (1985) three-criteria definition of corporate identity

Albert and Whetten's first criterion is the criterion of 'claimed central character', which points to features that are seen as the essence of the organization. The conception of an organization's identity, whether proposed by a scientist, by another organization or by the organization itself, must be a statement of identity which distinguishes the organization on the basis of something important and essential: the central character.

Albert and Whetten consider essential those characteristics of the respective organizations which are the focus of important decision making activities. Albert and Whetten seem to think of decisions at higher management levels, as they list as examples of important decision making 'making an acquisition' and 'court battles over a firm's tax classification'. Organizational leaders attempt to define the organization's central characteristics as a guide for what they should do and how other institutions should relate to them. Their attempts are influenced by the needs of the situation. Features become important for a certain purpose. No theory provides a list of organizational features that could be said to be important universally. Therefore, Albert and Whetten do not believe that 'central character' can be defined as a definitive set of measurable properties. However, there may be more fruitful ways of identifying an organization's 'essential' properties, other than having recourse to a 'universal' list of characteristics. How these central features can be revealed is the subject of chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Most organizations are not naturally conscious or thoughtful about their central properties. As a rule these are implicitly enshrined in the way they get on with their business (Olins, 1995). It is doubtful whether organizations do have sufficient insight into the self-evidences of their daily life for them to be able to claim their essence in a way which will be enforced by the employees' behaviour and recognized by stakeholders. Keller's (1990) example of the German bank and Bernstein's (1986) example of the Scottish engineering company (page 3) suggest that self-insight is often lacking.

So far, the criterion of 'claimed central character' has not been operationalized beyond an intuitive stage. The research procedure must ensure that the results remain attributable to the organization, not to the specific research effort. This problem will be dealt with and a workable operationalization will be developed in chapters three and four.

1.4.2 The criterion of 'claimed distinctiveness'

Albert and Whetten's second criterion is the criterion of 'claimed distinctiveness' from other organizations, pointing to features that distinguish the organization from others. Identity is a classification of the self that identifies the individual as recognizably different from others. Although theoretically it may be possible to identify two organizations which are exactly equal in all aspects, intuitively this case is hard to imagine. Therefore, several authors (e.g. Larçon and Reitter, 1979; Margulies, 1970; Olins, 1995) assume each organization to be unique. Nevertheless, if uniqueness has to be established in terms of one or more narrowly specified criteria, the distinctiveness of each depends upon the spectrum of comparison. Organizations may be unique in a certain region, or within a certain group of competitors, but perhaps not nationwide or worldwide.

How 'distinctiveness' from other organizations is defined depends upon how an organization wishes to position itself. Whenever a distinctive identity is prized, one might expect organizations to select uncommon attributes for interorganizational comparison (Albert and Whetten, 1985). Claims made in corporate communication are more effective, presumably, if the organization is the only one able to make them.

However, the implementation of this principle seems problematic. Statements of corporate beliefs, in the form of 'corporate philosophies', 'corporate bibles', and the like are becoming increasingly common in companies (Alvesson and Berg, 1992, pg. 193). However, Berg and Gagliardi (1985) found a considerable degree of consensus in their contents. Such statements may therefore reflect what society accepts as basic principles for good management rather than being genuine expressions of the company's fundamental identity. Martin, Feldman, Hatch and Sitkin (1983) investigated claims to uniqueness expressed through organizational stories. These stories turned out to share common elements and to express common concerns that were therefore not unique at all. For instance, at IBM, the story was told of chairman Thomas Watson Junior not being allowed to enter a room because he was not bearing the right badge. The same story was told, with slight modifications, at many companies other than IBM. This is what Martin et al. (1983) call the 'uniqueness paradox'.

So far, most organizations' claims to their uniqueness do not go beyond the status of unproven assertions. Claims to uniqueness may be more solid if they have an empirical basis, which can be provided by the measurement of an organization's identity. Empirical research methods must have the potential to reveal truly organization-specific results. Therefore, corporate identity research should start with a qualitative stage in which organization-specific elements are gathered in a completely open-minded way.

1.4.3 The Criterion of 'Claimed Temporal Continuity'

Albert and Whetten's third criterion of corporate identity is 'claimed temporal continuity', which is sameness over time. 'Central character' and 'distinctiveness' do not only apply at a given point in time, but also over a certain period of time. A severe enforcement of the continuity criterion is problematic: organizations change over time, the same way as individuals do. Changing market conditions, changing labour conditions, as well as internally-induced deliberate changes are factors that lead the organization to change over time (cf. Kammerer, 1988). Checking continuity empirically implies measuring the same organization consecutively at several points in time.

Summarizing, Albert and Whetten (1985) offer the criteria of 'claimed central character', 'claimed distinctiveness' and 'claimed temporal continuity' to prescriptively define an organization's corporate identity. A step which still has to be made is, however, how to derive adequate identity statements from an organization's actual corporate identity.

Albert and Whetten's 'centrality' criterion seems the most difficult to operationalize. The centrality criterion implies that statements on an organization's corporate identity make sense if they allow the organization to be recognized as a whole. This criterion is difficult to apply in modern organizations. Work is divided across the different jobs. Many employees perform totally different tasks within the organization, and they may have totally different working styles and ways of behaviour. It is questionable whether any organization could emerge as one single unity under all circumstances. Complete agreement may be nonexistent within organizations. Strictly speaking, identity elements which apply to only one department cannot be considered elements of the identity of an organization as a whole, i.e. of its corporate identity. The method suggested in chapter 4 of this dissertation offers a solution to this operational problem.

Conclusion

This dissertation focuses on corporate identity from the standpoint of corporate communication. In order to be effective in safeguarding an organization's meaning to stakeholders, identity statements should in some way reflect the criteria of suitability for communication purposes, as discussed in this chapter, namely: centrality to the organization, distinctiveness from other organizations and continuity over time. The measurement of an organization's identity should focus on looking for the coherent, constant and specific elements in an organization. Measurement at one point in time can deliver the coherent elements, and if it is repeated over time, it can also show what the continuous elements have been. Statements about of an organization's distinctiveness from other organizations,

however, do not get beyond the stage of unproven assertions. Therefore, the empirical investigation of an organization's uniqueness may not go far beyond a heuristic comparison with a limited set of similar organizations.

Even though identity research would not deliver elements which completely fulfil all three conditions, it can come up with elements which may be valuable for communication - and an empirical representation of an organization's identity can still fulfil its role in corporate communication, both as a source of inspiration for potential new messages and as a check as to whether what the organization is planning to communicate is not at odds with its existing corporate identity. As Olins (1995) puts it:

'Measurement of corporate identity should provide the organization with an opportunity to play its strengths: the outcome will consist of a central idea which reveals the organization's personality and a vision which emphasizes its sense of purpose and which helps it to seize the marketing high ground. It ideally is a concise description of the organization, getting to the heart of the matter. It outlines a concept which is both specific to the organization and recognised as realistic by those who work for and deal with it.'

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a definition and an operationalization of 'corporate identity', following the derived criteria of suitability for communication purposes, i.e. 'centrality to the organization', 'continuity' and 'specificity'. In chapter 2, approaches in the literature on corporate identity are reviewed, and the concept of corporate identity is compared to the related notions of corporate strategy and corporate culture. In chapter 3, a new definition will be developed, based on notions of 'identity' stemming from the fields of philosophy and the social sciences. Messages about 'what an organization is', as argued in chapter 3, are informative in so far as they deal with what an organization does. Therefore, the actions of an organization will be the point at which its identity will be measured. The new definition will lend itself to operationalization and usage in management practice. It will serve as a guideline to develop the measurement instrument, which is based on the 'laddering technique' (Reynolds and Gutman, 1984). Its application is illustrated with empirical investigations of organizations' identities. The result of the measurement procedure is a representation of an organization's identity. In this dissertation, the laddering technique is extended for the purpose of measuring corporate identity. The measurement results will be validated using quantitative surveys among the organization's employees. Comparison of the laddering results with the outcome of surveys underpins the validity of the use of the laddering technique and facilitates effective interpretation of the outcome of this kind of research. Chapter 6 will further investigate the semantic nature and direction of means-end relations. Chapter 7 will illustrate how the measurement results can directly be applied to corporate communication.

2. CORPORATE IDENTITY IN THE LITERATURE

In this chapter existing approaches to the concept of 'corporate identity' are reviewed. An overview is given of the more recent authors who treat the concept of corporate identity explicitly, following the distinction between the views of 'corporate identity' as the 'strategy regarding an organization's identity', as 'the identity of an organization as it is to date', and as 'the perception of an organization's identity'. The concept of 'corporate identity' is contrasted with the related notion of 'corporate culture'. Methods of measurement designed to capture 'corporate identity' in either of the mainstream approaches to corporate identity are reviewed and compared to find out to what extent their respective measurement results satisfy the criteria of suitability for corporate communication, as developed in the preceding chapter.

2.1 Major themes in the definitions and operationalizations of corporate identity

The lack of a generally agreed definition of corporate identity has led to a proliferation of different meanings, both among practitioners and scientists. As observed in the introduction, 'corporate identity' seems to stand for anything that symbolizes the organization. Merkle (1992, p. 30) attributes the existing confusion to the absence of an acknowledged general theory which is sufficiently complete, precise, and consistent to give something to hold on to for argumentation purposes. Its meanings reach in scope from the organization's logo, as described in the design-oriented literature, to holistic conceptualizations of the complete organization. For instance, Carter (1982) defines 'corporate identity' as 'the logo or brand name of a company, and all other visual manifestations of the identity of a company', whereas Thomas and Klein (1989) define the concept as 'what an organization really is'.

The use of the term varies according to profession and nationality. In 1993 the British design company Henrion, Ludlow and Schmidt published the results of a telephone survey done by MORI in 11 European countries (MORI, 1993). The interviewers asked 160 managers who bore ultimate responsibility for the corporate identity of their companies and whose firms numbered amongst the top 500 in these countries: 'How, in brief terms, would you define corporate identity?'

Table 2.1 shows the major definitions of corporate identity. Some of the respondents spontaneously focused on external image and recognition (50 %), 27 % defined it in terms of graphics and design, and 20 % linked it to organizational values and culture (MORI, 1993). This confusion greatly hampers communications on the subject. The widespread belief that corporate identity is the same as corporate image (50 % in Table 2.1) does not help matters (Van Riel, 1995). The 'expression of culture and values' and 'behaviour of staff' correspond to 'identity' as defined in this study.

