

# CORPORATE VISUAL IDENTITY MANAGEMENT:

Current practices, impact, and assessment



Annette L.M. van den Bosch

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# Preface

This dissertation is the result of a situation I found myself in about fourteen years ago. Due to restructuring, I almost had to leave the company I was working for. Fortunately I was able to stay, but meanwhile I had thought hard about what I wanted to do in my professional career. I figured that I wanted to study again, alongside my work, so I started a university study. The subject of my thesis was Managing the Corporate Visual Identity, which connected my first study (in industrial design) with the social sciences context of the academic study. I then changed jobs and became a consultant. After a while, I was given the opportunity to combine my consultancy work with conducting empirical studies – in cooperation with the University of Twente and the University of Amsterdam. The first results of this study were presented at a seminar dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the company I went to work for.

It took a while before I started with my PhD. Before starting, I had to define the conditions for cooperation with the university as well as with my employer. People often ask what it's like to combine academic study with a professional job. I usually reply as follows: first, you have to be really interested in the subject, second, you must have discipline, and third, you have to create the right conditions for studying autonomously.

One of the conditions for writing this dissertation was that it would consist of a number of standalone papers, which would be submitted to academic journals. Currently two are being published and two are accepted and will be published in 2006. These papers are being presented, without any adaptation, in this dissertation. Therefore, due to publication requirements, some chapters will be in US English and others in UK English. Another consequence of this approach is that, because of the schedule of writing and submitting the papers as well as developing insights during the project, the names of some variables differ slightly in the various chapters. In the first chapter of this dissertation I describe some anecdotes from my working experience that are related to my involvement in managing corporate visual identities. That is why this section is written in the first person singular, while the plural is used elsewhere to reflect the teamwork during parts of this research.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the organizations that participated in the empirical research and thus allowed me to gain insight into Corporate Visual Identity management. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have



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Further I would like to thank Bert Nijboer, who made it possible for me to combine work and study. I appreciate the way I could work autonomously on this dissertation. I am also grateful to Peter Schot, who actually suggested getting empirical foundations to support the findings of my thesis. Next, I would like to thank Niels van der Veer and his team, who helped me to gather the data, Mike Gould, for correcting my English, and Hans Agterberg and Dennis Buis (Quavorm) for the design of the cover.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their understanding that I did not always have the opportunity to spend as much time with them as I would have liked.

# 1

## Introduction

This dissertation is about Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) management. Its purpose is to gain more insight into activities associated with managing CVI and the impact of these activities on the outcome: the degree of consistency in CVI. In fact, this research started eight years ago, when I asked myself: “Why aren’t we making any progress with managing the CVI?” At that time, I was operationally responsible for the ‘huisstijl’ (unambiguous term for CVI in the Netherlands) in the company I was working for. The journey I embarked on at that time started with observations in my own organization, leading to an exploratory study for my Master’s degree in social science and finally to the studies presented in this dissertation.

During the intervening years, I have noticed that many readers associate CVI management with design. To illustrate the fact that CVI management is not always just concerned with design issues, I will present some of my personal experiences. These anecdotes (in the first section of this introduction) provide a flavor of the context within which anyone responsible for a CVI has to operate. In observing developments within the organization I worked for, I became curious about the reasons why people did not appear to want to follow prescribed CVI guidelines.

Next, in the section ‘managing CVI beyond the logo’, I briefly present the concept of CVI, its applications and considerations relating to translating ‘huisstijl’ into CVI. However, managing a CVI comprises more than design; one also needs to deal with organizational issues (see anecdotes). That organizational perspective will be the main focus of this dissertation.

Finally, I introduce the research question of this dissertation and provide an overview of the content of each of the chapters.

### CVI MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

I worked for Digital for fourteen years. Digital was a multinational computer company that manufactured and sold hardware and software. I first worked in their educational department and from 1991 onwards for the communication department at the head office in the Netherlands. Digital no longer exists. It has been taken over by Compaq, which in turn was taken over by Hewlett Packard. I left the company just before the acquisition by Compaq. Digital inspired me to start explor-

ing the field of CVI management. Among many other things, I was intrigued by the following observations:

- The color of the logo was changed from blue to gray and back to blue again (one day before implementing the gray in the Netherlands).
- The color of the logo was changed to red and the typeface altered slightly. Although not explicitly presented as such, this change coincided with a change in strategy towards indirect sales via business partners.
- A purchasing department selected new suppliers, which had an impact on the quality of the stationery.
- Business units started to use the logos of product groups such as Digital PC and StorageWorks.
- The introduction of Internet offered new ways of managing the CVI.
- A division of Philips was taken over, which led to the need for new communication strategies and opened up a variety of integration issues.

### **Color changes**

When a logo changes – even slightly – those involved in the implementation face a particularly stressful period. New materials have to be produced, employees have to be informed and the old materials need to be destroyed. The corporate Digital color used to be bright blue (process blue). Without knowing that Digital is a manufacturer of computers, the color combination (together with the white letters inside the text blocks) could be associated with ‘hygiene’ and thus also applicable to a cleaning company. The Corporate Identity Committee (CIC) at the main office in Boston (USA) decided to change the color into gray. Imagine the work this generated in countries over the world. In the Netherlands the preparation took months. Because writing off the old inventory had to be minimized, it took a period to phase out the ‘Digital blue’. The local communications department had ordered the new stationery in gray – which indeed had a more sophisticated look – and had produced a brochure for every employee. In this, the background of the change and the new items were presented. Just one day before the change, the corporate office sent an e-mail about the new logo. I have been told that there were endless discussions about the new color and to cut through the confusion, the CEO had decided that the color should revert to blue. Not the old blue, but a slightly darker blue. Everything had to be changed again. All the materials produced in the preparation period leading up to the implementation date had to be destroyed.

### **Logo in red – introducing Digital Business Partners**

Repositioning an organization – for instance finding new markets, new products, or new distribution channels – may also imply changes in the CVI. Digital had changed its strategy and introduced new sales channels. One of the visible aspects

of this new strategy was a change in the logo. The name and the seven text blocks remained but the color changed from blue into ruby red, which was supposed to be associated with a more human expression (to emphasize the new sales channels). The typeface of the letters in the logo was also changed – introducing a slightly softer curvature – but in such a way that only an experienced eye would see the difference.

The new sales channels consisted of a variety of business partners, such as distributors and resellers. For each type of partner, a business logo was designed. In this way, the business partner could demonstrate its authorized relationship with Digital. I figured that the logistic process to deliver the business partner logo package was crucial; otherwise the marketing team responsible for the acquisition of the business partners would deliver the Digital logo instead. A good CVI creates both recognition and differentiation. Digital's business partners should be recognized as such, and this was possible by means of the Digital business partner logo. They were not allowed to use the Digital logo, as this was used exclusively by Digital. There should be a clear differentiation between Digital and its business partners. To structure the delivery of artwork for business partners I made agreements with the legal department. As soon as they received the signed contract from the business partner, I received an e-mail and sent the art package with logos in several formats, together with instructions for use of it. The marketing department was inquired about this procedure.

Not long afterwards, one of the marketing representatives told me that he had promised one of the partners some Digital signage, which was left over due to relocation. This deal could not be carried out. It would confuse passers-by as to whether it was a location of Digital or not. On the other hand, Digital had no influence on the look of the building and other type of signage. The idea was that there should be a distinction between Digital locations and those of its business partners.

Further practical problems related to the lack of information and instruments supplied by corporate HQ. Now the story becomes somewhat technical. The red color was only intended for use with coated paper. However I needed the prescription for uncoated paper, as we advertised in magazines, which were printed on uncoated paper (such as that used for newspapers). The first ad printed in the pre-defined color came out as a filthy brown. The answer I got was that I had to talk to the printer about the right color. However, in the process of advertising there are so many intermediate partners, it is simply not realistic to ask a printer to adapt the ink (image the fuss for just one or two ads). The magazine editors expect the right materials to be delivered (and I think they were right to take this approach). We took the initiative to get in touch with a local lithographer and he made tests so that we could define the colors for different types of paper. We did the same with producing templates for letters and faxes. Corporate had defined the layout, but they

did not produce the templates. Although the paper size is different than in the USA (where quarto is the standard, in contrast with A4 in Europe), the European market was large enough to justify making separate templates. As a result, each country in Europe was expected to produce its own templates.

One last remark about the color change relates to employees' feedback. Not everyone liked the red in the beginning, but after a couple of months they got used to it and even started to like the new CVI.

### Selection of suppliers for stationery

The production quality of materials has an impact on the way the organization is perceived. A number of departments are involved in the production process. Each needs to be aware of its responsibility in delivering and accepting quality standards, whether written or unwritten.

I experienced a striking example of this when Harry, an employee responsible for taking deliveries came to my desk saying: "I've got a pallet with stationery, but the letterhead looks awful." I immediately dialed the number of the purchasing department and said: "We've got a pallet with stationery, but the letterhead looks awful. Can you tell me what's going on?" The purchasing department told me they had found a less expensive printer. I answered that we don't accept lower quality

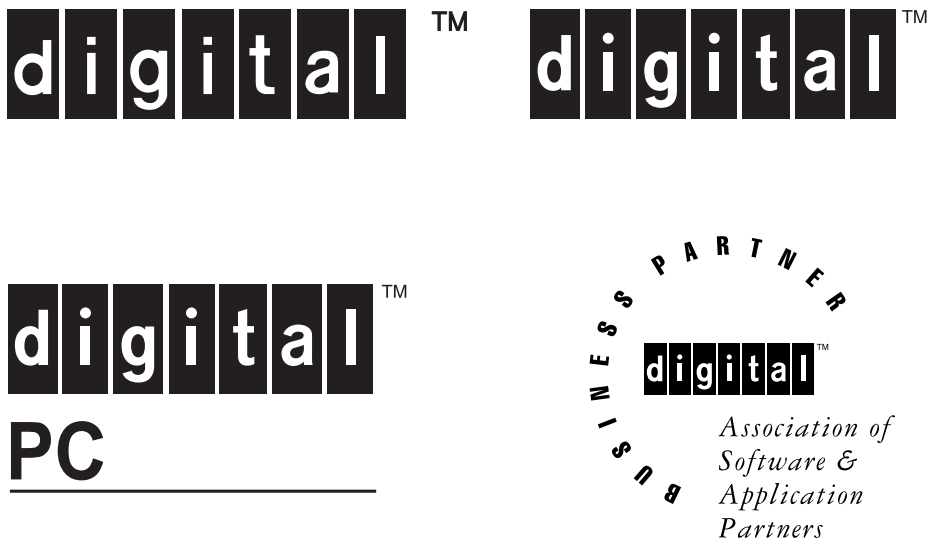


Figure 1.1: The 'old' Digital logo (upper left) and the 'new one' (upper right) with a slightly softer curvature (round dots and proportional blocs), the Digital PC logo and an example of a business partner logo.

and that they must arrange for the pallet to be returned to the printer. Harry was flabbergasted and when he asked: “don’t you want to see the goods?” I replied: “Harry, if you say it looks awful, I believe you. But meanwhile I’m curious. So, I’ll come down and take a look.” And indeed, it was awful.

After this incident, I told the purchasing department that they could handle prices, but not quality issues without consulting the communication department. Later they asked me whether they could change the paper, as they had found some inexpensive paper for use as stationery. I told them that, in accordance with corporate guidelines, we had to use environmentally friendly paper. The alternative paper was therefore not acceptable.

### **Digital PC and StorageWorks**

Even without changing the CVI, there is always a process of maintenance and development. In the period I was operationally responsible for the CVI of Digital in the Netherlands, I was confronted with many attempts to deviate from the guidelines, which were set by the Corporate Identity Committee in Boston. The following examples show that those responsible for the CVI do not always see what is going on in the business and that various forces may reduce the consistency of a CVI.

One business group for a specific product line, StorageWorks, performed extremely well and the employees in this group got extra bonuses and a higher salary raise than the average Digital employee. After a while I noticed they had developed their own visual identity with the logo of the product StorageWorks, and they used the logo on business cards, commercial printed materials and premiums. This international group did not contact the local communication departments in advance nor did they have asked permission to the Corporate Identity Committee. Apparently they wanted to differentiate their business group from other businesses in Digital and they took the initiative to present themselves with another logo.

Another business unit also wanted to present themselves in a style deviated from standard. The Corporate Identity Committee had created a Digital PC logo, which was approved for use on promotional materials for PC products. This Digital PC logo was a product brand and therefore had to be used only for product promotion. We received the artwork from the corporate office. After a while, the marketing department of the business unit asked permission to produce business cards with the Digital PC logo. I told him that the sender remains Digital. All stationery items had to carry the legal name and logo of Digital. He said that permission had been granted at the European level to adapt the business cards. Okay, I said, send me the e-mail with the decision. I am still waiting to receive that e-mail. After a couple of months he showed me business cards of colleagues from other European countries, with the Digital PC logo and he threatened to go to suppliers abroad, if I would not produce business cards with the Digital PC logo. Okay, I said, I haven’t

received the mail with the European decision, so I'll ask the Corporate Identity Committee. The company was hierarchically structured with a corporate level (main office in USA), regional areas (such as for instance Europe) and countries (local offices). The upshot of this action was that headquarters ordered the European PC group to destroy all Digital PC business cards and use the legal name and corporate symbol of the organization on all stationery.

### **Introducing Internet**

Digital was a technology-driven company. "Use what we sell, and sell what we use." was their motto at the time. When I started working for the company in 1984, I became familiar with electronic mail and I could send e-mails to almost every Digital employee in the world. As a high-tech company, Digital used e-mail internally long before it was widely implemented.

In order to manage the CVI effectively, we had access to various informative sites (nowadays these will be called intranet sites), such as for instance those that contained lists of trade names with their correct spelling. Compared to other companies, Digital used Internet technology to distribute guidelines to employees and to suppliers at a very early stage. From the early 1990s, the Corporate Identity Committee in Boston delivered information on CVI via the Internet. With a password the site was accessible to suppliers (nowadays these will be called extranet sites). However, not every supplier used this technology in the early 1990s. At that time Internet was considered 'new media'. Nowadays it no longer seems to be 'new' at all.

### **Acquiring a Philips business unit**

In 1991 Digital took over a business unit of Philips that sold PCs to small and medium-sized companies throughout Europe. The impact in the Netherlands was different from that in other countries. First, the corporate office of Philips is located in the Netherlands, and the number of employees taken over exceeded those already at Digital in the Netherlands. In other countries only a limited number of employees were taken over and these were immediately relocated to the offices of Digital. Second, due to tax advantages (I have been told), the 'old' Philips division became a separate legal entity, with the name Digital Equipment Enterprise BV. The original Digital employees remained in the original company, which was called Digital Equipment BV. Because of this separation (both in company structure and in location), communication was poor. I have noticed that there was limited interest in cooperation among management. Each company went its own way and this resulted in completely different approaches, for example in advertising campaigns.

Later, Digital Equipment Enterprise was integrated into Digital Equipment BV and the employees moved into the same buildings. Nevertheless, for many years, the origin of the employees was still visible from their badge numbers. It was corporate

policy for badges to be visible in the office. The numbers of the 'old' Philips employees started with a seven. In my opinion, these employees were branded for the rest of their career in Digital.

All of these experiences led to the exploratory study described in my doctoral thesis, in which I examined the issues involved in maintaining Corporate Visual Identity (CVI). This dissertation is a follow up of that study. Digital inspired other authors, too. For example, its culture is discussed in Schein (1999) and Rosson and Brooks (2004) describe the period when Digital was taken over by Compaq. All Digital products and services were relabeled as Compaq, which generated considerable resistance from employees and customers, alike. Later, Compaq was taken over by Hewlett-Packard.

## CVI MANAGEMENT BEYOND THE LOGO

CVI is usually associated with a logo. However, there are many other elements that can be used to identify an organization. Take, for example, the trade names of Digital software products. Every name that included the abbreviation DEC (Digital Equipment Corporation) referred to the owner. This is comparable with products sold by McDonalds, such as McChickens. Such an identity system may be clear too those familiar with computers, but not to everyone. There was a story going round about a taxi-driver in Boston, who said that both Digital and DEC regularly organized trade fairs for their customers.

In general, the elements of a CVI may include a logo, color palette, typefaces (fonts), layout, photography and illustrations, advertising styles and even signs and symbols. In the Netherlands, signs such as for instance those for toilets, lockers and ticket machines, which are used at railway stations, are well known. Symbols may also be pictorial, for example the McDonalds clown or the Michelin figure. In the appendix a list of applications is included, which may carry a logo or other CVI elements. All of these applications may be seen as the physical, tangible assets of the CVI. However, the range can be wider.

## THE TERM CVI

In the Netherlands the word 'huisstijl' is unambiguously connected with the visual elements that convey the identity of the organization. In English, however, 'huisstijl' can be translated as 'house style', but then might be interpreted as interior design. A second reason for not using the term house style is that interior design mostly relates to the retail organizations, while 'huisstijl' in the Dutch sense covers all type of organizations. Corporate identity is, in my view, a concept broader than



the visual elements which are used to express the identity of the organization. In Dutch, the expression 'stijl van het huis' (translation: style of the house) would be closer to the concept of corporate identity, as it also covers the way employees communicate and behave. Therefore, the term Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) more closely matches the term 'huisstijl'. Although the term may appear misleading, as the Dutch term 'huisstijl' refers to the way an organization presents itself visually and Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) refers to the identity itself, CVI is the closest match to the term 'huisstijl'. So, when we use the term CVI, we mean the visual presentation of a corporate identity. The final reason for using the term is that it has already been extensively used in earlier empirical research in this area, such as that by for instance Melewar and Saunders (1998, 1999, 2000).

In discussions on CVI, it seems that the design elements are perceived as rather static. In my opinion this may be the case for the basic design elements of the CVI, such as logo, typeface and perhaps the color palette. Signage on buildings, and in and around buildings has a long lifecycle and therefore remains the same for long periods. However, applying the design to brochures and advertising requires regular adaptation. Compare for instance advertising in magazines from twenty years ago with those of today and you will see a big difference. It may be that the logo has not changed, or just in minor ways. The main difference is in the style of photography, typography and layout. Therefore, the CVI can be distinguished into those elements that remain the same over a longer period and applications which need adaptation regularly. CVI is not as static as it seems.

The use of CVI, in all of its visual expressions, has an effect on the way the organization is perceived. The production quality of applications also conveys an impression of the organization. Therefore, the objective of using a CVI can be first, to announce the existence of the organization, and second, to create and support a corporate identity. In creating a design for a logo, there needs to be a good fit with the organization and type of business. Take for example a cosmetics manufacturer and an international transport company with tankers and large trucks. In an associative sense the first organization is likely to use a slimmer typeface, and the second a bolder one. But organizations do not only express an identity through their visual expressions. Wider aspects of communication and the behavior of employees also have an effect on their identity. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that in the case of mergers or acquisitions, the first action is to change the CVI. Associations derived from communication and behavior will be linked to the logo after a period of time.

The experiences described above illustrate the fact that even without a formal change of CVI, there are forces which will tend to stretch guidelines or even ignore them. These may arise in many parts of the organization. I often needed more materials than those delivered by the corporate communications department. I was one of two people in the world asking for information from Digital's Corporate Identity

manager in Boston – and pinpointing the lack of information. Most of the time, I had to figure things out for myself and develop materials at a local level. The practices I have described belong to the area of managing the Corporate Visual Identity, which will be the focus of this dissertation.

The concept of Corporate Visual Identity can easily be associated with design. In this dissertation, however the design itself will not be the main subject. In organizations employees are responsible for the final result, either by applying the CVI guidelines themselves or by giving assignments to suppliers and evaluating the results. The anecdotes in this chapter have shown that CVI should be seen as a common responsibility of all employees within the organization. In this dissertation Corporate Visual Identity management is mainly considered from an organizational perspective.

## THIS DISSERTATION

This dissertation builds on knowledge accumulated during my Master's study (Van den Bosch, 1999). Managing the CVI involves more than just setting guidelines. Guidelines must be accessible, tools need to be made available for applying the CVI or disseminating information about it. In addition, managing the CVI often involves developing the CVI, for example, as a result of organizational changes (mergers, acquisitions, or outsourcing of units or departments), new technology, or simply the fact that elements need to be modernized after a period of time. Although corporate communications usually takes the initiative, many more departments are also involved when a CVI needs to be adapted. Gradually, I developed the following definition:

*CVI management involves the planned maintenance, assessment and development of a CVI, anticipating developments both inside and outside the organization, with the objective of contributing to employee's identification with and appreciation of the organization as well as recognition and appreciation among external stakeholders.*

The definition is divided into three parts. First, CVI management should be *planned*, and the activities involved consist of maintaining, assessing and developing the CVI. Second, developments inside and outside the organization may have an impact on CVI management. Therefore, the CVI manager has to monitor developments as well as *anticipate* possible influences and develop or adapt instruments that will enhance the consistency of the CVI. The CVI has to fit into the organization and organizational changes may lead to the need for additional developments in the CVI. The logo does not necessarily need to change, but visual elements, typography or illustrations (e.g. photographs) may be added. Third, *the objective of*

*a CVI is to contribute to increased identification and appreciation internally and greater recognition and appreciation externally. It is important that it is understood and acknowledged that the CVI contributes to these objectives, as other aspects in the identity, such as behavior and communication also have an impact on the way the organization is perceived.*

This dissertation focuses on those aspects that influence the consistency of a CVI. My aim in this thesis is to bridge the gap between academics and professionals. For the first group, I present empirical results relating to a subject that has not been studied in this way before. The second group – practitioners – need knowledge that will help them manage their CVI. The main research question of this dissertation is:

*What is the impact of management practices and characteristics of the organization on the consistency of Corporate Visual Identity?*

Organizational characteristics include strategy, structure and organizational culture as well as management practices related to the CVI. To answer this question, we subdivided it into the following sub-questions:

- 1. Which management practices are being used to manage a CVI, what is their perceived importance, and what is the impact of management practices on the consistency of CVI?*
- 2. What is the influence of organizational characteristics on the consistency of the CVI?*
- 3. What differences in management practices and organizational characteristics can be discerned among different types of organizations?*
- 4. How can the management of a CVI be monitored in an organization?*

Chapter 2 explores CVI management. Some developments in Western societies, as well as both external and internal organizational developments are described concisely along with their impact on CVI management. Three perspectives are distinguished within which CVI management can be studied. Although these perspectives are closely connected, the focus of this dissertation – the organizational context within which a CVI can be studied – is insufficiently explored in the academic literature.

Chapter 3 is a theoretical exploration of CVI in relation to reputation. In most literature, reputation is used interchangeable with corporate image, and this is itself interchangeable with corporate identity. These terms are discussed in the first chapter. The third chapter explores the five dimensions of reputation, as defined by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004), and CVI is described from the point of view of each dimension.

Chapter 4 introduces the empirical research on CVI management and presents

some descriptive and exploratory findings concerning the characteristics of CVI as well as CVI management practices in organizations. In chapter 5 the results of the study on the use and effects of organizational measures to support a consistent image of the organization are presented. Specific measures within CVI management are defined and further explored, including their use in organizations, their perceived importance, and the impact of these measures on the consistency of a CVI.

Next, in chapter 6, a study is presented that explores the impact of general organizational characteristics and CVI management characteristics on the consistency of a CVI. First, variables are defined at the organizational level and in CVI management practices. The impact of these variables on the consistency of CVI is studied by using an AMOS analysis.

Chapter 7 presents a study on CVI management in different types of organizations. Distinctions are made between manufacturing and service, and between profit-making and nonprofit organizations. The study presents differences in the consistency of CVIs, organizational characteristics, CVI management characteristics, and measures taken within the different types of organizations. Regression analysis is used to explore differences between the selected types of organizations.

Chapter 8 presents the development and use of a qualitative instrument to assess CVI management within a single organization. The European Model of Quality Management (EFQM) adapted for assessing activities related to managing the CVI. Three case studies are presented, which lead to conclusions as to the usefulness of the instrument and the effectiveness of the practices used to manage the CVI.

Finally, chapter 9 presents conclusions and a discussion on the main topic CVI management. In this chapter, various theoretical implications and methodological considerations are addressed, and suggestions for further research discussed. Finally, a number of practical implications that can be derived from the research are presented.



# 2

## Perspectives on Corporate Visual Identity management

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) is an instrument organizations use to present themselves to stakeholders. In this chapter, CVI management is concisely described in relation to developments in Western society and in a variety of organizations. Next, CVI is explored in academic and management literature. Finally, three research perspectives of CVI management are presented: first, the identity, image and reputation perspective, in which CVI has to fit in with strategic developments, second, the design perspective, exploring CVI as a mean to an end, and finally the organizational perspective, in which CVI management is related to processes, use of instruments and practices. Academic research is relevant to all perspectives, but it is concluded that there has been insufficient research on the organizational perspective. This perspective clearly needs more attention, as it influences the consistency of CVI.

### INTRODUCTION

In the Middle Ages, escutcheons (heraldic Shields) were used to identify the allegiance soldiers. Heraldry had a similar function for cities and families. Signs of guilds provided information about the origin and quality of their products. These signs or symbols can be seen as the precursors of Corporate Visual Identities (CVIs). CVI has developed over the last century and more rapidly in the last decade. The Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century had transformed traditional crafts into new industries which applied mechanized processes to the production of industrial products. Mass production resulted in manufacturing of standardized, cost-efficient products. Initially, standardization and the manufacturing process were at the forefront. Design was of lesser importance in the mass-production era, which produced the T-Ford (remembered as a trendsetting product) that was only available in black. The first industrial designer was Peter Behrens, who is acknowledged as the founder of 'total design'. In 1907, as the leading architect and designer for AEG (*Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft*), he was responsible for the company's buildings, graphics and product design. He was well known for his innovative abilities and sensitive handling of materials, color, and detail. Esthetic

considerations were combined with technical production issues. In 1919, Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in Germany. He aimed to demolish the barriers between art and industry with a revolutionary teaching program that combined craft techniques and knowledge of materials with modern industrial production methods. More schools followed this concept, and design and industry soon became inseparable. Meanwhile, manufacturers had to redesign production processes in order to meet customers' needs for product differentiation (cf. Collins and Porras, 1994; Pine, 1993; Utterback, 1994). These developments led to more manufacturers of more products and more differentiation in the design of products. Commercial organizations had to attract customers at the point-of-sale, or through advertising. Alongside symbols and logos, graphic imagery and typography were widely used to present a visually unified image to the public. Companies developed a Corporate Visual Identity, which consisted of a system of visual identifiers. Nowadays, organizations, whether profit or not-for-profit, use visual expressions to enhance recognizability and differentiate their organization from others.

This theoretical examination of Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) further consists of a description of developments which have influenced the use of CVI. After exploring CVI in literature, three perspectives will be presented, relating to different domains of the CVI, and thus three areas in which CVI can be studied.

## DEVELOPMENTS INFLUENCING CVI

Two types of developments can be distinguished, both of which have had an influence on CVI. First, external organizational developments in Western society and, second, internal organizational developments which have an impact on the use of a CVI.

### **External organizational developments**

Three types of developments taking place outside of the organization can have an impact on its CVI: first, the development of the concept of a brand, second, the need to know the organization behind a brand, and third, the increasing number of visual stimuli in society.

First, brands used to relate mainly to products and their manufacturer. Nowadays, brands are being used by both profit and nonprofit organizations, including voluntary organizations (Ind, 2001). When a brand refers to a product, the brand will be judged by the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of the product (Riezebos, 1996). Intrinsic attributes relate to the product quality (taste, size, product design, etc.) and the extrinsic attributes deal with product experiences (name, packaging, product information, and price). For service-oriented organizations the behavior of the employees creates an impression of the organization. Thus employ-

ees are of major importance in the branding process (De Chernatony and Harris, 2000; Harris and Chernatony, 2001; De Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003; Hatch and Schultz, 2003). In the last decade, brands have also been used by nations, regions, cities and even individuals – such as, for example, Richard Branson the CEO of Virgin (Olins, 2004). Nations, regions and cities are branded to enhance and support tourism or international events. New York is promoted by I♥NY and the Dutch capital city Amsterdam attempts to attract tourists with their slogan ‘I *amsterdam*’. Over the decades, the concept of a brand has been extended considerably.

In general, a brand consists of both tangible and intangible assets. Its visual expression can be perceived as a tangible asset of a brand. Therefore, the CVI of an organization is an important asset in the branding arsenal. The identity symbols of an organization, such as its logo or emblem, typeface, and corporate colors are crucial in helping people recognize the organization, recall its image, and may even reaffirm trust in the organization (Dowling, 1993).

Second, in Western society, consumers can choose products and services from among many brands. The reputation of an organization is therefore of major importance in creating competitive advantage (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995; Kapferer, 1994; Kay, 1993). Suppliers want to establish a relationship with consumers and strive for their loyalty. Services are constantly being added to products, and they are being judged, too (cf. Normann, 1994). Consumers are increasingly interested in the organization behind a brand, and the way an organization deals with its corporate social responsibilities (Allee, 2000; Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2003; Blumenthal and Bergstrom, 2003; Charkham 1994; Sever, 2003). Publications on the behavior of organizations influence the attitude of the public towards them and create pressure for more transparency in business behavior (cf. Klein, 2000). Take for instance the crises at Shell, in which its reputation was damaged because of negative media coverage of the disposal of the Brent Spar drilling platform and its operations in Nigeria. Transparency in business practices and clear communication are likely to have an effect on trust and enhance the commitment of stakeholders towards an organization (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000).

Third, in modern, urban environments we are overwhelmed with visual cues. Our Western society is becoming more and more visually oriented. Visual impressions should compete for the attention of consumers or other stakeholders and this results – together with other information – in perceptions of a product or an organization in their minds. Visual impressions are based on logos, colors, graphics, typography, photography (style and composition) and, sometimes, additional symbols. These elements are presented via signage in the street, in buildings and shops, packaging, mailings, television, and all kind of printed and online media. Mass media such as television and Internet have enhanced the scope of visual com-



munication by adding moving pictures. Research shows how an elaborate symbolic environment made up of both visual and verbal cues expresses the essence of a brand and helps us to remember it (McNeal and Ji, 2003). According to McNeal and Ji, the main difference – compared with 26 years earlier – was the extended number of visual cues remembered. Logos and other visual cues help us recognize and choose product brands (D’Souza, 2000; Doyle and Bottomley, 2002). In communicating products and services, various attributes were created to get the attention of audiences. It is suggested that image-makers focus on values, attitudes, feelings and effects, while paying little attention to logic, proof and argument (Fleming, 1996). This implies that logos may have considerable associative power and that visual cues in general have become more important in communication. Besides their functionality, products clearly have expressive values (Riezebos, 1996; Van Kralingen, 1999). In particular, communication about luxury products is full of associations and little information is given about the functionality of the product. Picture-text congruity – the extent to which pictures and text communicate the same message – helps us understand an advertisement (Luna and Peracchio, 2003). Finally, consumers choose a brand because they feel relationship with it and lifestyle it stands for.

### **Internal organizational developments**

In this concise description of developments within the organization which have an impact on CVI, two type of developments can be distinguished: first, identification with an organization, and second, increasing autonomy in the workplace.

Over the last decades the relationship between organizations and their employees has changed. Take for example Philips’ relationship with its employees. In the past, Philips built employee housing, had its own health insurance, scholarships for the children of personnel and its own sports club (the Dutch abbreviation of the professional Eindhoven Football Club PSV used to stand for Philips Sport Vereniging – Philips Sport Society). Philips looked after its employees from cradle to grave, it was said. Such efforts create a powerful bond between personnel and the organization. All these fringe benefits have disappeared, not only in Philips, but in many other companies as well. Most have returned to their core competencies and cut away all other services, including those for their personnel. Nowadays they need fewer personnel and fewer people have a permanent employment contract (Handy, 1989). However, there is still a need for personnel to bond with the organisation. Organizational identity – the identification of the personnel with their organization – is based on claimed central character, claimed distinctiveness, and claimed temporal continuity (Albert and Whetten, 2003). Studies show that images of the organization are helpful in reinforcing motivation and feelings about the organization (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail,

1994; Albert, Ashforth and Dutton, 2000) and in engaging people to repair a damaged reputation (Dukerich and Carter, 2000). Sensemaking – the creation of reality as an ongoing accomplishment, based on earlier situations – will shape the organizational structure and behavior of employees (Weick, 1995). Olins (2004) speaks as much about bonding as about branding. In the process of bonding to the organization, visual cues can evoke an atmosphere and a context (Whetten and Godfrey, 1998). The brand is associated with the key attributes and values that position the organization. A brand should be inspirational and foster employees' identification with the organization (Kapferer, 2002). It is acknowledged that the reputation of an organization has a positive influence on attracting personnel (cf. Argenti and Druckemiller, 2003; Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004). Nowadays it seems that organizations should create a bond with their personnel using values and images – the branding process – whereas in the past a bond was created with conditions of employment that exceeded workplace expectations.

What's more, the autonomy of employees in the workplace has increased. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the driving force behind process innovation (cf. Davenport, 1993). In the case of CVI, only a few decades ago, very few departments in an organization had to deal with visual design elements. Administrative units were responsible for correspondence and used stationery. Public relations, communication or marketing departments had close contacts with the agencies that were responsible for artwork. Distribution of logos was only possible via these departments or agencies. Nowadays, technology allows all employees to create communication, and this may well have an impact on the visual representation of the organization. Employees use e-mail to correspond with external stakeholders. ICT tools for correspondence (templates for letters, memos and reports) were developed to make it easier for employees to apply the CVI and get the desired result. In the past, secretaries did this kind of work and only they had access to the equipment needed. Nowadays a logo can be downloaded from the Internet. However, this will probably not meet the requirements of format and resolution standards, if the logo must be used for applications other than screen output. Technology has created autonomous working areas with a great many possibilities, but at the same time it has introduced risks for the CVI. More and more employees are getting involved in visual presentation. Autonomy may well be a characteristic of an excellent organization; nevertheless, people need should have the right attitude and skills to handle the opportunities it presents (Peters and Waterman, 2003).

To sum up, technology has enhanced the scope of many jobs and the attitudes of stakeholders have changed. A brand may now be associated with the business practices of an organization. There's a strong need to express the identity and values of

an organization consistently and unambiguously. The consequences for CVI are: (a) a growing interest in images and impressions (referring to for example experiences and lifestyle) instead of product specifications requires a more extended CVI, (b) an increased number of applications for communicating CVI (for example Internet, which became widely used in the last decade of the twentieth century), (c) more opportunities to apply the CVI using the new technology, (d) more employees have an influence on the CVI and therefore more need to have knowledge of the CVI and access to the technical tools that will support them in applying the CVI.

## LITERATURE ON CORPORATE IDENTITY

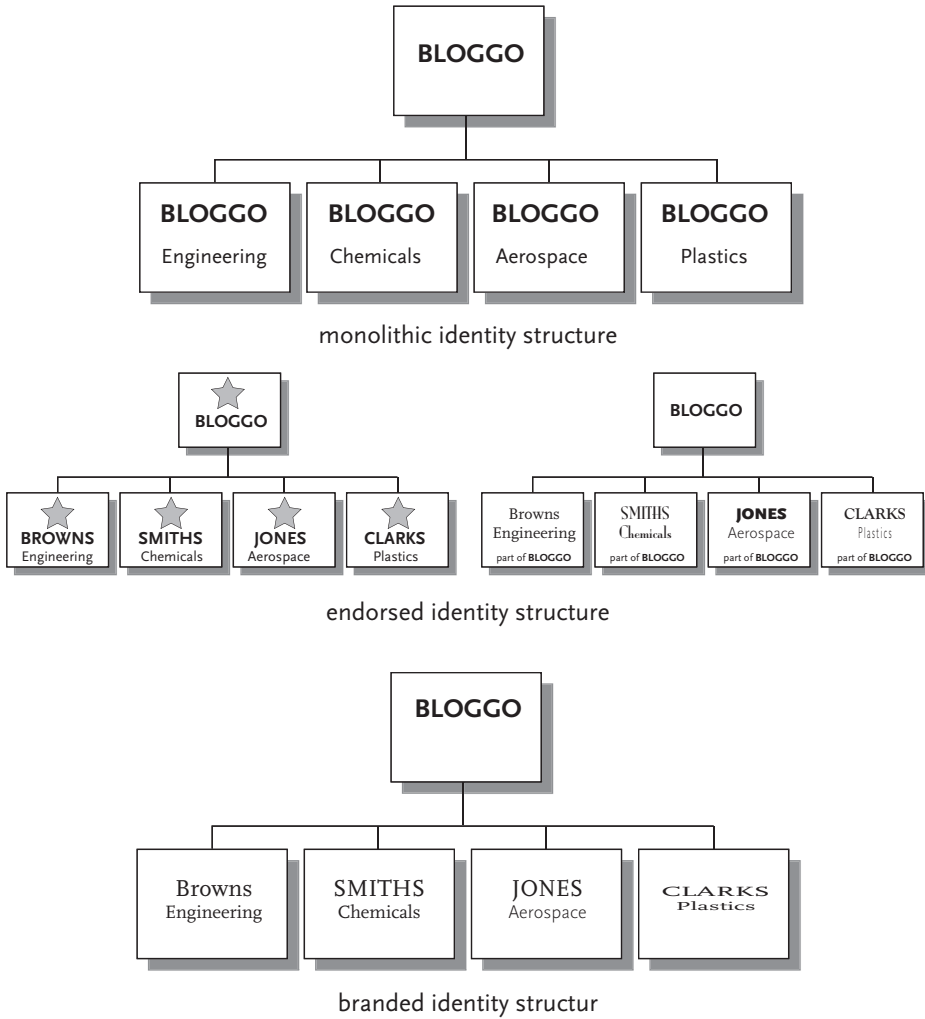
Originally, corporate identity manuals is mainly on CVI and thus the term CVI came to be used interchangeably with corporate identity. Most of the literature on the subject was written by practitioners. Olins (1989), for example, is well-known for his 'corporate identity structure', which consists of three concepts: monolithic brands for companies which have a single brand, a branded identity in which different brands are developed for parts of the organization or for different product lines, and an endorsed identity with different brands which are (visually) connected to each other (see Figure 2.1). Although these concepts introduced by Olins are often presented as the corporate identity structure, they merely provide an indication of the visual presentation of (parts of) the organization. It is therefore better to describe it as a 'corporate visual identity structure'. Van Riel (2000) used the concept to introduce parent visibility, i.e. the way (parts of) companies more or less visually present their relationship with the parent organization. Birkigt and Stadler (1986) introduced the concept of the corporate identity mix, consisting of communication, behavior and symbolism, resulting in the corporate personality. This concept, in which corporate identity was much more comprehensive, has been adopted and adapted by many authors (cf. Van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Van Rekom, 1998; Leitch and Motion, 1999; Balmer, 2001) and it soon became evident that corporate identity also comprises many intangible characteristics, such as the culture of an organization and the behavior of its members (cf. Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Brun, 2002; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Topalian, 2003). CVI belongs to the domain of tangible visible assets within the field of symbolism.

In the literature on corporate identity, concepts such as corporate image and corporate reputation are also used. A distinction was made between corporate identity (how an organization perceives itself and wants to be seen by its stakeholders) and corporate image (dealing with the actual perception of the organization by external stakeholders). The ideal situation is when the corporate image is identical to the corporate identity. Many theoretical approaches deal with bridging this gap

between identity and image (cf. Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Stuart, 1999; Christensen and Askegaard, 2001; Westcott Alessandri, 2001). Over the last decade, the concept of corporate reputation has been widely discussed (cf. Markwick and Fill, 1997; Greyser, 1999; Dowling, 2002). There is some confusion about precisely what is meant by this, as the term corporate reputation is used interchangeably with corporate image or identity. Corporate reputation is perceived as a dynamic concept, as it takes time to build and manage, it represents an organization's perceived ranking related to rivals and also may be perceived differently by different stakeholders (Gotsi and Wilson, 2001). Corporate reputations depend on stakeholders' experiences. Balmer and Gray (2003) define corporate image as a mental picture of an organization, and say that corporate reputations evolve over time (see Figure 2.4). However, authors dealing with bridging the gap between identity and image assume that identity and image may evolve over time as well.

To express the values of an organization through both tangible and intangible assets, the term branding or corporate branding has been introduced. Concepts such as corporate identity were linked to or transformed into corporate branding (Bickerton, 2000; De Chernatony and Harris, 2000; Simões and Dibb, 2001; Einwiller and Will, 2002; Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2003; Balmer and Gray, 2003; Leitch and Richardson, 2003; Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000; Stuart and Jones, 2004). The behavior of employees is crucial in the branding of service-based companies (Harris and Chernatony, 2001; De Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003; Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Internal campaigns and workshops can help to increase understanding about the organization's brand (Ind, 2001). Corporate branding, which is based on recognizable values and symbols, is used to create a sense of 'belonging' to the organization (Hatch and Schultz, 2003) and strengthened the 'bonding' of employees (Olins, 2004).

Over the decades numerous concepts have been introduced. However, there is no clear distinction between corporate branding, corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation, and there is not as yet an unambiguous understanding of these terms. How does CVI fit into these concepts? As a result of changing concepts, the attention has shifted from design to the nature of the organization itself. Strategy development, positioning the organization, and the behavior of its members became more prominent. Attention to corporate visual elements has decreased. Studies that focus on CVI mainly relate to the standardization of CVI and the perceived benefits by managers within the organization (Melewar and Saunders, 1998; Melewar and Saunders, 1999; Melewar and Saunders, 2000; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2000; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2001). It is obvious that there is more than one possible research perspective for those tackling the subject of CVI management.



**Figure 2.1: Corporate identity structure according to Olins (1989)**

## RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

CVI management can be studied from three perspectives. First, it can be studied from the perspective of identity, image and reputation, focusing on the objectives of CVI, dealing with strategic choices in the CVI. The second type of studies focuses on the design perspective, considering visual expressions as a means to an end. In the third research perspective, the organizational perspective, studies on CVI management in its operations, including processes, instruments and practices and their impact on the consistency of CVI.

### CVI management from an identity, image and reputation perspective

Mergers and acquisitions may lead to a new CVI; however, the CVI of the acquirer usually dominates (Rosson and Brooks, 2004). Sometimes a hybrid CVI (see Figure 2.2) is employed for a period of time. An example is Libertel (in the Netherlands), which first changed its name to Vodafone Libertel and finally joined the global brand Vodafone. Changing a CVI can take place step by step or overnight. A good example of a drastic change is the Centrubank in the Netherlands, which became the VSB Bank in the 1980s. The Centrubank was uncomfortable with the association of its name with the Centrupartij, an extreme right wing political party, and therefore changed its name and visual identity literally overnight.

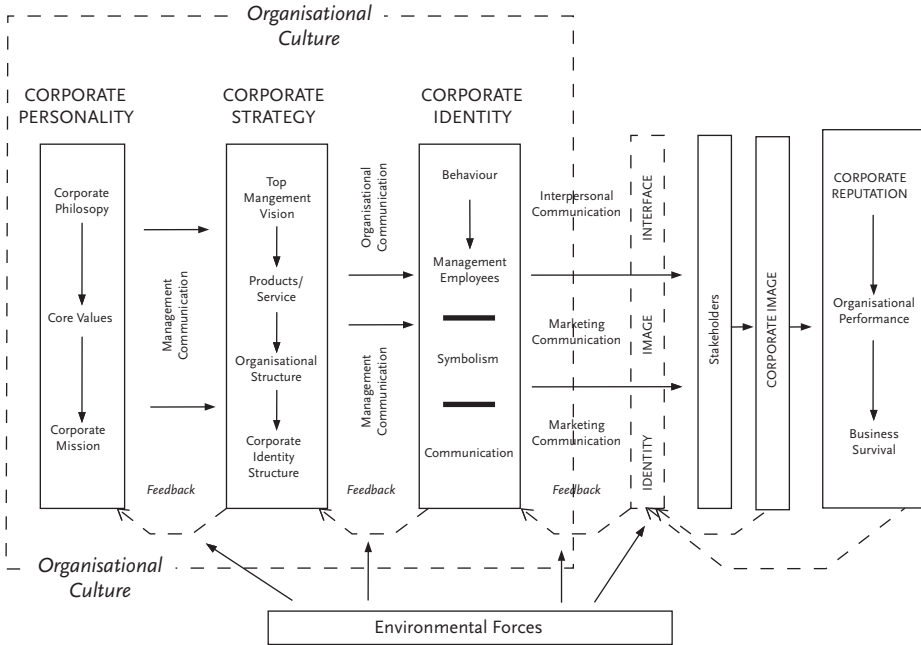
It is not known to what extent visual aspects contribute to the success of strategic changes. However, two out of nine failures in mergers and acquisitions attributed to the CVI (Balmer and Dinnie, 1999). Unresolved naming issues can reflect unresolved corporate identity, and integrated corporate identity and total corporate communications structures are rarely in place early in the merger and acquisition process. There are two schools of thought on how to develop a new corporate identity (Balmer, 1995). First, there is the strategic school, which focuses on corporate strategy, organizational behavior and corporate communications and it is articulating the corporate mission and philosophy. The CVI is not the primary focus. Second, the strategic visual school has graphic design as its focus and assumes that strategic change can be achieved through visual means. In both schools, the strategic development of the organization is included, and the visual expression of the organization either follows (in the strategic school) or is used to leverage change (as in the strategic visual school).

It is acknowledged that, in general, CVI is intended to increase visibility and recognizability for stakeholders (Olins, 1989; Herbig and Milewicz, 1995; Balmer and Gray, 2000; Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004). However, the design of a CVI itself has little intrinsic value, and visual identifiers need to acquire intrinsic value over time (Balmer and Greyser, 2003). Therefore, the CVI must be coherent – all visual elements should convey the same message and the various elements should strengthen



Figure 2.2: Logo change via hybrid CVI.

each other – and consistently used – over a longer period of time. Without such coherence and consistency, the impression of the organization will remain fragmented and ambiguous. Hence, design affects both corporate identity – how the organization presents itself – and corporate image – how the organization is perceived by external stakeholders.



**Figure 2.3: Corporate Identity Management process (Stuart, 1999)**

Although much has been written about corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation, little is known about the relationship of CVI to these strategic elements. Birkigt and Stadler (1986) and Van Riel (1995) discuss three factors that affect corporate identity – behavior, communication, and symbolism – and characterize CVI as the dominant representative of symbolism. Stuart (1999) presents a more complex model and identified three pillars in the corporate identity management process: corporate personality, corporate strategy, and corporate identity (see Figure 2.3). CVI is included in the corporate strategy by means of the corporate identity structure and in corporate identity through symbolism. The corporate identity is converted into a corporate image via an identity/image interface.

Balmer and Gray (2003) developed a new model of the corporate identity, which articulates the corporate identity and corporate communication process (see Figure 2.4).

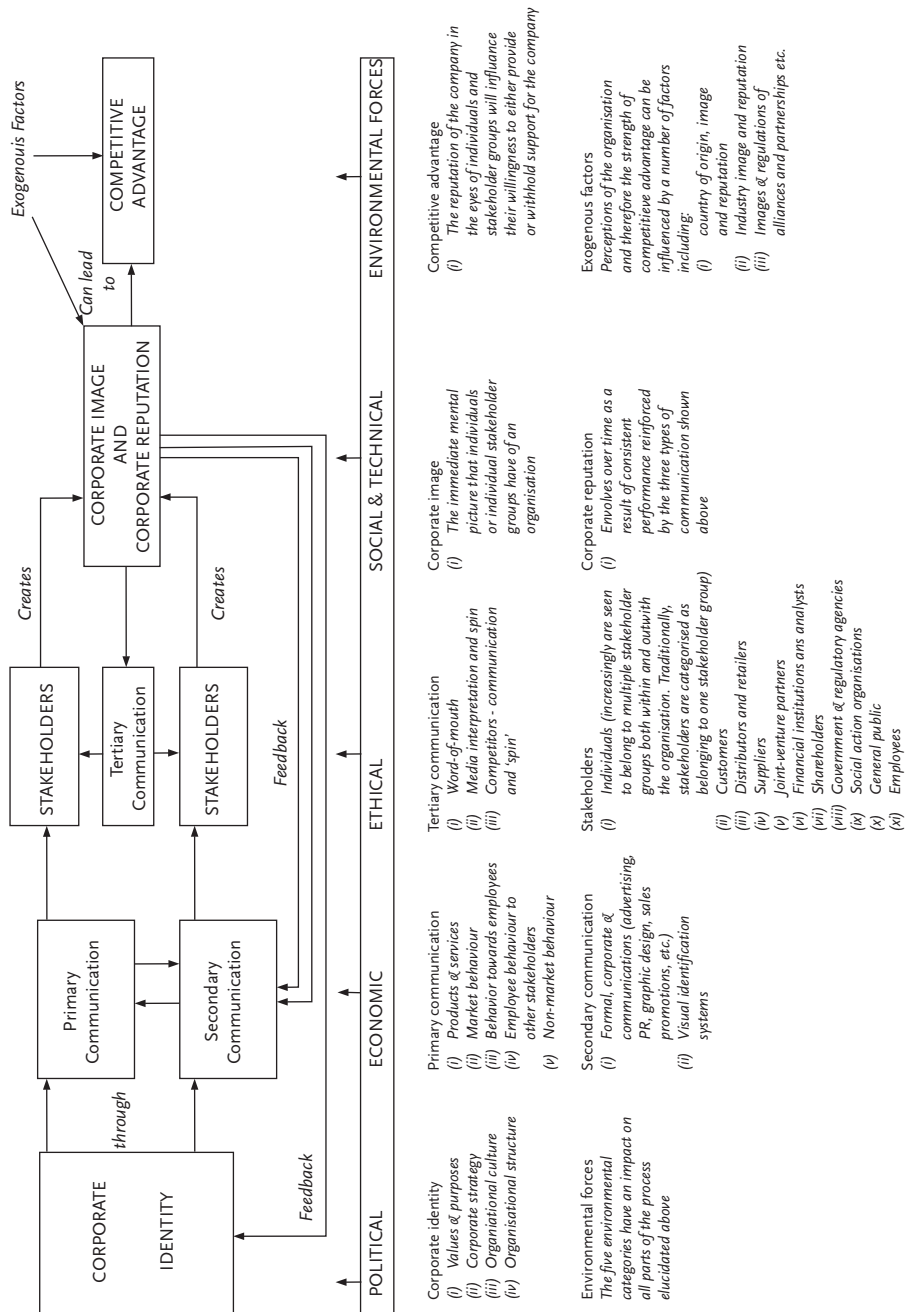
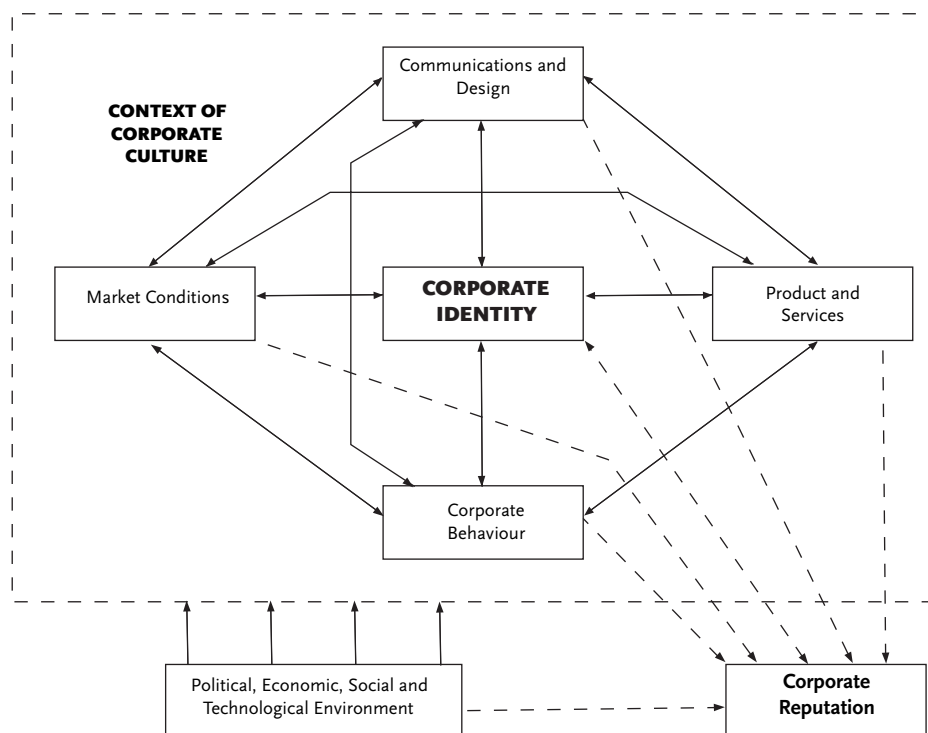


Figure 2.4: A new model of the corporate identity - corporate communication process (Balmer and Gray, 2003)



The model shows the inseparability of corporate identity, corporate communication, corporate image and reputation and the pivotal role of corporate communication. Corporate communication is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary communication. CVI, described as graphic design and visual identification systems, is located in secondary communication. Melewar and Wooldridge (2001) present a model of corporate identity which comprises more determinants, emphasizing the reciprocity between corporate identity and its determinants. In this model, communication and visual identity (design) are treated as one (combined) variable (see Figure 2.5).



**Figure 2.5: Model of corporate identity (Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001)**

CVI as an aspect of corporate identity is recognized in all concepts and models. In all of the models, CVI is one of the identifiers within corporate identity which affects the corporate image and/or corporate reputation. Although there is a clear correlation between CVI and the concepts, there are still questions about the share of CVI within corporate identity and to what extent CVI contributes to corporate image and/or reputation. What is for instance the impact of CVI on corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation?

More recent literature discusses the financial value of brands. The brand is seen as an important business asset (Calderón, Cervera and Mollá, 1997), which has a positive effect on long-term profits and is helpful in times of poor performance, helping companies to return to profitability (Roberts and Dowling, 2002). In measuring the effect of brand equity on sales, Baldauf, Cravens and Binder (2003) distinguished six dimensions: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, profitability performance, market performance and customer value. Their scale for brand awareness consists of six items including statements such as: 'I know what X looks like', 'I can recognize X among other brands' and 'I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of X'. Although not the most important dimension in brand equity, brand awareness significantly influenced brand profitability performance, brand market performance and customer perceived value, and these dimensions do affect buying intentions. Brand equity was defined as a set of brand assets and liabilities related to a brand, its name, and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991). Maathuis (1999) studied the value of a corporate brand to customers and to business-unit management. The major findings with respect of customers were that organizational issues – such as facts, performance, personality and culture, as well as country of origin – positively affect brand quality and credibility and affect the fit between a brand and a new product. However, corporate brands differ in the degree to which they evoke organizational associations, as the presence of these associations depends on familiarity and is related to the country of origin. For business-unit management the value of using the corporate brand depends on the degree of strategic similarity between the business units' activities and the organizational core competences, identification with the organization as a whole and the communication advantages of using the corporate brand. On the other hand, the use of the corporate brand decreases with greater business-unit autonomy.

The findings described above imply that a corporate brand – in its visual representation one of the assets within a CVI – has value and should be considered as an important corporate asset. Melewar and Saunders (2000) examined which CVI applications were effective in projecting the identity of British multinationals with subsidiaries in Malaysia. Apart from clothing, all items – interior/exterior, stationery, publications, vehicles, signs, forms, advertising, packaging, promotional gifts, and products – were of importance in expressing the identity. However, we can imagine that clothing may be of major importance in increasing recognizability and expressing the identity of other types of organization. Think, for instance, of airline personnel (both aircrew and ground personnel), police and postal services.

Although the CVI consists of many visual applications which represent the corporate identity of an organization, study of CVI in relation to identity, image and reputation has mostly been restricted to specific applications or certain types of

organizations. Van Riel and Van den Ban (2001) studied evaluations before and after the introduction of a new logo at a bank. The new logo was compared with the logos of two competitors. It turned out that people attribute different associations to each logo. Other examples of studying single applications are the impression people have of banks based on the architecture of their buildings (Schroeder, 2003), and art which could be associated with the image of the organization (the owner of the piece) (Hoeken and Ruikes, 2005). In the field of marketing, the visual aspects of packaging were studied in relation to their fit with products (cf. Bernstein and Moskowitz, 2003; Garber Jr. and Hyatt, 2003) or the effect of names and fonts on the choice of a product (Doyle and Bottomley, 2002). An example where packaging reflects corporate identity is The Body Shop. Simple, unadorned packaging and labels match the brand of this organization, which emphasize the values of responsibility, fairness and global stewardship.

Further studies on the perspective of identity, image and reputation could examine the fit between CVI and the impression of an organization across applications such as advertisements and websites. It would be interesting to measure the contribution of corporate visual identity to perceptions of corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation over a period of time. It may be that a new organization with a new CVI differs, in this respect, from the same organization revealed over a period of time, when the CVI has acquired associations due to other corporate identity elements, such as communication and behavior. Further studies could provide insight into, for instance, the strength of brands in relation to the consistent design over a period of time.

### **CVI management from a design perspective**

From the perspective of identity, image and reputation, various empirical applications are used. Brand awareness, for instance, has been measured by testing knowledge of the logo, and identity, image and reputation have been studied in relation to the effect of design elements. It is obvious that an organization has to make design choices for their CVI and as well as choosing which applications should carry the CVI. CVI – from a design perspective – relates to the main elements of a CVI – name, logo, symbols and aspects such as color pallets, patterns and other graphic elements – as well as their use on a variety of applications (see appendix). Symbolic figures may also represent the organization, express the core business, and attract customers. McDonalds, for example, uses a set of CVI elements, including the well-known golden arches and clown. Visual elements have to be coherent; conveying the same message and the various elements should strengthen each other. Even their product names, such as McChicken, refer directly to the brand (cf. Macrae, 1996). All these visual and verbal elements are means to an end in CVI management, with the objective of contributing to the corporate

identity, image and reputation. CVI can be perceived as an instrument used to express corporate identity. According to Gestalt theory, the corporate visual identity is designed to support the business of the organization (Pilditch, 1970).

Logos are studied in terms of their associative power and recognizability. The importance of associating meaning with visual images suggests that the meaning of a logo design must be considered as of greater importance than its esthetic value alone (Pimentel and Heckler, 2003). An important study of logos was carried out by Henderson and Cote (1998). They distinguished various type of logo designs – natural, harmony, elaborate, complex, parallel, repetition, proportion and round designs – and studied their impact on measures of affect, meaning and high or low recognizability. Moderately elaborate designs, which have some degree of complexity, activity and depth, appear to be increase affect. Natural logos also do so, although the logo should not be as detailed as a photographic image. Logos described as being harmonious, with symmetry and balance, also enhance affect, as predicted by Gestalt psychologists. Further, a familiar meaning that is associated with a logo improves recognizability.

In a further category of logos, Henderson and Cote distinguished highly recognizable logos, low-investment logos, high-image logos and poorly designed logos. Poorly designed logos fail to achieve recognizability, create no affect and have little meaning. Low-investment logos are designed to create ‘false’ recognition and the associated affect. In this sense they are mainly used for copycat brands, which are deliberately designed to confuse consumers through their similarity with highly regarded brand names and visual similarities in their packaging (Warlop, Ratneshwar and Osselaer, 2005). In the Netherlands, Unilever sued Albert Heijn for fourteen such copycat branding exercises. In three cases, the judge ruled that the similarity would confuse consumers and Albert Heijn was obliged to redesign its packaging.

The study on logo designs has been replicated and extended in China and Singapore (Henderson, Cote, Meng Leong, and Schmitt, 2003). Feng Shui, which is thought to reveal positive and negative aspects of natural forces, was included as a measure for assessing logos. However, a great deal of variance was explained by other design factors such as natural imagery and harmony. It turned out that the way designs are perceived, and their effect, was similar in China and Singapore. A comparison of these results with the findings of a study carried out in the United States (Henderson and Cote, 1998) showed that many of the responses were similar. This implies that visual aspects, such as logo design, may accomplish the goals of an organization across international borders.

Whereas Henderson and Cote limited their study to the design of the logo, Warlop, Ratneshwar and Osselaer (2005) increased the complexity of their research by measuring its recognizability, comparing easy and difficult learning conditions,

based on different brand names, packaging (shape and color) and price. It turned out that after two weeks extrinsic attributes such as a distinctive brand name and packaging had helped consumers to recall intrinsic product quality.

In general, the integrated design elements of CVI have rarely been studied. Mostly the logo alone is studied or the logo with regard to specific applications or the issue of using logos on the Internet, correlated with attractiveness, creativity and professional impact (Foo, 2003). Research on visual consistency has shown that color and grid/navigation were the main tools used to create consistency on the Web (Van der Geest and Loorbach, 2005). Occasionally research on design has focused on specific target audiences. Viswanthan, Rosa and Harris (2005), for example, showed that illiterate consumers use pictographic thinking to recognize a brand. These consumers get confused when packaging and logos change. Further study could determine the lifecycle of a logo. Although many well-known brands have been used for many decades (Riezebos, 1996), it is unknown whether this longevity is correlated with the consistency of the visual expression of a brand.

The design perspective of CVI covers the whole area of design: logos, design elements alongside the logo and the use of design elements on various applications and carriers. The semiotics of symbols and visual rhetoric have been studied (Birdsell and Groarke, 1996; Blair, 1996; Fleming, 1996; Moriarty, 1996) and visual expressions have been studied in relation to marketing and advertising (cf. Kenney and Scott, 2003; McQuarrie and Mick, 2003; Mulvey and Medina, 2003). An initial examination of design elements and their associative power was conducted by Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen (2000). The test showed that people have some ability to discriminate when it comes to design elements. The strongest results were found in attaching meanings to colors. On the other hand, different paper qualities could not be distinguished. Not all combinations of design elements were included in these tests, which need further development.

Comparing the visual representation of organizations, various corporate (visual) identity structures appear to have been implemented (see Olins, 1989, and Figure 2.1). Examples of a monolithic identity structure are Deawoo and Canon (one name for the organization and all product groups). Unilever used to have a branded identity structure (products with no visual connection to the parent brand), but its new logo will be placed on all product packaging (thus introducing an endorsed identity structure). Therefore, creating a design for the visual representation of the organization also needs to take into account issues such as the desired corporate (visual) identity structure. An attempt to make a 'choice diagram' for a corporate identity structure was presented by Stuart (1999). In this theoretical approach, the corporate identity structure was combined with the typology of Mintzberg (1979). Depending on the dominant coordination mechanism and the driving forces within the organization, a monolithic, endorsed or branded identity could be indicated.

This theoretical approach has yet to be implemented, but we foresee considerable practical difficulties, as reality is very complex. First, Mintzberg's model (1979) consists of ideal typologies and these do not exist in a pure form. Second, research (Van den Bosch, 2000) has shown that a distinction is made not only on the basis of organization structure or coordination mechanisms, but that choices on depend on the application areas or carriers. For example, stationery and vehicles can be branded with a monolithic design, whereas promotional materials such as advertisements, brochures and websites can be endorsed. An empirical study investigating the degree of standardization of CVIs in relation to Olins' corporate identity structure (1989) was carried out by Melewar, Saunders and Balmer (2000). Apart from slogans, taglines and payoffs, the degree of standardization of CVI corresponded to Olins' structure and a well-known, widely accepted corporate name was more likely to be used in a monolithic identity structure.

Further studies from the design perspective could examine the coherence among CVI elements and the lifecycle of a CVI, in which the logo may have the different lifecycle to other CVI elements such as typography, color pallet and additional design aspects such as curves and boxes. In studies on corporate visual identity structures, CVI elements can be included to examine which design elements enhance familiarity in different parts of the organization.

### **CVI management from an organizational perspective**

Whichever design and corporate identity structure are chosen, a CVI must be embedded in the organization. As already mentioned, organizations communicate their brand through various conduits and communication channels as well as through the behavior of employees. The organization may try to control all forms of expression, but it has been acknowledged that, in contrast with the content of communication, only the visual aspects are truly policeable (Ind, 2001).

In theory, spreading the use of a CVI should be easy as CVI guidelines provide detailed directions for use (Van Riel, 2000; Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004). This suggests that guidelines ensure appropriate application. However, at this point we would like to mention an example of a purchasing department that had changed the printing procedure for business cards. Instead of a high-quality print process, digital printing was introduced to save costs. Even though the right design was used, receiving a business card with poor print quality will definitely influence the way an organization is perceived. It is not only the use of the design that is important; production quality also influences the corporate image.

The use of guidelines, both for applying the CVI as well as for production, is part of the organizational perspective. However, research in other areas shows that employees do not always act according to guidelines (Van Gemert, 2003). Apparently more need to be done to ensure that employees apply the guidelines.

CVI management from an organizational perspective involves processes, instruments and practices in the organization. Users (including suppliers) and employees must apply the guidelines correctly. When they lack appropriate knowledge or tools, the CVI will not stay consistent. Take, for example, PowerPoint presentations, in which consistency can be achieved by distributing templates and, of course, ensuring that these are used.

Most of the academic and management literature CVI focuses on changes in design due to mergers and acquisitions or when parts of the organization are about to be outsourced. But a CVI also needs to be managed after a new design has been implemented (Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2003) and organizational commitment is essential (Balmer, 2003). Therefore, CVI managers should act both internally and externally. As well as engaging design and advertising agencies, they should give priority to the operational aspects of managing the CVI in the organization (Murphy, 1989).

Little empirical research has been conducted in this area. Most studies focus on the standardization, control and benefits of CVI. Melewar and Saunders (1998) investigated the relationship between the degree of control by headquarters and the standardization of CVI among British companies and their subsidiaries in Malaysia. CEOs, senior managers and corporate identity managers indicated that the benefits of a standardized CVI were reflected in higher sales, greater consumer goodwill, advertising awareness, executive recruitment and better acceptance by local people. The findings suggest that centralized control of CVI decisions involves standardizing the name, symbol or logo, typography, color and corporate slogan. Further, the chief executive is the key internal driving force of a globally standardized CVI. The results show that local managers are more in favor of using a standardized CVI. However, the authors wonder whether this might be due to cultural factors. In a follow-up study, the influences on the international standardization of CVI were examined among a sample of UK multinationals (Melewar and Saunders, 1999). The results showed that market entry strategies – e.g. foreign direct investments – are associated with the degree of CVI standardization. The main reasons for developing a standardized CVI were boosting sales in a competitive environment, creating an attractive environment for personnel, and enhancing the stature and presence of the organization (Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2001). Where global restructuring, mergers or acquisitions took place, there was increased interest in the CVI and local in-house design departments usually developed it in cooperation with external design agencies.

The studies mentioned above focused on standardizing a CVI as a mechanism for controlling the way subsidiaries present themselves. However, the standardization of a CVI may be perceived from a design perspective, too. Studies that focused on the organizational perspective of CVI management touched on man-

agement issues, such as the role of the chief executive and the use of design agencies and in-house design departments. However, they provided little insight into practical issues, such as for instance the applicability of CVI guidelines, training in applying the CVI, or the development and use of tools that enhance the use of the CVI. The organizational perspective of CVI management includes a lot more than design. So far, these aspects have not been examined in academic research.

A first exploratory study – with a focus on management practices – led to the conclusion that managing a CVI is a long-term challenge (Van den Bosch, 2000). This suggests that it should not be restricted to periods of organizational change due to restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, and privatization. The organization exists in a dynamic environment and hence those responsible for CVI should anticipate changes in the organization and in its environment. As there is limited empirical knowledge about how best to manage a CVI from an organizational perspective, with the purpose of maximizing consistency, more research from this perspective would clearly be helpful.

## CONCLUSION

In this theoretical examination of CVI management, we first concisely described some external and internal organizational developments. The workplace has changed considerably and, because of developments in technology, more employees now have an influence on the visual expression of the organization they work for. On the other hand, we have noticed a significant increase in visual stimuli in society. Meanwhile, consumers are now more knowledgeable about the organization behind a brand and have become more critical. Personnel no longer have jobs for life, and management needs to find new ways for employees to bond with the organization. It can be concluded that those responsible for managing a CVI need instruments that will involve employees and other users and tools for propagating the use of the CVI which will keep it within the desired boundaries.

Study of the academic and management literature shows a growing interest in corporate identity, corporate image, corporate reputation and branding. CVI is seen as one of the elements that expresses a corporate identity and contributes to corporate image and reputation.

Next, we distinguished three research perspectives: 1) the identity, image and reputation perspective, 2) the design perspective and 3) the organizational perspective. Although the three are closely linked, a distinction could be made based on 1) the objectives of a CVI, 2) the means applied and finally 3) management, including processes, instruments and practices. It is striking that the academic and management literature mainly focuses on the first two perspectives.

Corporate visual identity can be seen as a tangible asset which can be used to



represent the organization. Employees show their connection with the organization, either through business cards, or by an e-mail address, or by wearing corporate clothing. Coherence among CVI elements and the consistent use of a CVI are essential for any organization that aims to achieve uniformity in its visual representation.

We have suggested various areas for further study, including focusing on the value and contribution of CVI to corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation. How much effort is needed to ensure that the CVI elements of an organization will be recognized by target audiences? What is the time needed to attach the desired associations to these elements? And what is the contribution of CVI to the value of 'goodwill' in mergers and acquisitions? Research on design is currently mainly restricted to logos and design elements in specific application areas and further study could usefully include the coherence between design elements and their impact on the branding lifecycle. Which design elements are perceived as coherent and related to specific types of organizations, and what is the lifecycle of a logo (as well as that of other design elements of a CVI)?

'The demise of identity studies and of practice being viewed in terms simply of graphic design is to be welcomed' wrote Balmer and Greyser (2003, p. 347). We agree. In our view, managing the CVI from the organizational perspective has received insufficient attention. Empirical studies in this field are needed to gain more insight into CVI management, its instruments and practices and their impact.

We have touched on the comprehensiveness of CVI management. On the one hand, persistent management practices are needed, but on the other, strategic organizational developments may lead to new design solutions. CVI management must deal with questions about corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation as well as and those related to design and management issues. Hatch and Schultz (1997) have suggested combining knowledge from the field of marketing communication with organizational studies. In our view, studying CVI management from the organizational perspective is a good example of such an approach. It combines strategic identity issues with practical considerations and prerequisites for the use and consistency of CVI.

# 3

## How Corporate Visual Identity supports reputation <sup>1</sup>

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) comprises all the symbols and graphical elements that express the essence of an organisation. Although it is by far the most visible and tangible asset in the armoury of tools used by the majority of organisations in their interaction with the outside world, the role of CVI is scarcely mentioned in studies on corporate reputation. Despite the growing interest in measuring reputation and brand values, little is known about the role of CVI. This article explores the relationship between CVI and five general dimensions of reputation: visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency and consistency. It is concluded that CVI can, in principle, support each of these dimensions, through the quality of the design, the range of its application, and the condition of carriers.

A Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) consists of a name, a symbol and/or logo, typography, colour, a slogan and – very often – additional graphical elements. The logo or corporate symbol has the potential to express organisational characteristics (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). CVI elements are used in communication and on a variety of applications, such as buildings, vehicles and corporate clothing. In general, CVI provides recognizability (Balmer and Gray, 2000) and an organisation must have very strong reasons before dissociating itself from an established CVI. Every major change in a CVI requires time and a substantial investment to communicate the new name and/or corporate design, stressing the presence of the (new) organisation and emphasizing ways in which it differs from others. CVIs are often changed as a result of organisational changes, for instance repositioning (a change in strategy), mergers, acquisitions, or privatisation. In due course, a CVI may need to be modernized. However, most organisations with a good reputation gradually adapt their CVI in a way that is hardly noticeable to outsiders. CVI, the visual expression, is an important tangible asset of the organisation.

The development of a new CVI starts with a process of discovery that reveals the organisation's current corporate identity, its historical roots, culture, strategy and structure. Once the essence of the organisation is known – what it stands for, what its aims are, in which respects it differs from others – the design process

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<sup>1</sup> Published in: Van den Bosch, De Jong, and Elving (2005)

can start. The desired result is a visual identity system that fits the organisation. The CVI will eventually come to represent the organisation. A new CVI can be considered the first step towards building a corporate reputation. A favourable reputation is influenced by all of the elements in the corporate identity mix: behaviour, communications and symbolism – and reputation has impact on organisational performance (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). The CVI can be seen as the symbolic element within the corporate identity mix (Baker and Balmer, 1997). Reputation is getting more and more attention, because of its powerful influence on the mindset of a variety of stakeholders, such as investors, employees and potential employees, customers and the press.

Management of identity is inseparably linked to that of organisational reputation (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000). Corporate branding and corporate communication can be seen as activities used to build a corporate reputation (Bickerton, 2000; Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000; Einwiller and Will, 2002). Roberts and Dowling (2002) define corporate reputation as “a perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall appeal to all its key constituents when compared to other leading rivals.” Corporate reputation refers to the distinctive attributes of the organisation. The corporate symbol represents both current results and future ambitions. Logos, CVI guidelines, an identity architecture – one corporate logo for the whole organisation or consciously chosen additional visual identities for parts of the organisation or selected products and services – and a communication plan are all relatively easy to implement (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004), but CVI management is needed to ensure consistency (Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving, 2004). After all, CVI is not a goal in itself, but a means to an end.

Instruments are being developed to measure an organisation’s reputation – locally and globally – but the influence of CVI is scarcely referred to in reputation studies. In our view, corporate reputation clearly needs to be evaluated and measured, but this exercise should include CVI. Once the strategy has been developed and the visual identity has been designed, CVI seems to be taken for granted.

In this paper we explore the relationship between corporate visual identity and reputation. In which ways and to what extent can CVI support a corporate reputation? Our exposition of the relationship between reputation and CVI is based on the framework established by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) and the reputation model they present, which consists of five dimensions: visibility, distinctiveness, transparency, authenticity and consistency. We explore this relationship by investigating these dimensions. The results will be helpful to communication professionals who deal with integrated communication and aim to enhance the consistency of messages – both written and visual – within their organisation.

## Visibility

Visibility is a measure of the prominence of the brand in the minds of customers. In the model created by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004, pp. 111), this dimension can be gauged in terms of exposure in the street, national heritage, media exposure, brand equity, listing on a public stock exchange and corporate citizenship. All of these elements – whether they are positive or negative – influence reputation. To take just one example, the most visible organisations in Denmark – based on their street exposure – turned out to be retailers with top locations, financial services and telecom companies (Schultz, Nielsen and Boege, 2002).

Elaborating further on this theme, CVI supports visibility by emphasizing the presence of the organisation and it also influences reputation, either in a positive or in a negative way. The CVI is not only used on signage of buildings, but also on billboards and vehicles. McDonalds' golden arches are a well-known example of a powerful symbol that is placed alongside highways to give motorists the idea to turn off at the next exit and eat at the restaurant. The Ronald McDonald trust is an example of corporate citizenship. The name of this institution corresponds with the organisation behind it and thus supports the reputation of the owner. Names and visual elements used on a range of applications result in visibility and the quality of CVI carriers provides additional information – creating strong perceptions in the minds of the public.

On the negative side, CVI on trucks in poor condition not only draws attention to the organisation behind the truck, but also to the way the organisation is apparently taking care of its fleet and personnel. The logo provides visibility, but the condition of the carriers, such as buildings and its surroundings or the fleet also has an impact on its image. A striking example of this occurred on primetime news in the Netherlands, when turned out that Ahold had misled shareholders by overstating its earnings. The crown in the Ahold symbol on the company's headquarters was damaged, conveying a visual metaphor for the precarious situation of the company. Brand equity had all but collapsed. Reputations can collapse extremely rapidly, also reflecting on other brands owned by the company. In the Netherlands, customers stayed away from Albert Heijn – the flagship supermarket chain owned by Ahold – partly due to the earnings of the new CEO, which were seen as exorbitant by Dutch standards.

Other examples of this effect can be seen in the recent history of Enron, WorldCom and Parmalat. These names, and the visual symbols that represent their organisations, became associated with major scandals in business and financial reporting. It takes enormous efforts to regain trust and rebuild reputation.

CVI supports the dimension visibility in the reputation model through the use of the name and/or visual cues such as the logo on buildings, vehicles and exposure in the media, both paid and non-paid. The use of visual identity elements on

a variety of carriers increases the organisation's visibility. The logo (alongside other visual cues) communicates not only the existence of an organisation, but also – particularly when the organisation is in the news – can come to symbolise its reputation.

### **Distinctiveness**

The second dimension in the reputation model is distinctiveness – the unique position of the organisation in the minds of customers and other stakeholders. The organisation can achieve distinctiveness through strategic alignment (bringing together aspects of its vision and strategy to build the business), through emotionally appealing features, and by attracting attention through the use of startling messages (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004, pp. 153-156). A good example of strategic alignment is Intel's marketing campaign, which encourages PC manufacturers to use the Intel Inside® logo in their ads. The logo became distinctive via these manufacturers, referring to Intel's technology as it is used in personal computers. British Petroleum (BP) introduced a new logo and the tagline 'Beyond petroleum', both of which emphasise their environmentally friendly technologies. Another example is Philips, which has become better known worldwide through its slogan 'Let's make things better'. This slogan has been widely and consistently spread via advertisements in the print and broadcast media. This slogan represents a promise that is designed to address both employees and external stakeholders. The design of the tagline was embedded in the company's CVI guidelines with precise instructions for its use in all applications.

Fombrun and Van Riel (2004, pp. 142-145) mention a number of distinctive trademarks, logos and visual elements – such as the swoosh of Nike, the swan of KLM, and the logo of Akzo Nobel. Another good example is the Shell emblem, which, since the 1980s, no longer has the company's name attached to it and yet is recognized all over the world. Shell did not even feel the need to change the organisation's name – which referred to the company's most important trade at the end of the nineteenth century (the importation of shells into the UK) – when oil became more important. Nowadays few would associate oil with shells, but the logo nevertheless 'works'.

Pharmachemie, a manufacturer of generic medicines in the Netherlands, uses microscopic images of the raw materials of medicines such as paracetamol (crystals) in its CVI. Their stationery visualizes these crystals and in total there are six different letterheads and six business cards.

Finally, some design agencies also create a range of business cards for their customer-facing personnel. The front is standard, but the back displays a visual created especially for and often by each member of staff. This approach puts the individuals within the agency in the spotlight.

All of these examples illustrate the fact that CVI is influenced by a lot more than just a logo; additional visual elements, which can be both attractive and surprising, also help build up the company's image among stakeholders. The distinctiveness of the design requires considerable creativity and it must match the organisation's strategy. A good reason to change a CVI is when an organisation wants to emphasise a new strategy. Changing a CVI can also create awareness of an existing strategy among relevant stakeholders – as with BP – but besides the costs of the change, a substantial budget is needed to buy media exposure (see the dimension visibility) to portray the message. A distinctive design that is both emotionally appealing and surprising can attract free publicity. Once the strategy is known, the CVI helps to fix it in memory and the organisation becomes distinctive (top of mind).

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity, the third dimension, begins with a process of discovery in order to create a convincing constructed identity, followed by a process of internal expression and finally by external expression (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004, pp. 165). The slogan 'Let's make things better' was the outcome of such a process, and – to remain credible – Philips has to behave and act according to this promise. The challenge of authenticity is formulated by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004, pp. 181) in four lessons: first clarify who you are, develop a broad consensus within the organisation, express your identity clearly, and remain true to that identity. Authentic firms are seen as real, genuine, accurate, reliable and trustworthy.

Authenticity is often not directly related to CVI, but there are examples of visual elements or logos that go back to the roots of a company. The Philips symbol is such an example, as it is constructed from stars (which refer to light) and waves (which visualise radio). These authentic elements still apply to components of Philips' core business. Philips did not radically change this brand asset, but gradually adapted it in ways that most outsiders wouldn't notice.

The crystals of Pharmachemie, which visualise the raw materials of the generic medicines they sell, can also be seen as an expression of authentic visual symbolism. Handing over one of their six business cards creates an opportunity to tell the story of the crystals, the organisation and its business. Employees know this story, they like it and – most important of all – they want to talk about it. This is a good example of discovery, followed by internal and external expression. The design of the CVI was a crucial part of this process.

Once designers have a clear view of the roots of the organisation and what it stands for, they can start to develop distinctive, authentic visual identities. Pilditch (1970) stressed the importance of establishing a close correspondence between the design of the CVI and the organisation. Archive analysis, interviews, focus groups and quantitative analysis will help prepare a good design briefing. The process of

discovery is the first step towards developing a CVI. The story behind its development, with links to authentic elements of the organisation – the design philosophy – has great communicative value. The story of the CVI also helps employees understand what their organisation stands for and – together with actions that demonstrate the authenticity of the organisation – gives them the material they need to enhance the corporate image among external stakeholders. Thus the CVI can clearly be of assistance in developing the quality that Fombrun and Van Riel call authenticity.

### **Transparency**

Research findings suggest that the more transparent an organisation is, the more likely it is that stakeholders will rely on its disclosures (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004, pp. 187). Transparency, the fourth dimension, increases trust and reduces uncertainty. The main domains of transparency differentiated by Fombrun and Van Riel (200, pp. 197-207) are products and services, vision and leadership, financial performance, social responsibility and the workplace environment.

In our view another domain can be added to these, namely transparency created by an organisation's visual identity. This can be based on one or more brands and familiarity with the visual identity offers insight into the organisation's activities. For several reasons, an organisation can choose either a single visual identity, or several endorsed identities for subdivisions, product lines and service divisions. When the product brand is also the corporate brand, this enhances the transparency of the manufacturer of the products. Most companies that are ranked high in global reputation studies use the same brand at both levels, corporate and product. When organisations use product brands that are not identical with the corporate brand, the negative effect on the corporate reputation can be significant (Roberts and Dowling, 2002). According to a survey of the world's most valuable brands, there are strong links between product brands and corporate brands (Clifton and Maughan, 2000). In 19 of the top 20 companies, the corporate and product brand names were identical. The identity architecture clarifies the organisation's structure and the portfolio of products and services (Olins, 1989) as well as the visibility of the parent company (Van Riel, 2000).

An example of a change of CVI for reasons of transparency comes from the municipality of Amsterdam, which has recently redesigned its corporate visual identity. Over the years many logos were developed for the various departments and services within the city's administration. There was no common ground between the visual identities and, as a result, the mutual connections between these organizations were unclear to most citizens. A design agency was asked to bring the visual identities of all these entities into line in a single monolithic brand. Municipalities have to address a particular issue when developing their CVI: the

city itself needs to be distinguished from its governing body, which carries the same name (see also the dimension distinctiveness).

Fombrun and Van Riel (2004, pp. 191-197) mention five drivers for greater transparency: market pressure, social pressure, political pressure, legal pressure and internal pressure. Examples of possible outcomes are – for instance – a code of conduct and information on packages or products. Unilever, a British/Dutch-owned food and personal care multinational, produces and distributes literally hundreds of products under separate brands, and yet it is an organisation with a branded identity. In the past the Unilever logo was only used by the holding. In a recent new 'Path-to-growth' plan, the number of product brands was reduced from 1,600 to 400 and to help position Unilever in the minds of customers, a new logo was designed, which will be displayed on all packaging. Besides supporting the company's visibility, the new CVI will increase transparency about who is the manufacturer of all these products.

Another way to provide information on products or production processes is through certification. Examples of this include the ISO Quality mark, the EKO Quality symbol used for organic products in the Netherlands, and the FSC trademark, a certification logo distributed by the Forest Stewardship Council A.C., a not-for-profit organisation whose aim it is to protect indigenous forests and to promote wood obtained from sustainable forests.

CVI can provide transparency in two ways. Firstly, through an identity architecture that includes corporate and endorsed brands. In a pure branded identity structure there is no visual connection with the parent company behind the brands. Secondly, a special logo can be used as a certification or quality label for organisations that meet a certain standard and thus provide customers with background information on their products and services.

### **Consistency**

The final dimension, consistency, enacts across all stakeholder groups and through all of the company's communication and initiatives (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004, pp. 218). Van Riel (2000) describes various ways in which the content of communication can be orchestrated. Firstly, through visual coherence – which needs to be supported by clear CVI guidelines – and consistent marketing communications, applying the same pay-off, packaging and visual marks. Secondly, the communication as a whole can be orchestrated using common operational systems, cooperative structures for communication decision-making and common starting points. Fombrun and Van Riel (2004, pp. 223-229) view the identity architecture – monolithic, endorsed or branded structures – as part of the dimension consistency, but we think it is more related to transparency. In our view, consistency in relation to CVI has to do with the way brands and graphic elements are used on carriers over a longish period of time.



An example of consistency over time is the Shell logo, which still resembles the emblem that was designed in 1904. After World War II the logo was used in all communications. In the beginning, the logo changed every 12 years, but in recent decades it has only undergone very minor changes. The emblem, name and colours of Shell have not changed for a very long time.

Another example of consistency is the use by Coca-Cola of a standard wave, the same colours and the same typeface. Wherever we are in the world, we recognise signs, billboards, and products bearing this brand – even if they are written in a script we’ve never seen before. Similarly, the use of the colour blue and a swan in KLM advertisements demonstrates consistency in communication. Once the swan is identified with KLM, this even provides information on what EasyJet wished to say when they use a swan in their commercials on TV. In corporate identity programmes there are a variety of cues that can be used to represent an organisation.

CVI proves to be a useful tool for integrating all types of businesses, applications and communication utterances. It supports the organisation’s reputation by establishing consistency and CVI guidelines can certainly enhance that consistency.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The five dimensions in the reputation model are all interrelated and intertwined with impressions that are based on behaviour, communication and symbols. Roberts and Dowling (2002) show that corporations with a good reputation are more active in reinforcing that reputation through corporate and marketing communications (e.g. brand advertising). In the context of takeovers, reputation comes rapidly to the fore. In a takeover such as that of Kraft by Philip Morris or Rowntree Macintosh by Nestlé, the actual value of a company greatly exceeds its book value (Kapferer, 1994; Balmer and Gray, 2003). The difference is a valuable asset known as ‘goodwill’, which consists of brand names, corporate logos and customer loyalty (Herbig and Milewicz, 1997). In general, the trend is to put the value of brands on the balance sheet, but it is not clear to what extent the goodwill should be attributed to the visual aspects of the identity. In Interbrand’s analyses of the world’s most valuable brands (see *BusinessWeek*), they measure the brand strength in terms of factors such as leadership, stability, market, internationality, trend, support and legal protection (Birkin, 1991). These measures are used to establish the degree of market penetration, distribution and licensing, and the assessment of brand valuations involves specialists from disciplines such as marketing, accountancy, finance and law.

Assessing the visual identity can be useful in attempts to identify organisational weaknesses, and a weak visual identity may be a symptom of corporate malaise (Baker and Balmer, 1997). A new corporate visual identity, however power-

ful, should be part of an integrated approach to repositioning an organisation. Symbols, such as logo, name and graphics are clearly instrumental in expressing the organisation (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000), but they are not considered the most important issue that has to be managed (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen, 2000; Bromley, 2001). Corporate communication is becoming increasingly strategic (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Steiner, 2001; Westcott Alessandri, 2001). The corporate brand – the visual symbol, as well as its links with goods and services – should be well managed because it provides plenty of scope for differentiating the company from its competitors (Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2003).

In this paper, we explore the role of CVI in reputation management. We used Fombrun and Van Riel's reputation model and connected CVI to its five dimensions: visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency and consistency. Our conclusion is that CVI can support these dimensions and that all of them are inter-related. There is convincing evidence that transparency and consistency in CVI increases an organization's visibility. But we do not want to overestimate its role. Besides the visual identity, which symbolizes the organisation, communication and behaviour are also of major importance in creating and maintaining a solid, sustainable, unambiguous reputation. Nevertheless, CVI needs careful attention and it must be well managed. CVI is more than just a logo. It not only represents an organisation, its products and services, but it's also a visual expression that can be associated with reputation. The reputation model is helpful in exploring this relationship. CVI can clearly support reputation through impressive design, effective application on a range of identity carriers, and the condition of these carriers. CVI must therefore be considered a useful tool that can be successfully applied to managing the reputation of any organization.



# 4

## Corporate Visual Identity in organizations: descriptive and exploratory results <sup>1</sup>

Before reviewing the factors affecting the consistency of Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) in organizations (in chapters 5, 6 and 7), this chapter first presents some descriptive and exploratory research findings. The chapter consists of two main sections. In the first, descriptive survey data on the characteristics of CVI as well as CVI management practices in organizations is presented. This section also serves as an introduction to the following chapters, since the data were collected with the same questionnaire as the data underlying the analyses in chapters 5 to 7. In the second section, an exploratory focus group study is described, comparing three organizations with high, moderate and low CVI consistency, respectively. Finally, some preliminary conclusions are drawn.

### SURVEY: CVI IN ORGANIZATIONS

#### **Method**

In order to establish a clear overview of CVI characteristics and CVI management practices in organizations, written survey data were collected within 20 large Dutch organizations. The entire survey covered not only the descriptive data presented in this chapter, but also the dependent and independent variables used in the following chapters.

In selecting the organizations, we included commercial and non-profit organizations, manufacturing and service organizations, as well as those that focus on the business-to-business market and those in consumer markets. The criteria were that the organization's head office should be in the Netherlands, it should be of a certain size (more than 400 employees), and it should not be engaged in implementing a new visual identity or have recently introduced a change in visual identity (in the past two years).

From contact persons within these organizations, we obtained the names and addresses of about 70 employees who were to receive a questionnaire. The contact persons made a selection within their organizations of employees with functions

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter have been published in: Van den Bosch, De Jong, and Elving (2001)

that are directly or indirectly involved with the visual identity, working in departments such as marketing and communication, secretariats and support units such as the in house printer, vehicle fleet control, building management and purchasing. Fifteen organizations provided addresses, so that the questionnaires could be sent directly. In four organizations the contact persons distributed the questionnaires internally. In one organization an online questionnaire was sent to e-mail addresses supplied by the organization concerned. Each organization received a partial report containing the results for that organization. The questionnaires were sent out in the period from November 2000 to May 2001. The average response rate of the participating organizations was 48%, with a range from 13% to 78%. In all, 686 questionnaires were returned and processed.

The questionnaire<sup>2</sup> included questions to enable us to make a distinction according to their direct or indirect involvement with the visual identity or its development. Seventeen percent, with a range from zero to 42%, (in total 114 respondents) were directly involved in the visual identity or its development, and 83% (in total 572 respondents) were only indirectly involved – i.e. it was their task to apply the CVI, but they did not have any direct CVI management responsibilities. In the questionnaire some questions, such as the characteristics of the CVI, management practices and reasons for change in CVI, were only put to respondents who had said that they were directly involved in the development of the CVI. Questions, such as where to find information on guidelines, were only put to those indirectly involved. Respondents had to select one option out of a variety of answers or, in some cases, they could select several options. Some questions had space for additional information.

The measure of consistency of a CVI did not reflect the quality of design or the coherence among various design elements, both of which are based on a similar 'look-and-feel' among the various CVI elements. The consistency of CVI was defined as the extent to which the various CVI elements were actually employed as intended. The assumption is that the consistency of the CVI depends on the way the CVI guidelines are applied, resulting in a more or less consistent visual expression of the organization. Consistency of CVI is determined on the basis of eight statements that were presented to all respondents (both directly and indirectly involved). Among the statements about the consistency of the visual identity were: our organization can easily be identified by its CVI, the visual identity of our organization is untidy, and everyone in our organization observes the CVI rules. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert-scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The reliability of the scale was good (Cronbach's alpha .80).

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<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire can be obtained from the author.

## Results

The results described below fall into three main categories. First, results regarding CVI characteristics are presented, focusing on the elements, the applications, and the scope of CVI in organizations. Then the results relating to CVI management in organizations are discussed, focusing in particular on the lifecycle of a CVI, the reasons behind and strategies for CVI change operations, the responsibilities for the CVI within organizations, and the availability of information about the CVI. Finally, the perceived consistency of CVI in organizations is discussed.

### *CVI Characteristics*

Some visual identities prescribe only the logo, while others set out many more CVI elements, such as corporate colors, fonts and slogans or mottos. The visual identity may be worked out in detail for various fields of application. Sometimes the visual identity manual also contains examples intended to inspire users. Often a visual identity manual provides evidence of high ambitions at the outset, but many chapters remain unwritten. Those directly involved with the visual identity were asked about its elements, applications, scope, and whether there was background information available. With regard to the CVI elements, it is remarkable that corporate colors – rather than the logo – was most frequently mentioned. Table 4.1 shows the results for the whole study group of respondents who were directly involved. One would expect to find differences between (and not within) organizations in defining the elements of the visual identity. However, we found that respondents within each organization also had different opinions about what elements make up the visual identity.

**Table 4.1: Elements defined in the Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Element of Corporate Visual Identity</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Corporate colors	95
Logotype or logo	86
Standard fonts	81
Grids for print layouts	65
Additional design elements (curves, lines, colored areas)	64
Specially developed fonts	52
Slogan or motto	41
Symbols or figures	28

N = 114

The CVI can be used in various fields of application (see appendix) and applications can be used for internal and/or external purposes. We presented a list of applications and the respondents who were directly involved were asked for which applications the CVI had guidelines (see Table 4.2). The most important applications appear to be printed material, office items, advertising, forms, Internet and intranet, the signage on and around the building, and flags and banners.

**Table 4.2: Applications defined in the Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Element of Corporate Visual Identity</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Printed materials (leaflets, brochures, magazines)	97
Office items, such as letters, faxes, memos	96
Advertising	95
Forms	94
Internet and intranet	83
Signage on and around buildings	80
Flags and banners	80
Business gifts	75
Presentations	72
Fleet	67
Restaurant items (e.g. crockery, napkins, sugar and milk sachets)	56
Packaging	53
Sponsoring	49
CD-ROM	44
Corporate clothing	43

N = 114

The Dutch term “huisstijl” (CVI) may be interpreted as “de stijl van het huis” (the ‘style of the house’), extending the scope of the CVI with language (tone-of-voice), communication and behavior. The visual elements were most frequently named within the scope of the visual identity. Much less frequently mentioned were language norms, regulations, rules of conduct and dress codes (see Table 4.3). Again, there were clear differences of opinion within the organizations about the scope of the CVI.

**Table 4.3: Elements within the scope of Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Scope of Corporate Visual Identity</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Visual expression	97
Use of language (tone-of-voice)	24
Regulations	14
Rules of conducts	10
Dress codes (apart from corporate clothing)	7

N = 114

From the results shown above, we may conclude that the CVI is far more than just a logo and a letterhead design. Other elements, such as a color palette, fonts, grids or other design elements are included. Various applications may carry the CVI, and new applications, such as the Internet, have been added during the last decade. There is little agreement within the organizations about the elements and scope of a visual identity. This is striking because the information was collected from respondents who reported that they were directly involved with the development of the visual identity. One reason for this might be that the respondents stated that they are directly involved, but that this is merely a perception of their role, which is not formally defined.

#### *CVI Management*

Respondents were also asked when the last change in the visual identity occurred. There were only three organizations whose respondents had a uniform response. The responses of the others varied from less than two years ago to more than five years ago (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4: Last changes in Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Change in CVI</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Less than 2 years ago	51
Between 2 and 5 years ago	25
More than 5 years ago	24

N = 114



Although the contact person in the participating organizations had assured us that there had not been a recent change in the CVI, 51% of the respondents believed that the last change was less than two years ago. This can be explained by the reasons for changing a CVI. Whereas in the opinion of the contact person, the CVI was slightly adapted or extended to new applications, this may be perceived as a change in the CVI by respondents who were directly involved. We therefore asked respondents to characterize the changes: a change at one time, a change over a period of time, or gradual minor changes (see Table 4.5). Drastic changes in the CVI may be implemented at a specific moment in time, so that the audiences are being forced to get used to the new CVI. Over a period of time, the CVI may evolve toward a new CVI. Gradual changes or minor changes may hardly be noticed at all by external audiences.

**Table 4.5: Characterization of changes in Corporate Visual Identity**

Characterization	Percentage of respondents
Change at one time	51
Change over a period of time	27
Gradual minor changes	22

N = 114

The respondents were asked to mention the reasons for changing the CVI in their organization (see Table 4.6). The respondents were able to offer more than one reason and they had the opportunity to add reasons. Modernization of the CVI was mentioned most frequently. The other reasons show that internal motivation such as restructuring, new applications or templates, or the opportunity to work more efficiently may result in changes in a CVI. Some reasons, such as an update of the CVI manual as well as renaming and relocation, appear to be interpreted by the respondents as a reason for changing the CVI. However, updating a CVI manual is usually the result of a change in a CVI and relocation may simply present a pragmatic moment to change a CVI.

Respondents directly involved with the CVI were asked who is specifically responsible for the CVI. A list was presented and the respondents were able to choose more than one option as well as add options (see Table 4.7). The results show that there were various opinions in the departments and individuals responsible for the CVI as well as for expressing the identity of the organization.

**Table 4.6: Reasons for changes in Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Modernization of a CVI	44
Change in the strategy of the organization	27
Acquisition or merger	21
Technological developments	13
New markets	11
Other reasons:	
• restructuring	
• new applications	
• clustering of activities	
• there was no CVI	
• attempt to achieve more recognition	
• renaming and/or relocation of the organization	
• development of new templates	
• more efficiency	
• update of CVI manual	
• don't know	

N = 114

**Table 4.7: Departments or individuals responsible for Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Communication or Public Relations department	75
CEO or Board of Management	47
CVI manager	33
Everyone in the organization	25
Secretariats	18
Departments such as Facilities and Fleet management	15
Managers of units and departments	11
Purchasing department	10
Others:	
• decentralized Public Relations departments	
• traffic for print production	
• brand department	

N = 114

**Table 4.8: Information available on the background of CVI**

<b>Information on background of Corporate Visual Identity</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Visualizations/visual language	55
Logotype/logo	51
Desired identity	34

N = 114

The Communication or Public Relations department was most often involved. A minority of 25% indicate that CVI and expressing the identity of the organization is a collective responsibility of all employees.

**Table 4.9: Resources for information on Corporate Visual Identity**

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Manual on paper	58
Digital manual on Internet	23
Other resources or remarks:	
• an A4 sheet of paper, distributed once	
• description on five A4s	
• brochure	
• newsletter	
• you get information when you ask for it	
• via colleagues	
• via the Communication department	
• via departments such as Media production, Facilities, and Purchasing	
• via a helpdesk	
• via suppliers	
• included in templates	
• I made something myself	
• don't know	
• not available	

N = 572

The respondents (those directly involved) were asked whether information is available in the organization about: 1) the background to the logo design, 2) the desired identity and 3) the visual expressions and visual language used, for example in printed materials. We found that this information is not always available (see Table 4.8). Just over half of the respondents stated that information was available about visualizations/visual language or the logo, while only one third of the respondents stated that information about the desired identity of the organization was available.

The respondents who are not directly involved were asked what resources were available with information on the CVI. We presented two options: a CVI manual on paper, and a digital manual on the Internet. The respondents were also given the opportunity to add resources that supplied information. This option was used by 24% of the respondents, and their additions were remarkable (see Table 4.9). Some respondents took the opportunity to express their opinion that information was outdated, action should be taken on this issue, or indicated that there was a lack of control.

#### *CVI consistency*

Finally, we explored the consistency of the CVI in the participating organizations. The mean score consistency for all organizations together was 3.51 on a five-point scale (1 = not consistent at all, and 5 = very consistent) with a standard deviation of .67, with a range from 2.38 (SD = .13) to two organizations with 3.92 (SD = .43 and SD = .57). The consistency of the CVI varied among the organizations. This consistency is an important measurement in this study. What results in a high score? Which aspects of corporate visual identity management influence the consistency of the visual identity, and to what extent?

## FOCUS GROUP STUDY

In addition to the survey data described in the previous section, three focus groups were held to explore the differences between organizations with different degrees of CVI consistency. A central question in this study was whether the consistency scores obtained in the survey can be explained by employees' own impressions about the CVI of their organization. An exploratory attempt was made to connect CVI consistency with relevant organizational characteristics.

### **Method**

Based on the survey results, three organizations were selected to participate in a focus group study: one from the upper segment of CVI consistency, one in the middle

group, and one from the lower segment. Organization A had a relatively highly consistent CVI, with a mean score of 3.84 (SD = .45) on the five-point consistency scale (1 = not consistent at all, 5 = very consistent). Organization B had a moderately consistent CVI, with a mean score of 3.30 (SD = .58). Organization C had a relatively low CVI consistency, with a mean score of 3.09 (SD = .46). In the listing of all twenty organizations according to their CVI consistency, the three participating organizations ranked fourth, twelfth and eighteenth, respectively.

In each organization, one focus group session was held, which lasted between one and a half and two hours. All employees selected to participate in the focus groups were closely involved in their organization's CVI management and application, external relations, communication, and/or strategy. The focus group discussion within organization A was with nine participants; the focus group discussions in organizations B and C were each with seven participants. In the focus group discussions, four main topics were addressed:

- Is applying the CVI a matter of course for employees?
- How do employees learn about the correct use of the CVI?
- To what extent do employees feel proud of their organization's CVI?
- What are positive and negative aspects of the way the CVI is currently managed?

These topics served merely as starting points for a discussion among the employees. In all three organizations, a vivid discussion developed, covering a broad range of topics relating to CVI.

The three focus groups took place in July 2001, and were held in conference rooms at the participating organizations. The group discussions were audio-taped and transcribed.

## **Results**

The main focus in the analysis was on the differences and similarities between the three organizations. First, attention is paid to the CVI management practices in the organizations. Then, the participants' appreciation and background knowledge of the CVI is described. This is followed by results concerning organizational characteristics that may be related to the CVI. And finally, the scope of the CVI in the three organizations is discussed.

### *CVI management practices*

The three focus groups provided insight into the way CVI was managed within in the three organizations. A rather limited interpretation of CVI management would be that employees must be enabled to find up-to-date and clear guidelines and/or easy-to-use templates whenever they are working on internal or external communication materials. In all three organizations, focus group participants mentioned

problems in this respect. For instance, organization A, it was stated that the information about the CVI was not always up to date, and that it was dispersed across several sources (“The CVI is constantly adapted, which is hard to communicate to all employees”). When the CVI was introduced, a CVI handbook had been disseminated within the organization, but not all employees had received a copy, and the handbook was already out of date. One of the participants also said that the report template available in organization A was “a piece of junk.” In organization B, one of the participants noticed that the CVI was not “rolled out” well across the various departments: “Not everyone knows how the CVI works and where to find the right information about it.” In organization C, participants complained about the vagueness of the CVI guidelines. Besides, one participant in this organization mentioned that a new template for PowerPoint presentations was available, but that most employees did not know of its existence. From the three focus groups, it is evident that there were considerable communication and usability problems involved in CVI management. All three organizations experienced difficulties in offering tailored, up-to-date information to facilitate the appropriate use of their CVI. Several participants hinted at the possibilities of an intranet as well as Microsoft Office templates, but these solutions had not yet been fully developed. At the same time, it must be noted that the problems with CVI guidelines and templates were common to all three organizations: the organization with the most consistent CVI essentially had the same kinds of problems in this respect as the one with the least consistent CVI.

Nevertheless, there were differences among the three organizations in terms of CVI management practices. Organization A had a carefully planned CVI implementation process, while organization C had, according to the participants, invested too little on the implementation of its CVI (“They just skimped too much. The entire budget was limited to 50,000 guilders”). There were also differences in terms of CVI responsibilities. Organization A had appointed a CVI coordinator, who was actively engaged in the monitoring, maintenance and continuous development of the CVI. Organization B had several CVI coordinators – one for each subsidiary organization. In organization C, however, no CVI coordinator was appointed: some responsibilities were given to the printing office, and occasionally a secretary would send an email to all employees requesting compliance with certain CVI guidelines (but she found out that such e-mails did not “make a lot of sense”).

#### *CVI appreciation and background information*

Regarding the employees’ appreciation of the CVI, some striking differences between the organizations were found, in particular between organizations A and C. In organization A, several of the focus group participants expressed their appreci-

ation of the organization's CVI. One of the participants even said that she was more proud of the CVI than of the organization itself, claiming that the CVI expressed the reliability, legal security, and dynamism the organization should strive for ("We are not there yet, as an organization, but we could use the CVI to get there"). Another participant praised the esthetic quality and the recognizability of the CVI. In the discussion among participants, it was emphasized that it is considered important that employees value the design of the CVI. In organization C, on the other hand, none of the participants expressed any pride regarding the CVI. Some participants complained about the lack of investment in the CVI ("I get a miserable feeling when our envelopes cannot be printed in the CVI colors anymore. They don't want to spend money on it"). Another participant differentiated between the range of applications and CVI guidelines, and stated that some of the best materials used by the organization do not comply at all with the CVI guidelines ("And when the guidelines are followed, it looks terrible, because they use some kind of lousy photo collage").

In all three organizations, a number of participants found it important that employees should know about the background of the CVI ("I think you'll get more involvement if employees know the background of the CVI. Knowledge of this philosophy will make the CVI more interesting"). Other participants, however, assumed that many employees will not be interested in such background knowledge ("I would only want a brief description of the CVI: how-to-do information, not information about the philosophy behind it"). Background knowledge about the design of the CVI appeared to be rather limited in all three organizations: some of the focus groups participants knew about it, but many did not ("I just heard that there is a philosophy behind the logo and its colors. I never knew that"). One of the participants in organization B (the designer of the CVI) stressed that it is important that a CVI is somewhat ambiguous ("A good CVI depicts, but does not spoon-feed. The shapes that are used must be open to several interpretations – they almost have literary characteristics"). In organization C, however, the background information about the CVI was not generally considered to be very convincing ("The briefing about our new CVI could also have applied to the butcher's down the street. They should have better explained why certain choices were made, so as to avoid endless discussions about liking the design or not.")

#### *CVI and organizational characteristics*

The appreciation of the CVI seems to be closely related to the issue of employees' identification with their organization. Again, striking differences were found between organizations A and C regarding the extent to which employees identified with their organization. Participants in organization A immediately connected the CVI with their (positive) feelings about the organization. "My friends and family

sometimes even get a little bored when we are on the road and I point out the logo whenever I see it,” said one participant. Another participant from organization A stated: “It makes you feel proud, because you see the logo everywhere. You also hear people say that it so recognizable, and that makes you glow with pride.” Participants from organization C, on the other hand, appeared to have a rather unfavorable impression of their organization (“People dress rather sloppily in our organization. When a bus stops outside and people get out, you immediately know by their clothes where they are heading for: to our building or to the other side”). And another participant from organization C stated: “Our culture, our CVI, and our use of the CVI are perfectly in line with each other. None are any good.”

Besides employees’ identification with their organization as a whole, their identification with specific organizational units appeared to be another important factor in all three organizations. In organization A, one particular department still used its own logo. For a long time, it had only been loosely related to organization A, without formally being part of it; after the formal takeover, the – still unresolved – discussion about adjusting the CVI had begun. In the same organization, there were some regional differences relating to the CVI: various regional staff magazines had a partly different layout. Still, there was explicit awareness of the importance of the organization as a whole (“It doesn’t matter in which division you are. People will consider you as someone who works for that organization, not for a specific division.”). In organization B, the CVI was designed to fulfill the management’s desire to express unity as one organization, but also gave divisions the opportunity to be distinctive. In practice, a tension between the two functions of CVI was felt (“For internal use, there is a plethora of icons and colors. Due to the range of applications, the CVI is not recognizable anymore”). The icons were originally developed for internal use only, but several departments also use them in their external contacts. In organization C, many employees did not primarily identify with their own organization, but rather with external networks or policy working groups (“To the employees, their specific projects are more important than the organization they represent”). A complicating factor is that in collaborative projects, involving multiple organizations, it is far from obvious how the various organizations should be represented in project materials. The CVI guidelines of organization C do not cover these (frequent) events.

Another important factor may be the external focus of the organization. Some interesting differences were found in particular between organizations A and C. In organization A, the discussions in the focus group highlighted substantial awareness of the external target groups of the organization, and the need to systematically coordinate the external communication with these groups. In organization C, several participants stated that the organization lacked a clear vision on external



communication. Traditionally, a lot of attention has been paid to for the intrinsic aspects of policy issues, but there is no systematic investment in communication (“The main focus is on content. They just add a cover to the report, and that’s the way things are published”).

### *Scope of the CVI*

Somewhat related to the external focus and the systematic attention to communication is the scope of the CVI. The three organizations in the focus groups appeared to differ regarding the scope of their CVI. Participants from organization A, which had the most consistent CVI of the three, tended to choose rather elaborate interpretations of the CVI. CVI, in their view, was definitely more than just a visual presentation of the organization. One of the participants stressed that the way customers are treated, on the telephone and face to face, would certainly have to be included in the CVI. Another participant mentioned language as an important aspect. And a third participant would also include the information selection in various scenarios (e.g., the information package provided to new employees). In organization B, participants focused predominantly on visual aspects, but one of them raised the issue of tone-of-voice in recruitment advertisements. Organization C had the most limited view on CVI, which was restricted to the visual elements, in a limited set of communication tools (most notably, business cards, policy reports, and recruitment advertisements). To summarize, organizations that have reached a certain level of CVI management may have the tendency to further develop their CVI to, for instance, the verbal and communicative aspects of their relationships with customers and other stakeholders, whereas organizations with a less developed CVI tend to have a more limited view of the scope of their visual identities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the descriptive analyses of the survey showed that those directly involved with the development of the CVI had a range of opinions about the CVI in their own organization. Because the surveys were anonymous, we could not check whether the respondents were in fact formally responsible for the development of the CVI, or that they merely perceived themselves to be directly involved. Questions relating to the differences in CVI management between those directly and indirectly involved are not addressed in this dissertation.

The consistency of the CVI differs among the organizations, and the results show that there are various interpretations of what has been prescribed and who is responsible for the CVI. Employees who have stated that they are directly involved in the development of the CVI do not always mention strategic organizational

developments as a reason for a change in the CVI. The development of for instance new tools, may generate momentum for adapting the CVI or for enhancing the efficiency with which it is applied. Developments in the CVI can be derived from organizational developments, as well as from pragmatic operational issues.

Employees not directly responsible for the development of the CVI stated that they received instructions via a manual, which was sometimes limited to a couple of sheets of paper. They also received instructions by word of mouth. Respondents also said that the CVI guidelines are not always up to date, and that something should be done about that. A preliminary conclusion is that up-to-date information has an effect on the use of guidelines, and therefore influences the consistency of the CVI.

After exploring the CVI – elements, applications and scope – and the type of information on the CVI, the main question is: what influences the consistency of CVI? The results from the three focus groups highlight the fact that it is reasonable to assume that there is more to ensuring CVI consistency than just the availability of guidelines and templates. In many respects, differences between the three organizations were found, suggesting that various CVI management characteristics and organizational characteristics may in practice be interwoven. The difference between an organization with a relatively consistent CVI and an organization with CVI consistency problems cannot be ascribed to a single factor.

The entire gamut of CVI management characteristics was not discussed in the focus groups, but among the various characteristics, the quality of the implementation process and the CVI responsibilities may be important factors. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, however, it is not justified to immediately jump to practical conclusions: both factors may be signs of a more general awareness of the importance of the CVI for an organization. In chapter 5, the effects of a wider range of measures are investigated quantitatively.

Organizational characteristics might be among the more stable factors affecting the use of a CVI. In the focus groups, identification seemed to be important: the way employees felt about their organizations may have affected their willingness to comply with the CVI. This aspect had not been included in the questionnaires (which were administered earlier than the focus group discussions – the CVI consistency scores from the questionnaires served to select the three organizations for the focus groups), but will definitely be an interesting topic for future research. The external focus of organizations – which corresponds to a strategic and communicative awareness among employees – also seemed to be an important variable. This was included in the questionnaire used for the studies in chapters 6 and 7, in combination with other organizational characteristics relating to structure and culture.

A final observation was that the organization with a well-developed and relatively consistent CVI was inclined to further expand the scope of their CVI, whereas the organization with CVI consistency problems tended to see visual identity as a very limited issue.

# 5

## Managing Corporate Visual Identity: use and effects of organizational measures to support a consistent self-presentation<sup>1</sup>

It is generally acknowledged that corporate visual identity (CVI) is an important element of identity, reputation, and relationship management. Academic research has focused strongly on the strategic and design aspects of CVI, and neglected the operational level. This article addresses one of the major operational issues: the problem of ensuring a consistent use of a CVI. Based on a survey among employees of 20 large Dutch organizations, this study compares the use, perceived importance, and effects of various (structurally and culturally embedded) measures organizations may take to support the consistency of their CVI. Little correspondence was found between the use, perceived importance, and effectiveness of the various measures. Although technical tools (such as templates) and access for all employees to up to date guidelines were prevalent in the use and perceived importance analyses, one of the underexposed culturally embedded measures – i.e., managers setting an example – appeared to be a crucial factor in maintaining a consistent CVI.

### INTRODUCTION

Corporate visual identity (CVI) is a hot issue among communication professionals. A simple search on the Internet, using the Dutch equivalent ‘huisstijl,’ already revealed more than 175,000 hits. We came across sites of graphic design and communication agencies offering their expertise or presenting a showcase of their work. We also found Web pages of organizations instructing employees about the correct use of their visual identity. Other pages announced the introduction of a new visual identity (with or without a prestigious accompanying event) or explained the rationale behind a corporate logo. Organizations appear to be willing to pay much attention to their visual identity, as is clearly underlined by various collections of graphical examples available (cf. Rosen, 1970; Schmittl, 1978, Olins, 1989; Haig and Harper, 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> Published: Van den Bosch, De Jong, and Elving (2004)

In the academic literature on corporate communication and public relations, however, CVI management is a rather neglected research topic. In current handbooks on corporate identity, image and reputation, CVI is treated as a more or less obvious and self-explanatory tool that may contribute to an organization's strategic aims. The problem of designing an effective visual identity and the dynamics of visual identities in the organizational practice are scarcely addressed. Birkigt and Stadler (1986) and Van Riel (1995) discuss three factors that affect corporate identity – behavior, communication, and symbolism – and characterize CVI ('house style') as the dominant representative of symbolism. Melewar and Wooldridge (2001) present a more complex model of corporate identity, which comprises more determinants, honors the contextual embedding, and stresses the reciprocity between corporate identity and its determinants. In this model, communication and visual identity are treated as one (combined) variable, thus recognizing that the two factors may, in practice, be strongly related. Dowling (1994) discusses four elements of a visual identity – corporate names, logos and symbols, color, and typeface – and states that visual identity matters, although 'it is not nearly as important as what your organization does, the products and services it offers, or what and how it communicates with stakeholders.' In most publications, a simple 'means-end' relationship is assumed between visual and corporate identity, and the challenging and urgent research questions are sought at the 'end'-part of the dichotomy. A possible explanation for the underexposure of CVI as a research topic would be the distinction between a 'visual' and a 'strategic' school of corporate identity (Hatch and Schultz, 2000). The visual school is rooted in the graphic design tradition, and the strategic school forms part of the (overlapping) disciplines of corporate communication, public relations and reputation management. It may be hard to cross the line between the two professional and research traditions.

The research domain of CVI may be divided into three levels: the strategic, the operational, and the design level (cf. Figure 5.1). The *strategic* level focuses on the aims organizations have with their visual identity. Organizations, for instance, must decide how to present and distinguish themselves ('corporate branding'). Important issues addressed in the academic literature are the corporate branding strategy – the choice between a monolithic, an endorsed and a branded strategy (Olins, 1989; Maathuis, 1999) – and the choice between a standardized and a localized corporate identity for multinational organizations (Schmitt, 1995; Melewar and Saunders, 1998, 1999; 2000, Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2000). The *operational* level focuses on the development and management of CVI systems. Organizations are faced with the challenge to translate a desired corporate identity into a coherent, consistent, and effective visual self-presentation (Melewar and Saunders, 2000). Important issues at this level are the process of changing or modifying a CVI and the maintenance of a consistent use of the CVI system. Finally, the *design* level fo-

cuses on the functionality and effectiveness of specific elements of a CVI. One can think of research into the use and effects of corporate logos (Green and Loveluck, 1994; Colman, Wober and Norris, 1995; Haase and Theios, 1996; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001), color (Madden, Hewett and Roth, 2000), or corporate slogans (Dowling and Kabanoff, 1996). We do not assume a linear process between the three levels: professionals may switch between the levels whenever they like, but will eventually try to achieve a satisfactory degree of correspondence between the strategic, the operational, and the design level.

All three levels have a methodological component as well. On the strategic level, various methods have been developed to explore the corporate identity of organizations (Van Riel, 1995, pp. 47-72; Van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Van Rekom, 1998; Van Rekom and Van Riel, 2000). On the operational level, methods are available for academic research into the visual identity of organizations (Melewar, 2001) and for auditing CVI systems: the ‘visual audit’ (Olins, 1989; Baker and Balmer, 1997). Methodological contributions on the design level focus on the pretesting of visual designs (Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen, 2000).

<b>Strategic level</b>	<b>Operational level</b>	<b>Design level</b>
Corporate identity Corporate branding International aspects	CVI system Design processes Maintenance	Corporate names Corporate logos Corporate slogans Color/typography
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Methodology</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Methodology</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Methodology</div>

**Figure 5.1: Levels of corporate visual identity (CVI) research**

The operational level of CVI appears to be the most underexposed research area. Of the empirical studies we found, only two offered some insights on this level. Melewar and Saunders (2000) investigated CVI systems of multinational organizations, and found a positive relationship between the degree of standardization of the CVI and the perceived effectiveness of elements (varying from forms to interior/exterior, and from stationary to vehicles) in projecting the organization’s identity. Melewar, Saunders and Balmer (2000) investigated the relationship between corporate branding strategy (monolithic, endorsed, or branded) and the degree of standardization of name, logo, typography, color, and slogan. As could be expected, the monolithic strategy corresponded with a higher degree of standardization than the endorsed or branded strategy; with respect to corporate slogans, however, no significant relationship was found. Both studies primarily focus on the interplay

between the strategic and the operational level of CVI. The process and management issues of designing and maintaining a CVI have not been investigated at all.

In this article, we report on the first data from an omnibus survey study into the management of CVI. This article focuses on the various measures organizations take to maintain a consistent CVI. We differentiate between structural and cultural measures. Mintzberg (1979) defines the structure of an organization as the sum total of the ways in which it divides its labor into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them. Structurally embedded measures in managing a CVI refer to coordination mechanisms or organizational instruments to optimize the use of the CVI, for instance by standardization of procedures, formalization, and support by specialists. According to Schein (1992), culture can be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the organization learned, solving its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. Founders and leaders play a significant role in the development of an organizational culture. Culturally embedded measures in managing a CVI therefore relate to learning processes and the influence of leaders. Three questions will be addressed:

- (1) To what extent do organizations use structurally or culturally embedded measures to enhance the consistency of their CVI?
- (2) To what extent are these measures deemed to be important by employees?
- (3) How do these measures relate to the consistency of an organization's CVI?

## METHOD

The research was conducted by means of questionnaires sent to a sample of employees of 20 organizations that complied with the following criteria: (1) a headquarter situated in the Netherlands, (2) more than 400 employees, and (3) no recent or ongoing changes in the corporate visual identity. Organizations were selected to include governmental, not-for-profit and profit organizations, to cover both service and manufacturing organizations, and to comprise both business-to-business and business-to-consumer organizations. In each organization, the communication manager was asked to select 70 employees, covering the entire gamut of jobs, to whom a questionnaire could be sent. Fifteen organizations provided a list of employee names and addresses, so that the questionnaire could be sent to them directly. In four organizations, our contact person distributed the questionnaire for us. In one organization, an online questionnaire was sent to the e-mail addresses of employees. In exchange for their cooperation, all participating organizations received a research report with the main findings.

The questionnaire was designed to cover a wide variety of issues regarding CVI. For the study reported in this article, three sets of questions were used. Two sets of questions focused on possible measures organizations take to enhance the consistency of their CVI. The first set asked whether or not the organization actually used the various measures (yes/no/don't know). The second set asked how important the various measures, according to the respondents, were to maintain a consistent CVI (high/moderate/low). Ten current organizational measures were included in the two sets of questions, seven of which can be characterized as structural (dealing with formalization and the availability of aids) and three as cultural (dealing with interaction among employees and socialization). The selection of measures was based on recent descriptive studies into the practice of CVI in the Netherlands, consisting of a survey and various case studies (Van den Bosch, 1999; Roos, 2000). An overview of the measures included in the research can be found in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Organizational Measures to Maintain a Consistent CVI**

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**Structurally embedded measures:**

- Extensive CVI guidelines with detailed descriptions
- CVI guidelines up to date
- Everyone has access to CVI guidelines
- Standard technical tools (e.g., templates) developed centrally
- A helpdesk for questions about the CVI
- A CVI manager in the organization
- Preferred suppliers for the execution of the CVI

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**Culturally embedded measures:**

- Regular consultation with the users of the CVI
- Managers setting an example
- CVI as a topic when inducting new personnel

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The third set of questions focused on the perceived consistency of the organization's CVI. The respondents had to answer on a five-point scale to which extent they agreed with eight assertions about the CVI. Examples of such assertions are 'The visual identity of our organization is messy,' and 'In my opinion, it is important to comply with the visual identity.' Together, the eight questions formed a sufficiently reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha .80).

The questionnaires were sent between November 2000 and May 2001. The response to the surveys was encouraging: overall, 48 percent of all questionnaires were returned, varying between 13 and 78 percent per participating organization. A



total of 686 questionnaires could eventually be processed and analyzed. The percentage of returned questionnaires per organization showed a significant correlation with the perceived consistency of its CVI ( $r = .46, p < .05$ ). Of the respondents, 29 percent had a managerial position, and 71 percent were lower-level personnel. Apart from that, 17 percent of the respondents were directly involved in the management or development of their organization's CVI, while 83 percent were only indirectly involved, being employees who just had to comply with the CVI guidelines.

## RESULTS

The first question to be answered is to what extent the various measures for maintaining a consistent CVI are being used in practice. An overview of the results can be found in Table 5.2. In general, the culturally embedded measures appeared to be considerably less current than the structurally embedded measures (on average, 20 versus 49 percent). Another notable result is that respondents often disagreed whether or not a certain measure was implemented in a particular organization. For instance, in the case of a large university, 11 respondents stated that the CVI guidelines were up to date, 10 respondents stated that they were not, and 10 respondents did not know. For each measure, a substantial number of respondents did not know whether it was being used in their organization. These findings may to some extent reflect differences between the divisions or units in an organization. For some of the measures, they may also reflect different interpretations about how such measures must be applied. And finally, they may indicate that the implementation of measures can be a problem in itself: having up to date CVI guidelines is only part of a solution; making all employees aware of them will be equally important.

**Table 5.2: Use of Organizational Measures to Maintain a Consistent CVI**

Percentage of respondents	Used	Not used	Don't know
Technical tools	75	10	15
Access to CVI guidelines for all	54	22	25
CVI guidelines up to date	52	23	26
Preferred CVI suppliers	46	17	36
A CVI manager	47	32	22
Extensive CVI guidelines	39	35	26
A CVI helpdesk	32	50	17
Managers setting an example	27	41	32
CVI topic for new personnel	21	53	26
Regular consultation with CVI users	14	62	24

The results of measures used in the organizational practice can be compared with the importance of each measure, according to the respondents. Table 5.3 presents the results of the importance ratings. The ‘Top 3’ of measures remains intact. However, two of the culturally embedded measures – i.e., managers setting an example, and CVI as a topic when inducting new personnel – appear to deserve more attention according to the respondents. The third culturally embedded measure – regular consultation with the users – was judged to be relatively unimportant. For all the measures investigated, there is a clear relationship between the incidence of the measure in an organization and its perceived importance: if a certain measure is actually used in an organization, employees judge considerably more positively about its importance (Mann-Whitney U test,  $p < .001$ ). Employees appear to be more inclined to value existing measures than to endorse the potential of new directions for ensuring the consistency of a CVI.

**Table 5.3: Perceived Importance of Organizational Measures for a Consistent CVI**

Percentage of respondents	High	Moderate	Low
Technical tools	80	16	4
Access to CVI guidelines for all	68	23	9
CVI guidelines up to date	67	28	5
Managers setting an example	61	32	8
Preferred CVI suppliers	52	33	15
CVI topic for new personnel	49	37	14
A CVI manager	48	33	19
A CVI helpdesk	45	37	18
Extensive CVI guidelines	37	41	21
Regular consultation with CVI users	33	42	25

Our third analysis focuses on the relationship between the use of the ten measures and the perceived consistency of the organization’s CVI. To investigate this, a stepwise regression analysis was conducted, with consistency of the CVI as the dependent variable, and the ten measures (recoded to dichotomies, by combining the ‘no’ and ‘don’t know’ answers) as independent variables. Table 5.4 presents the results of this analysis. Only six of the ten measures appeared to predict the consistency of an organization’s CVI. Of the four measures that were excluded by the analysis, three already had relatively low rankings in the use and perceived importance tables – i.e., a helpdesk, extensive guidelines, and regular consultation with users. Surprisingly, however, the fourth variable excluded was the use of technical tools

such as templates, which was ranked as the "Number 1" in both the use and the perceived importance tables. To a lesser extent, a similar discrepancy can be seen with the accessibility of the CVI guidelines for all employees. This measure ranked high in the use and perceived importance analysis, but proved to be of less importance for a consistent CVI (although, admittedly, it was still included as a predictor by the regression analysis).

Another striking result is the relative importance of one of the two culturally embedded measures. The behavior of managers with respect to the CVI appears to be one of the crucial factors in maintaining a consistent CVI. Considering the use and perceived importance tables presented above, this is a factor that is currently underestimated in practice. Compared to its ranking in the use and perceived importance analysis, a second culturally embedded measure may be interesting and underestimated as well: attention to CVI when inducting new personnel appears to be of similar importance as the accessibility of CVI guidelines for all employees.

**Table 5.4: Multiple Regression Analysis: Measures as Predictors of a Consistent CV**

	Beta	Significance	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Managers setting an example	.22	p < .001	
CVI guidelines up to date	.18	p < .001	
A CVI manager	.16	p < .001	
Preferred CVI suppliers	.14	p < .001	
Access to CVI guidelines for all	.08	p < .05	
CVI topic for new personnel	.08	p < .05	
			.26

Note: F = 37.758, p < .001

It could be assumed that not the individual measures but the overall attention to CVI is crucial for a consistent self-presentation. Following that line of reasoning, it will be interesting to compare the effects of the number of different measures taken by an organization as well as the effects of individual measures. To investigate this, we included a new interval-level variable 'number of different measures used' with all the individual measures in another stepwise regression analysis. As can be seen in Table 5.5, the importance of a combination of measures is strongly confirmed: the more measures an organization takes, the more consistent its CVI will be. Interestingly, however, two of the individual measures appear to have an added value of their own. Again, the most prominent of these two measures is managers setting an example.

**Table 5.5: Multiple Regression Analysis: Number of Measures and Individual Measures as Predictors of a Consistent CVI**

	Beta	Significance	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Number of different measures used	.37	p < .001	
Managers setting an example	.14	p < .001	
CVI guidelines up to date	.10	p < .05	
			.26

Note: F = 74.013, p < .001

Given the apparent importance of managers' behavior, it would be interesting to further explore the perspectives of both managers (N=195) and other employees (N=478) on the use, importance and effects of this measure. Managers appear to be considerably more optimistic than employees about whether or not they are setting a good example regarding CVI (39 versus 22 percent; chi-square = 19.795, df = 1, p < .001). At the same time, there is a tendency in the results indicating that managers endorse the importance of setting an example even more than the other employees do (Mann-Whitney U test, z = -1.86, p = .06). With respect to the effects of setting an example, an analysis of variance shows that the managers and employees judge similarly about the consistency of their organizations' CVI (F(1,644) = .537, p = .46) and that there is no interaction effect between the respondents' organizational position (manager/employee) and the perceived effectiveness of managers setting an example (F(1,644) = .162, p = .69).

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study may be used to guide decisions about how to urge and facilitate employees to comply with the CVI guidelines of an organization. A first and obvious conclusion is that attention to CVI management, in general, matters: a clear relationship was found between the number of organizational measures taken and the perceived consistency of the CVI. Another general conclusion is that there is no univocal relationship between the use, the perceived importance, and the effects of specific measures. The measures that are actually used by organizations differ in some respects from the measures seen as important by the employees, and both the measures used and preferred have no clear relationship with what proves to be effective.

We will first discuss measures with more or less consistent results in the use, perceived importance and effectiveness analyses, and then highlight some of the

discrepancies. For two of the measures investigated, the use, importance and effectiveness data univocally confirm their usefulness. In all respects, it appears to be crucial to have CVI guidelines that are up to date and that are accessible for all employees. For three other measures, the analyses reported in this article unambiguously cast doubt on their usefulness. A CVI helpdesk, extensive guidelines and regular consultations with users are scarcely used, are deemed to be relatively unimportant, and are not related to the consistency of the CVI of organizations.

With regard to the discrepancies in the use, importance and effectiveness data, organizations generally seem to overestimate the effects of structural measures to maintain a consistent CVI, and to underestimate the contribution made by culturally embedded measures. Technical tools (such as templates) appear to be very popular in organizations and their importance is virtually unchallenged by the employees. However, no relationship could be found between the availability of such templates and the perceived consistency of the CVI. Another striking result, in the opposite direction, is the salience of managers setting an example. Most of the organizations do not (effectively) use this type of norm-setting behavior of people in managerial functions, whereas it proves to be relatively important in the perception of employees and influential for ensuring the consistency of a CVI. In popular textbooks, this is usually characterized by the obvious ‘practice what you preach’ adage, but the challenge here is that the managers at the unit and division levels must be persuaded of the importance of a consistent CVI themselves.

Two theoretical concepts may be used to further interpret the importance of managers setting an example. First, of the various persuasive strategies possible, modeling appears to be a very important one (Bandura, 1986). The way managers talk about and act with the CVI system appears to affect the extent to which employees are willing to comply with the guidelines. For various reasons, a key role of managers seems to be very plausible. Unit and division managers’ behavior with respect to CVI will often be visible for the employees and may in practice even be complemented with explicit opinions about the CVI. And at the same time, unit and division managers are more or less natural opinion leaders regarding CVI issues, since they are the ones who judge the way employees are functioning and who are acquainted and entrusted with strategic considerations (both at the level of the organization as a whole and at the unit or division level). Especially the attention and motivation of employees will be affected by the managers setting an example: employees can be expected to be more aware of the existence of CVI requirements, and to be more susceptible to the importance of a consistent CVI. These insights connect to a more general body of organizational communication research into so-called ‘contagion theories’ (cf. Monge and Contractor, 2001). Contagion theories predict that employees’ attitudes and behavior, for instance toward the implementation of new technologies, are re-

lated to the attitudes and behavior by significant others in their working environment.

Second, the salience of the behavior of managers draws attention to the applicability of a two-step flow (or multi-step flow) of communication in an organizational context (cf. Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). It does not seem realistic to view the process of implementing and maintaining a CVI exclusively as a communication challenge between upper management and the collective of employees. Managers at various hierarchical levels may on the one hand be a more effective means of communicating the necessity to comply with the CVI guidelines, and may on the other hand impede the effectiveness of other measures taken. Considering the results of this study, it appears to be very important to develop strategies specifically focused on the persuasion of unit and division managers being important stakeholders in the process of compliance.

Of course, some reservations must be made in applying these results. First, the dependent variable in this study was the perceived consistency of the CVI, not the consistency *per se*. Including an objective and independent measure of consistency could lead to different conclusions. Especially in the context of large organizations, however, it seems highly questionable whether one measure of consistency will be feasible and informative. Still, it is important to recognize that the employees' judgments about consistency may to some extent be affected by, for instance, amplified personal experiences with and/or individual norms about CVI. Second, the results apply to organizations in general, but it is imaginable that a specific organization will benefit from one of the measures set aside by our effectiveness analysis. The results highlight general tendencies, but it remains possible to provide sound arguments in favor of (or against) individual measures in specific situations.

The results presented in this article clearly demonstrate that the management of CVI is more than simply executing decisions made at the strategic level. Developing a CVI that optimally supports the identity and image of an organization will be a fruitless affair, if the employees fail to use it, develop and use a visual identity for their own units, adapt it according to their personal preferences, use it in the wrong way, etcetera. There are various threats at the operational level of CVI that may annul all the efforts made and vision displayed at the strategic and design level. Conveying an effective and consistent external self-presentation places high demands on organizational processes and on the internal communication, which deserve to be studied like the communicative aspects of mergers or organizational transitions have been and are being studied. There is a need for more academic research attention for the operational level of CVI management.



# 6

## The impact of organisational characteristics on Corporate Visual Identity<sup>1</sup>

Analysis of corporate identity and reputation regularly includes Corporate Visual Identity (CVI), but largely neglects its management. In this paper, a research model is adopted to investigate CVI management from an organisational perspective. It is assumed that characteristics of the organisation and of the way a CVI is managed will affect consistency. This assumption was tested in a survey carried out among employees in 20 Dutch organisations. The results provide good evidence of these influences. CVI management characteristics – socialisation processes related to CVI, knowledge of CVI strategy, and CVI tools and support – have a strong impact on the consistency of CVI, and organisational characteristics affect the way CVI is managed. Little evidence was found for the direct influence of organisational characteristics. The results indicate that CVI management matters, that CVI management is related to more general organisational characteristics, but that communication managers nevertheless have a considerable amount of freedom in determining the way they manage their CVI.

The concept of corporate identity has undergone some remarkable changes. Originally, it seemed to refer primarily to the graphic design of logos and other visual identity elements. Gradually, however, it became evident that it also comprises many intangible characteristics, such as the culture of an organisation and the behaviour of its members (see for example Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Brun, 2002; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Topalian, 2003). As a result, attention has shifted from design to the nature of the organisation itself. Attention to corporate visual elements has decreased. Nevertheless, Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) plays a significant role in the way an organisation presents itself to both internal and external stakeholders. Key elements of a CVI are the corporate name, logo, colour palette, font type, and a corporate slogan, tagline and/or descriptor and these may be applied on, for instance, stationery, printed matter (such as brochures and leaflets), advertisements, websites, vehicles, buildings, interiors, and corporate clothing. Sometimes architecture can also be an important element in an organisation's visual identity (examples: McDonalds and Ikea).

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<sup>1</sup> Accepted: Van den Bosch, Elving, and De Jong (forthcoming)



In general terms, a CVI expresses the values and ambitions of an organisation, its business, and its characteristics. Four functions of CVI in corporate communication can be distinguished. Three of these are aimed at external stakeholders. First, a CVI provides an organisation with visibility and 'recognisability' (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Dowling, 1993; Du Gay, 2000). For virtually all profit and non-profit organisations it is of vital importance that people know that the organisation exists and remember its name and core business at the right time. A visual identity provides people with additional cues to remember an organisation. Second, a CVI symbolises an organisation for external stakeholders, and, hence, contributes to its image and reputation (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000). A weak visual identity may be a symptom of corporate malaise (Baker and Balmer, 1997). The importance of reputation to the viability of an organisation is undeniable, and this has been confirmed in several studies (Bickerton, 2000; Fombrun and Rindova, 1998; Greyser, 1999; Roberts and Dowling, 2002). The specific contribution of CVI to corporate reputation has not been investigated as such, although experimental studies have shown that the choice of logo, colour or even font type can affect people's judgements and behaviour (Doyle and Bottomley, 2002; Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen, 2000; Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving (2005) explored possible relationships between CVI and reputation, and concluded that CVI plays a supportive role in corporate reputations. Third, a CVI expresses the structure of an organisation to its external stakeholders, visualising its coherence as well as the relationships between divisions or units (Olins, 1989). A fourth, internal function of CVI relates to employees' identification with the organisation as a whole and/or the specific departments they work for (depending on the corporate visual strategy in this respect). Identification appears to be crucial for employees (Bromley, 2001; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000), and CVI probably plays a symbolic role in creating such identification.

As the most tangible asset for the self-expression of an organisation, CVI must be viewed as an important strategic instrument within corporate communication. Organisations appear to be willing to make large investments in the development and implementation of their CVI, and it is generally acknowledged that it is important to reach a considerable degree of consistency in the way a CVI is applied. Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) can be seen as the visual common thread that runs through the way an organisation expresses itself.

Special attention is paid to CVI in times of organisational change. In the case of mergers, take-overs and acquisitions, CVI is a major factor in strategic decisions, since it symbolises the change in the organisation and is one of the few directly manageable instruments in building a new corporate identity. Developing a new CVI raises issues such as corporate identity and strategic choices (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Balmer and Dinnie, 1999; Brun, 2002). Repositioning an organisation – for instance finding new

markets, new products, or new distribution channels – may also imply changes in the CVI.

Another reason for changing or adapting a CVI is modernisation, as trends in design change over time. Changes in the CVI can be drastic, but can also be so subtle that they are hardly noticeable for many audiences. The changes may involve alterations in the logo or additional visual elements or new applications. Once a new CVI is implemented, attention to CVI-related issues generally tends to decrease. In our view, CVI needs to be managed on a structural basis, to be internalised by the employees and to harmonise with future organisational developments. After all, the effectiveness of a CVI depends to a great extent on its consistency.

The subject of managing CVI receives little attention in management and communication literature. In publications on corporate identity, corporate communication and reputation, the development of strategies plays a central role, while the CVI is merely considered one of the means organisations have to express themselves. Contributions that touch on CVI either focus on the relationship between strategy and CVI, or address the effects of visual elements. Theories in the first category focus on identity structures (Olins, 1989) – e.g., monolithic, endorsed and branded identities –, the visibility of the parent company (Van Riel, 2000), and standardisation or localisation of the CVIs of multinationals (Melewar and Saunders, 1998, 1999; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2001). Those in the second category focus on the design and impact of corporate logos (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001), typeface (Doyle and Bottomley, 2002) and design elements (Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen, 2000). As yet, very little research has looked at how to manage a CVI and make it consistent. In an earlier practice-oriented study we explored the relationship between various measures and their effectiveness on the consistency of a CVI. The results show that the total number of measures taken has a positive effect on the consistency of a CVI and that two measures are most effective: managers setting an example and having up-to-date CVI guidelines (Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving, 2004).

In this paper, we further investigate the relationship between organisational characteristics and a consistent CVI. Our research is based on the classic distinction between strategy, structure, and culture (see appendix). Organisational characteristics may apply to business processes in general or to specific domains, such as CVI management. The research question is whether and to what extent organisational characteristics and CVI management characteristics affect the consistency of CVI. To study these influences we focus on:

- (1) The influence of general organisational characteristics on a consistent CVI.
- (2) The influence of CVI management characteristics on a consistent CVI.
- (3) The influence of general organisational characteristics on CVI management characteristics.

## METHOD

The study was conducted in twenty Dutch organisations. The inclusion criteria were that their headquarters should be located in the Netherlands, the organisations should be of a certain size (at least 400 employees), and they should not be engaged in implementing a new visual identity or have introduced a change in visual identity recently (less than two years ago), since we assume that CVI gets more attention in a change process and this might affect the results. We included both profit and non-profit organisations, manufacturing and service organisations and organisations that focus on business-to-business markets and/or consumer markets. The research focused on the opinions of employees in the participating organisations, and not on external stakeholders. After all, employees have to apply CVI guidelines, and therefore have a major influence on its consistency. Furthermore, they can be expected to have a good overall view of CVI consistency in their organisation, whereas external stakeholders will have a more scattered view.

From communication departments in the participating organisations we obtained names and postal addresses of approximately 70 employees to whom we sent a questionnaire. Based on our criteria, our contacts – those responsible for the visual identity – made a selection of employees with a variety of jobs, such as in marketing and communication, secretariats and support units (e.g. in-house reprographic department, vehicle fleet control, building management and purchasing). We asked our contacts to select employees who need to know about CVI guidelines for their jobs. Fifteen organisations provided addresses, so that the questionnaire could be sent directly. In four organisations, the contact persons distributed the questionnaire themselves. In one organisation, an online questionnaire was sent to e-mail addresses. Confidentiality was assured and the (anonymous) questionnaires were returned directly to the researchers. In return for participating in the research, each organisation received a summary of their own results. The average response rate was 48%, with a range from 13% to 78%. In all, 686 questionnaires were returned and processed. The positions held by the respondents were: unit managers (9%), departmental managers (20%) and employees (71%).

### **Consistent CVI**

In our study, the measure of consistency of a CVI did not reflect the quality of the design or the coherence among the various design elements, both of which are based on a similar 'look and feel' among the various CVI elements. The variable Consistent CVI was defined as the extent to which the various CVI elements were actually employed as intended. The assumption is that the *consistency* of the CVI depends on the development of CVI guidelines and the way the defined CVI guidelines are applied, resulting in a more or less consistent visual expression of the organisation. The

dependent variable Consistent CVI was measured using eight statements. All responses were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The reliability of the scale was good (Cronbach's alpha .80). A high score corresponds with a consistent CVI, whereas a low score implies that in the perception of the respondents the CVI is not consistent. See Table 6.1 for the full measurement scale.

### **Organisational characteristics**

The survey consisted of questions referring to organisational characteristics and statements on CVI management in the organisation. All items were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In total we included five organisational characteristics (OC). *OC Knowledge of Strategy* (5 items, Cronbach's alpha .71) measured respondents' knowledge of the strategy of their organisation. The variable *OC Tools and Support* (6 items, Cronbach's alpha .70) was the measure for the co-ordination mechanism used to support the differentiated units and functions in the organisation. Statements used for the variable *OC Quality of Managers* (5 items, Cronbach's alpha .70) referred to respondents' opinion of their managers. The variable *OC Internal Communication* (8 items, Cronbach's alpha .79) measured perceptions of the quality of internal communication within the organisation. Finally we included the variable *OC Open and Dynamic* (5 items, Cronbach's alpha .68) reflecting the extent to which an organisation is in a dynamic environment and therefore has to act flexibly and anticipate changes.

The operationalisation of organisational characteristics (OC) is based on the different perspectives on organisations in literature. There is a great deal of academic and management literature that portrays the strategy of organisations (Johnson and Scholes, 1999; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998). The corporate strategy relates to the overall purpose and scope of the organisation. For this we included the variable *OC Knowledge of Strategy*. Some authors define an organisation as a system in which labour is divided among individual members, who work together to achieve company goals or objectives. The focus is on the structure of the organisation and co-ordination between different functions and tasks (Hall, 1991; Hodge, Anthony and Gales, 1996; Mintzberg, 1979). These theories were used to include the variable *OC Tools and Support*. Others focus on the culture and describe the shared values and beliefs of the organisation's members, how they communicate and behave, and how newcomers are socialised (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1992; Trice and Beyer, 1993). Leaders or managers play an important role in creating and consolidating a culture. From this perspective we included the variable *OC Quality of Managers*. We included *OC Internal Communication* for the reason that the perceived quality of communication in organisations is also an important subject in academic and management literature (Hargie and Tourish, 2000). Finally we want to know whether

organisational dynamics play a role in the consistency of CVI. According to open systems theory, an organisation interacts with its environment and adapts to it in order to survive (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). We named this characteristic *OC Open and Dynamic*.

**CVI management characteristics**

We also included organisational characteristics related to CVI management. Again, all items were measured on five-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The variable *CVI Knowledge of Strategy* (3 items, Cronbach’s alpha .70) measures knowledge of the rationale behind the CVI and its objectives. Corresponding with OC Tools and Support we also included in the variable *CVI Tools and Support* (5 items, Cronbach’s alpha of .85). Finally we defined the variable *CVI Socialisation Processes* (5 items, Cronbach’s alpha .73), which focuses on formal

**Table 6.1: Full measurement scale with items**

Variable	Items
Consistent CVI (dependent variable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our organisation can be easily identified by its CVI.</li> <li>• The CVI fits our organisation.</li> <li>• The CVI of our organisation is untidy.<sup>a</sup></li> <li>• Everyone in our organisation contributes to the good image of our organisation.</li> <li>• Everyone in our organisation observes the CVI rules.</li> <li>• In my opinion it is important to apply the CVI.</li> <li>• The visual materials in our organisation lacks consistency.<sup>a</sup></li> <li>• Everyone applies the CVI as they feel best.<sup>a</sup></li> </ul>
OC Knowledge of Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know what our organisation stands for.</li> <li>• I know where our organisation is heading.</li> <li>• It is important for our organisation to be easily recognised.</li> <li>• It is important for our organisation to differentiate itself from other organisations.</li> <li>• I know the mission statement of our organisation.</li> </ul>
OC Tools and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within our organisation I get sufficient training to do my work.</li> <li>• Within our organisation I’m given adequate tools to do my work.</li> <li>• Specialist staff departments support me in doing my job.</li> <li>• Within our organisation nobody is interested in the results of your work.<sup>a</sup></li> <li>• In our organisation we continuously consider how the work can be improved.</li> <li>• Within our organisation people are aware of the way I carry out my tasks.</li> </ul>

**Table 6.1: Full measurement scale with items (continued)**

Variable	Items
OC Quality of managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers have clear objectives.</li> <li>• Managers are knowledgeable about the work.</li> <li>• Managers stimulate us to learn more about our work.</li> <li>• My manager does not explain why tasks must be carried out.</li> <li>• In general managers do their job well.</li> </ul>
OC Internal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general there is a good cooperation between departments.</li> <li>• There is consultation between business units and the board of directors.</li> <li>• There is mutual consultation among business units.</li> <li>• I am well informed about what is going on in our department.</li> <li>• I am well informed about what is going on in our organisation.</li> <li>• Communication between our department and the board of directors is good.</li> <li>• Communication among departments is good.</li> <li>• Communication within the department is good.</li> </ul>
OC Open and Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the work can be organised by the staff members themselves.</li> <li>• Newcomers are quickly accepted in our department.</li> <li>• It's not appreciated in our organisation if you take the initiative.<sup>a</sup></li> <li>• Our organisation continually anticipates new developments.</li> <li>• In general I can voice my opinion within the organisation.</li> </ul>
CVI Knowledge of Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know the rationale behind our company logo.</li> <li>• The CVI is helpful in making our organisation recognisable.</li> <li>• The CVI provides a good image of our organisation.</li> </ul>
CVI Tools and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is sufficient information to apply the CVI rules.</li> <li>• The guidelines of our CVI are up to date.</li> <li>• In our organisation we have tools that help us apply the CVI easily.</li> <li>• Within our organisation it's easy to get information on the CVI.</li> <li>• We get good answers when we have questions on the CVI.</li> </ul>
CVI Socialisation Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers set an example and apply the CVI.</li> <li>• Newcomers to our department always get an induction course on the CVI.</li> <li>• Applying the CVI is a matter of course in our organisation.</li> <li>• When I do not apply the CVI, I get criticised.</li> <li>• I get positive feedback when I apply the CVI.<sup>a</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> recoded items. Note: The questionnaire was written in Dutch. There may be problems with some of the translated items, as no back translation was performed to test their accuracy. The questionnaire can be obtained from the authors.

and informal learning processes and the behaviour of managers, through which members of an organisation and newcomers gain insight into their expected behaviour in relation to the CVI. See Table 6.1 for the full scale used to measure all the independent variables.

### Hypotheses

As described above, we constructed one dependent variable (*Consistent CVI*), three independent variables relating to CVI management characteristics (*CVI Knowledge of Strategy*, *CVI Tools and Support*, and *CVI Socialisation Processes*) and five independent variables relating to organisational characteristics (*OC Knowledge of Strategy*, *OC Tools and Support*, *OC Quality of Managers*, *OC Internal Communication*, and *OC Open and Dynamic*).

The first thing we investigated was whether there is a direct relationship between organisational characteristics and a consistent CVI. We hypothesised that knowledge of organisational strategy, the availability of tools and support, good managers and communication have positive effects on the consistency of a CVI. The direction of the effects of an open and dynamic organisation can be either way: on the one hand, it can be assumed that a pragmatic organisation will engage in pragmatic behaviour relating to CVI as well; on the other hand, it can be assumed that a dynamic environment underlines the importance of consistent presentation, which may lead to more CVI awareness among employees. To summarise, as regards the direct relationship between organisational characteristics and a consistent CVI, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

- H1a: Knowledge of organisation strategy has a positive effect on CVI consistency.
- H1b: The availability of tools and support in the organisation has a positive effect on CVI consistency.
- H1c: High-quality managers have a positive effect on CVI consistency.
- H1d: High-quality internal communication has a positive effect on CVI consistency.
- H1e: The openness of the organisation and a dynamic environment both have an effect on the consistency of a CVI.

Next, we assumed that all three CVI management characteristics would have a positive influence on the consistency of a CVI, leading to the following three hypotheses:

- H2a: Knowledge of CVI strategy has a positive effect on CVI consistency.
- H2b: The availability of CVI tools and support has a positive effect on CVI consistency.

H2c: Socialisation processes related to CVI have a positive effect on CVI consistency.

Finally, we assumed that there is a relationship between the organisational and the CVI management level, and that the quality of internal communication affects all three CVI management characteristics. The following hypotheses were tested:

- H3a: Knowledge of organisational strategy has a positive relationship with knowledge of CVI strategy.
- H3b: The availability of tools and support in the organisation has a positive relationship with the availability of CVI tools and support.
- H3c: High-quality managers in the organisation have a positive relationship with socialisation processes on CVI.
- H3d: High-quality internal communication has a positive relationship with all three CVI management characteristics (CVI Knowledge of Strategy, CVI Tools and Support and CVI Socialisation Processes).

## RESULT

A first exploratory step in our analysis of the results is a correlation analysis including all independent and dependent variables (see Table 6.2). As can be seen, the highest correlations (Pearson's correlation coefficient above .50) were between CVI management characteristics and CVI consistency. However, the correlations between organisational characteristics (OC) and CVI consistency are also significant.

To get insight into the various influences and relationships, we conducted structural equation modelling with AMOS (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999), a software package which supports data analysis techniques known as structural modelling, analysis of covariance structures, or causal modelling. Structural equation modelling basically makes it possible to test a set of regression equations simultaneously, providing both parameter statistics for each equation and indices which indicate the 'fit' of the model to the original data. Figure 6.1 shows the structural equation model that best fits the data and has the strongest explanatory power.

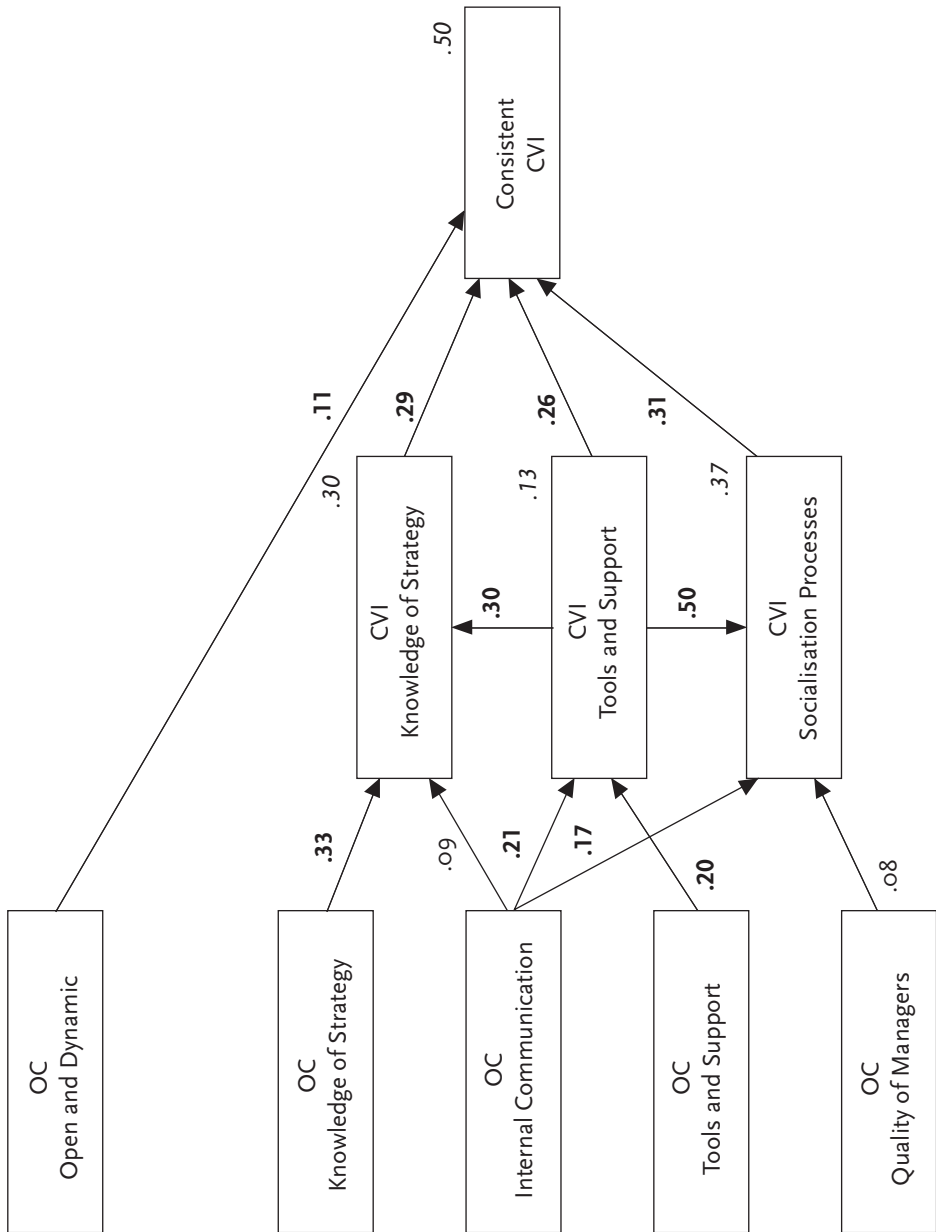


**Table 6.2: Mean scores, standard deviations and correlation of Consistent CVI, organisational characteristics and CVI management characteristics**

Variable	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Consistent CVI (1)</b>	3.51 (.67)	-	.43**	.41**	.35**	.31**	.42**	.55**	.60**	.58**
<b>OC Knowledge of Strategy (2)</b>	4.05 (.66)		-	.49**	.42**	.46**	.51**	.48**	.32**	.28**
<b>OC Tools and Support (3)</b>	3.64 (.64)			-	.59**	.47**	.54**	.34**	.33**	.35**
<b>OC Quality of Managers (4)</b>	3.43 (.64)				-	.39**	.56**	.30**	.24**	.33**
<b>OC Open and Dynamic (5)</b>	4.06 (.58)					-	.44**	.31**	.18**	.15**
<b>OC Internal Communication (6)</b>	3.35 (.60)						-	.36**	.33**	.39**
<b>CVI Knowledge of Strategy (7)</b>	3.88 (.89)							-	.44**	.33**
<b>CVI Tools and Support (8)</b>	3.29 (.90)								-	.58**
<b>CVI Socialisation Processes (9)</b>	2.93 (.80)									-

\*\* p < .01

636 < N < 677



Note: all estimates are significant (those in bold at  $p < .001$ , those not in bold  $p < .05$ ). The proportion of explained variance is given in italics above the variable.

<sup>a</sup>Indexes:  $\chi^2 = 49.385$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $GFI = .985$ ;  $TLI = .960$ ;  $RMSEA = .061$ . Standardized parameter estimates are presented. Covariates are omitted for clarity.

**Figure 6.1: AMOS model for organisational characteristics (OC) and CVI management characteristics as they affect the consistency of CVI<sup>a</sup>**

Although AMOS produces a large number of different statistics, four statistics are commonly reported.

1. The Chi-Square value indicates the absolute fit of the model to the data and is the result of testing the null hypothesis that the model does indeed fit the data. For the model in Figure 6.1, the Chi-Square test of overall model fit is 49.385, with 14 degrees of freedom, returning a probability value of .000. This indicates that the model does not fit the data, but since the Chi-Square value is largely dependent on the sample size, this may be the reason why the model does not fit.
2. Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is a measure of the discrepancy between predicted and observed covariances, as devised by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1984). The GFI value should be less or equal to one. A value of one indicates a perfect fit. The value of .985 indicates a good fit.
3. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is a relative fit statistic that is not sensitive to sample size and non-normality. It compares the absolute fit of the specified model to the absolute fit of the most restrictive model possible, in which all relationships between the observed variables are assumed to be zero. The greater the discrepancy between the overall fit of the two models, the larger the values of these descriptive statistics. TLI values close to one indicate a very good fit (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999), and for the model in Figure 6.1, this value is .96. So, this is further evidence of a good fit of this model to the data.
4. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is based on a comparison of the values in the specified model to population means and covariance structures. There are several rules of thumb concerning this statistic, such as the one by Brown and Cudeck (1993), who claim that an RMSEA of .05 or less would indicate a close fit of the model in relation to the degrees of freedom (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999), and a value of .08 or less would indicate a good fit. Since the model in Figure 6.1 has an RMSEA of .061, this statistic provides further evidence that the model has a good fit.

All the relationships shown in Figure 6.1 are significant and the total explained variance of consistent CVI is .50. In order to get a model that fits, we used the modification indices provided with the AMOS 5.0 software package. These indicated two relationships, which had not been hypothesised before, i.e. the relationships between CVI Tools and Support and CVI Knowledge of Strategy, and between CVI Tools and Support and CVI Socialisation Processes. These relationships are examined in the discussion part of this paper.

Of all the OC characteristics, only the openness and dynamic environment of organisations (*OC Open and Dynamic*) has a direct positive influence on CVI consistency. So of the five hypotheses under (1), only H1e is supported by the results of this study. In contrast, the hypotheses under (2) are all supported by the results. All three CVI management characteristics appear to have a substantial influence on CVI consistency. In addition, all hypotheses under (3), which relate to the relationship between OC and CVI management characteristics, are confirmed as well.

**Table 6.3: Results of hypotheses**

	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Result</b>
H1a	Knowledge of organisation strategy has a positive effect on CVI consistency.	not supported
H1b	The availability of tools and support in the organisation has a positive effect on CVI consistency.	not supported
H1c	High-quality managers have a positive effect on CVI consistency.	not supported
H1d	High-quality internal communication has a positive effect on CVI consistency.	not supported
H1e	The openness of the organisation and a dynamic environment have an effect on CVI consistency.	supported
H2a	Knowledge of CVI strategy has a positive effect on CVI consistency.	supported
H2b	The availability of CVI tools and support has a positive effect on CVI consistency.	supported
H2c	Socialisation processes related to CVI have a positive effect on CVI consistency.	supported
H3a	Knowledge of organisation strategy has a positive relationship with knowledge of CVI strategy.	supported
H3b	The availability of tools and support in the organisation has a positive relationship with the availability of CVI tools and support.	supported
H3c	High-quality managers in the organisation have a positive relationship with socialisation processes on CVI.	supported
H3d	High-quality internal communication has a positive relationship with all three CVI management characteristics (CVI Knowledge of Strategy, CVI Tools and Support and CVI Socialisation Processes).	supported

The amount of explained variance, however, is considerably lower (with  $R^2$  varying from .13 to .37). Table 6.3 provides an overview of the results of the hypotheses.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to offer insight into the topic of CVI management. We investigated the question as to whether organisational characteristics influence the consistency of CVI. We developed a model in which we distinguished characteristics at the level of the organisation and at the level of CVI management. The measure of CVI consistency was derived from the perception of the employees; they judged the visual identity in their own organisation.

We demonstrated that all CVI management characteristics influence the consistency of a CVI. *CVI Knowledge of Strategy* and *CVI Socialisation Processes* appear to be of major importance. *CVI Knowledge of Strategy* provides employees with reasons for maintaining the visual identity, whereas the socialisation processes can be seen as internalisation, resulting in behaviour related to the visual identity that is infused with motivation and feeling. These help to explain the direction and persistence of individual and more collective behaviour (Albert, Ashforth and Dutton, 2000). *CVI Tools and Support* are also relevant to the consistency of a CVI. The results showed significant relationships between *CVI Tools and Support* and *CVI Knowledge of Strategy* and between *CVI Tools and Support* and *CVI Socialisation Processes*. Although we did not expect to find these relationships, it is plausible that tools such as for instance a digital manual, which contains information on why and how to use the CVI, are relevant to obtaining knowledge of the CVI. Support, either through personal coaching or answering questions on the CVI may also explain the 'socialisation' of applying the CVI.

The organisational characteristics we used appear to have a very limited direct influence on CVI consistency. Our assumption that CVI management characteristics are influenced by organisational characteristics, however, is supported by the results. *CVI Knowledge of Strategy* is positively related to *OC Knowledge of Strategy*. Pilditch (1970) refers to the 'Gestalt' of an organisation, in which corporate logos are used to support other artefacts of the organisation. He advised designers to put themselves into the position of the organisation when they develop a new or adapted visual identity.

The results also show that *CVI Tools and Support* are influenced by *OC Tools and Support*. To some extent, the availability of tools and support in general appears to be indicative for the availability of tools and support for applying the CVI. Internal communication in the organisation positively influences all three CVI management characteristics. Finally, *OC Quality of Managers* appears to have a positive relationship with *CVI Socialisation Processes*. Schein (1992)

defined culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learns when solving problems such as external adaptation and internal integration, and one that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to new problems. In this, the behaviour of the managers setting an example and their influence on socialisation processes are important. In our study, socialisation processes related to CVI appear to be of major importance and managers can influence them.

One organisational characteristic we used turned out to be of direct influence on CVI consistency. Organisations that are open and dynamic appear to use their CVI more consistently than those of a closed or static nature. To operate in a dynamic environment, these organisations have to be flexible and responsive. As a result, a continuous development and awareness of corporate strategy is needed in all organisational layers (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). This may have a positive effect on the employees' appreciation of and commitment to the CVI. Another explanation might be that a dynamic environment places greater demands on consistent presentation than a static environment, thus creating a sense of urgency among the personnel.

To sum up, the results of this study demonstrate that organisational characteristics are a factor of importance for CVI consistency. With the exception of the openness and dynamics of an organisation, no supporting evidence was found for a direct relationship between organisational characteristics and CVI consistency. CVI consistency appeared to be substantially predicted by the CVI management characteristics we distinguished, which, in turn, correspond to organisational characteristics.

From the point of view that CVI is an important tangible asset in the expression of the organisation and used as the 'glue' in communication, this study can be helpful to corporate identity managers and communication professionals alike. An important implication of the findings is that CVI management matters: the choices made regarding strategy, socialisation processes and tools and support appear to have a significant impact on the consistent use of the CVI. Another implication is that CVI management characteristics are, on the one hand, rooted in organisational characteristics – there are unmistakable relationships between organisational and CVI management characteristics – but, on the other hand, are not predetermined by organisational characteristics. Given the relatively low amounts of variance explained by organisational characteristics, it can be concluded that communication managers have a considerable degree of freedom in shaping their CVI management. Managing an organisation's brand can be seen as a dynamic process that needs to be continuously adjusted to vision, culture and image, and which reflects all the functions in the organis-

ation (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Employees must be motivated to propagate the brand (Ind, 2001). Therefore the communication managers responsible for CVI management need to observe and understand organisational aspects and developments. They not only have to look externally – at the impact of the CVI design – but also internally (at management practices and their consequences).

A multi-channel approach to CVI management will give the best results. It can be helpful to embed the CVI in existing tools and support. Besides this, information has to be provided on the CVI strategy and socialisation processes are necessary for internalising the need for applying it. Both formal and informal learning processes can be helpful in anchoring a CVI within an organisation, e.g. by defining it and explaining the criteria for its utilisation – what is desirable, what is not, and why – and solving problems relating to its application. The formal learning process may start with introduction programmes for new hires. Informal learning processes include the behaviour of managers, who can provide an example of how best to apply the CVI. Earlier research has shown that both types of socialisation processes positively influence the consistency of CVI (Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving, 2004).

Pilditch (1970) stressed the importance of establishing a strong correspondence between the visual design and the characteristics of the organisation. While developing a visual identity, designers have to have a clear view of what an organisation stands for. The results of our study extend this view to the issue of CVI management. It appears to be equally important to provide information on organisation and CVI strategy to everyone who has to apply the CVI. Knowing about this background information will increase employees' willingness to comply with guidelines. But graphic designers also need to be familiar with background information to produce appropriate materials. It's the job of communication professionals to provide this type of information.

This study has three limitations. Firstly the consistency of each CVI has been measured by the judgement of the respondents, all employees of the organisation concerned. We did not carry out a visual audit and we therefore measured the consistency of the *perceived* CVI. Further research could include a visual audit and the perception of external stakeholders towards the visual identity and thus make a distinction between actual consistency and perceived consistency by internal and external audiences. The second limitation is that we only examined the main corporate visual identity and not sub- or product brands. We conducted the study in the Netherlands, where the Dutch term 'huisstijl' is unambiguous and clearly related to the corporate brand or identity. Future research can take different brands into account or can broaden the concept of CVI (including cultural aspects, language, rituals, myths, etc.). Another approach could be a benchmarking study in

which a number of organisations are compared. The last limitation has to do with the openness of organisations in a dynamic environment, which leads to the question as to whether the typology of organisation – e.g. profit or non-profit – has an impact on the consistency of its CVI. Further research can define types of organisations and measure their CVIs.

In this paper we investigated CVI from an organisational perspective. So far our study illustrates useful findings for communication professionals responsible for integrated communications and managing the corporate identity. It is striking that visual identity – regarded as a self-evident asset in most organisation and used by many to present themselves to the outside world – has received so little attention in research and hardly been studied at all from the perspective of this paper.





# 7

## Managing Corporate Visual Identity: exploring the differences between manufacturing and service, and profit-making and nonprofit organizations<sup>1</sup>

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) is a crucial part of the identity of any organization. Most research on managing corporate identity deals with the strategic development of corporate identity as well as the design and effects of specific elements of the CVI. This study focuses on an aspect of CVI management that has not received much attention, namely the problem of maintaining consistent use of the CVI in an organization. A comparison is made between manufacturing and service organizations, and between profit-making and nonprofit organizations. For these organization types, the perceived CVI consistency was investigated, as well as the organizational and CVI management characteristics and instruments affecting it. The research was conducted using questionnaires that were distributed among employees of 20 Dutch organizations. Most of the differences found were those between profit-making and nonprofit organizations. The results showed greater consistency in the CVI of profit-making organizations, in accordance with the amount of effort these organizations put into CVI management.

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) plays a significant role in the way organizations present themselves, both to internal and to external stakeholders. The main elements of a CVI are corporate name, logo, color palette, font type, and a corporate slogan or tagline. A tagline is a sentence or message which may be connected to the logo, as, for example, HP invent for Hewlett-Packard (the word 'invent' creates a tagline, together with the logo of HP). CVI elements may express or emphasize certain aspects of an organization, but will only be effective if people are confronted with them regularly on all communication materials, also called carriers. Some years ago, Philips introduced the slogan 'Let's make things better' and this has been consistently used in all communication materials, varying from advertisements to packaging. A combination of colors may also serve as a strong visual cue in recognizing an organization. The combination of green and

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<sup>1</sup> Accepted: Van den Bosch, De Jong, and Elving (forthcoming)

yellow on a service station on the highway, for instance, will definitely associate it with BP, while a combination of yellow and red represents Shell. Since the 1980s, the name “Shell” no longer appears with the emblem, yet the company’s identity is still recognized everywhere. The same applies to Coca Cola, with its standard wave, the colors red and white, and its characteristic typeface. All over the world, people recognize signs, billboards, and products bearing this brand, even if they are written in a script they have never seen before. Symbolic figures can also represent an organization. Through advertising campaigns run by Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM), the swan has become a symbol for the airline. Other examples of symbolic figures are the McDonalds clown and the Michelin Man.

CVI may be applied on carriers such as stationery, printed matter (e.g. brochures and leaflets), advertisements, websites, vehicles, buildings, and corporate clothing. Visual consistency may be maintained by CVI guidelines, or, in marketing communications, by applying the same pay-off in commercial messages, packaging, or visual aspects in commercial messages (Van Riel, 2000). Guidelines for the use of the name, logo, colors and typeface of the organization must result in a consistent set of visual cues that express the essence of an organization.

Standardizing the CVI is presumed to have a positive impact on customers’ awareness of advertising, recruitment, their familiarity with the organization and its products/services, goodwill, sales, market share, and the receptivity of local inhabitants to the organization’s operations in a particular area (Melewar and Saunders, 1998). A CVI provides visibility and recognizability (Balmer and Gray, 2000) by symbolically representing an organization or brand. Brands help customers to reduce their anxiety when purchasing products or services, and they also help shape the identity of consumers (Kapferer, 1994; Ind, 2001).

The importance of CVI for organizations is usually sought in its relationship with corporate identity, image and reputation. Organizations depend to a great extent upon their image and reputation among relevant stakeholder groups. In the corporate identity mix, three components are assumed to influence image or reputation: organizational behavior, communication, and symbolism (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). The strongest of these influences is organizational behavior – the way an organization acts, as perceived by its stakeholders (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Hatch and Schultz, 1997, 2003). Communication comprises both the way an organization communicates with its stakeholders and media coverage (cf. Renkema and Hoeken, 1998).

The CVI is the most prominent expression of corporate symbolism (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000). Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving (2005) discussed the possible contributions of CVI to corporate reputation, using the five reputation dimensions distinguished by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) – visibility, distinctiveness, transparency, authenticity and consistency –, and concluded that CVI may be

relevant for each dimension. In general, a weak visual identity may be considered to be a symptom of corporate malaise (Baker and Balmer, 1997). Firms with a good reputation are more likely to orchestrate and integrate their communication initiatives across departments (Fombrun and Rindova, 1998).

The importance of CVI is quite obvious for organizations that operate in a competitive environment. But it may be equally important for governmental organizations that do not need to bind their 'customers' to them, since there is no competing service provider. Even though these organizations do not have to fight for every new customer, they still need to be recognized as of use to society. Increasingly, governmental organizations are also seen as brands: here, the brand implicitly presents a promise of performance (Ind, 2001). In this respect, there is no great difference with non-governmental organizations. The Dutch Inland Revenue Service is an example of a well-known brand. Although nobody likes to pay tax, this organization created considerable goodwill among tax payers by a systematic and carefully designed communication strategy, including a highly recognizable CVI and a prominent corporate slogan, 'Leuker kunnen we het niet maken, wel makkelijker' ('We can't make it more pleasant, but we can make it easier'). The color blue is one of the CVI's most conspicuous characteristics: When a blue envelope arrives in the mailbox, every Dutch citizen immediately knows where it comes from.

A CVI has several functions: It symbolizes the organization, it provides visibility and recognizability, it expresses its structure and, internally, it may enhance the extent to which employees identify with the organization (Olins, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000; Bromley, 2001). Corporate values first need to be incorporated by employees, before they can be expressed externally (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2004). In our view, the CVI should also first be understood and supported by the employees of an organization. The consistency of the CVI is a prerequisite for a clear and unambiguous perception of the organization (the corporate image). Too many different visual cues will inevitably create an unfocused impression.

Research on CVI can focus on the design criteria for selecting a logo (e.g., Henderson and Cote, 1998), on the tools used to evaluate design elements (Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen, 2000), on an analysis of visual interpretation (Moriarty, 1996), or on the potential for using visuals in argumentation (cf. Birdsell and Groarke, 1996; Blair, 1996; Fleming, 1996). This paper focuses on the problem of managing CVI in an organizational context. The central problem in our study is the need to maintain consistent use of the CVI in an organization.

In an earlier exploratory study, the 'Leiden Octahedron' was used as a model to explore the organizational dimensions that influence the consistency of a CVI (Van den Bosch, 1999). The model, which was adapted from Leavitt (1965), was further

developed by Dementin, Van der Vlist, and Allegro (1989). The 'Leiden Octahedron', which visualizes the way in which an organization reacts to a dynamic environment, consists of six clusters of variables: organization goals, strategy, structure, culture, technology and people. People work towards common goals and the results are influenced by strategy, structure, culture and technology. Organizational dimensions, based on the various perspectives on organizations found in the literature, emphasized the strategy of organizations (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998; Johnson and Scholes, 1999), organizational structure and principles of co-ordination among various functions and tasks (Mintzberg, 1979; Hall, 1991; Hodge, Anthony and Gales, 1996), and culture, which includes how the shared values and beliefs of the organization's members are described, how one is supposed to communicate and behave, how newcomers are socialized, and how leaders influence others (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1992; Trice and Beyer, 1993). Socialization is the inculcation of the company's norms and values, and this assimilation of the culture is mostly reinforced through daily practices (Kotter, 1996). Another important organizational characteristic was found in open systems theory, which accounts for the way an organization interacts with its environment and adapts to it in order to survive (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

In two earlier studies, we investigated the influence of organizational characteristics, CVI management characteristics, and specific CVI management instruments on the perceived consistency of CVI. All selected characteristics and instruments were based on the above mentioned exploratory study. In the first study, we investigated the influence of specific CVI management instruments. The total number of CVI management instruments applied appeared to have a positive impact on consistency. Within these instruments, up-to-date CVI guidelines and managers setting an example were the most important (Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving, 2004). In the other study, we distinguished various organizational characteristics and identified three corresponding CVI management characteristics that focus on strategic, structural, and cultural aspects. These CVI management characteristics appeared to significantly influence the consistency of CVI (Van den Bosch, Elving and De Jong, 2006). In these two studies, however, we did not distinguish between types of organizations.

In this study we explore the influence of organizational characteristics and CVI management instruments on the perceived consistency of CVI in various types of organizations. We categorized these organizations according to their business and financial orientation. Firstly, looking at the type of business, we distinguished between manufacturing and service organizations. Manufacturing organizations deliver tangible products, and this fact is reflected in the use of CVI on, for instance, products and packaging. Organizations delivering services, on the other

hand, have to present themselves to the market without being able to show any (tangible) results of their work in advance. Whereas products and packaging provide visual cues, services are inherently invisible before they are delivered and can only be assessed retrospectively. It may be that service organizations have to work harder to make themselves and their services visible. The first research question is:

- (1) What differences are there between manufacturing and service organizations with regard to employees' perceptions of the consistency of the CVI and of the characteristics and instruments that influence its consistency?

Secondly, we made a distinction based on financial orientation, distinguishing between profit-making and nonprofit organizations. Manufacturing organizations are profit-making, while service organization can be either profit-making or nonprofit-making concerns. Profit-making organizations depend on transactions with customers; nonprofit organizations depend on funds that do not necessarily come from the users of their services, but, for example, from the government or the general public. We presume that there is a higher degree of CVI consistency in profit-making organizations, because they have to deal with competitors, and visibility and recognizability in visual communication are crucial in the battle to influence target audiences. Most nonprofit organizations, such as governmental organizations, do not have this need, and therefore this type of organization may often pay less attention to its CVI. We recognized, however, that universities and schools are examples of nonprofit organizations that compete for teachers and students; nonetheless, we expected more consistency in the CVIs of profit-making organizations. The second research question is:

- (2) What differences are there between profit-making and nonprofit organizations with regard to employees' perceptions of the consistency of the CVI and of the characteristics and instruments that influence its consistency?

## METHOD

The study was conducted in twenty Dutch organizations. The inclusion criteria wereto be located in the Netherlands, the organizations had at least 400 employees, and they should not be in the process of implementing a new visual identity or have introduced a change in their visual identity in the past two years. CVI gets more attention during and immediately after a change process, which might affect the results. The research focused on the opinions of employees in the participating organizations, not on external stakeholders. After all, the employees are the ones who have to apply the CVI and, therefore, have the greatest influence on its consistency. Moreover, employees can be expected to have a clear, overall view of the consistency of the CVI of their organization, whereas the impressions of external

stakeholders are likely to be more fragmented. External stakeholders, for instance, may not see materials produced for internal communication purposes or those intended for other stakeholders.

First, we contacted organizations by telephone. We asked for the person responsible for the CVI. We introduced the research and asked about their responsibilities with respect to the CVI. Further we asked if there was a change process involving the CVI going on. If this was not the case, we asked them to participate in the study. Some organizations wanted to participate but – due to change processes or other studies currently being carried out – the timing was not right. Other organizations did not have the time to collect enough respondents. In total, we contacted 80 organizations, and 20 organizations met the criteria and were willing to participate.

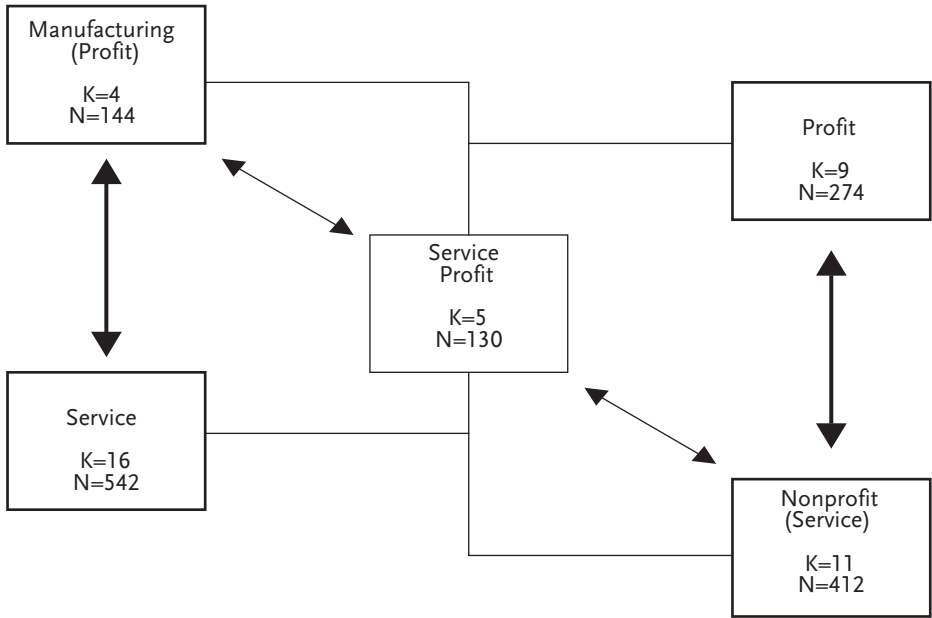
In the second phase, we obtained the names and postal addresses of approximately 70 employees from each organization. Based on our criteria, our contact persons – those responsible for their organization's visual identity – made a selection of employees with a variety of jobs, e.g. in marketing and communication, secretariats and general support units such as the in-house printing department, the department that manages the fleet of vehicles, building management, and purchasing. Fifteen organizations provided addresses, so the questionnaire could be sent to the employees directly. In four organizations, our contact persons distributed the questionnaire themselves. In one organization, we have sent an online version of the questionnaire to employees' e-mail addresses. In return for participating in the research, each organization received a summary of its own results. The average response rate was 48%, ranging from 13% to 78%. In total, 686 questionnaires were returned and processed.

### **Types of Organizations**

We categorized organizations according to (1) their business orientation, and (2) their financial orientation. The first distinction gave us four manufacturing (N=144) and 16 service organizations (N=542). Manufacturing organizations depend on the delivery of tangible material products and product-related services. This exploratory study included manufacturers of industrial and consumer goods, a publishing firm, and a building contractor. All the other participants came from service-oriented organizations, working in the fields of, for instance, consultancy, health services, insurance, higher education, and public services. The second distinction – financial orientation – resulted in nine profit-making (N=274) and 11 nonprofit (N=412) organizations. Profit-making organizations were manufacturing organizations, an engineering consultancy firm, an employment agency, a telecommunications network and a retail organization. Nonprofit organizations were a hospital, institutes for higher education, a land register and governmental

organizations at the national, regional and local level. We further subdivided profit-making organizations into four profit-making manufacturing organizations (N=144) and five profit-making service organizations (N=130). All manufacturers are profit-making organizations. Next, we distinguished five profit-making (N=130) and 11 nonprofit organizations (N=412) in the service sector. The category ‘non-profit organizations’ is totally composed of service organizations. We promised not to disclose the names of the organization. Figure 7.1 shows the types of organizations and the differences we analyzed.

To measure the way in which Corporate Visual Identity is managed in the different types of organizations, we focused on similarities and differences of the perceived consistency of the CVI by the employees, general organizational (management) characteristics, CVI management characteristics, and single CVI management instruments.



K = Number of organizations

N = Number of respondents

Note: A distinction was made between manufacturing and service organizations. Within the service organizations a subdivision was made between profit-making and nonprofit. The total group was also divided into profit-making and nonprofit organizations. The profit-making organizations were subdivided into manufacturing and service sectors. The arrows show the comparisons which were made.

**Figure 7.1: Types of Organizations and Differences measured**



### **The Consistency of the CVI**

In our study, the measure of CVI consistency did not reflect the quality of the design or the coherence among the various design elements, as for instance a color palette and a matching typeface, which can strengthen each other and thus enhance visual impact. This is based on a similarity of the “look and feel” among the various CVI elements. The variable *Consistent CVI* was defined as the extent to which the various CVI elements were actually employed as intended. The assumption is that the consistency of CVI depends on the way the defined CVI guidelines are applied by the employees, resulting in a more or less consistent visual expression of the organization’s corporate image. The consistency of the CVI was measured by asking the respondents to react to eight statements, including “Our organization can easily be identified by its CVI,” “The CVI of our organization is messy,” and “Everyone in our organization complies with CVI rules.” All responses were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The reliability of the scale used for perceived CVI consistency was good (Cronbach’s alpha .80).

### **Organizational and CVI Management Characteristics**

We included eight organizational characteristics, arranged in two clusters. The first group were general organizational characteristics, and the second group organizational characteristics directly related to CVI management. We included five general organizational characteristics: *Knowledge of Organization Strategy, Tools and Support, Managerial Quality, Internal Communication*, and whether the organization was *Open and Dynamic*. The variable *Knowledge of Organization Strategy* (five items, Cronbach’s alpha .71) consisted of statements such as “I know what our organization stands for,” “I know where our organization is heading,” and “I know the mission statement of the organization.” The variable *Tools and Support* (six items, Cronbach’s alpha .70) provided a measure of the co-ordination mechanisms used to support the various units within the organization. It consisted of statements such as “Within our organization I have the tools I need to do my job” and “Specialist staff departments support me in doing my job.” Examples of statements related to the variable *Managerial Quality* (five items, Cronbach’s alpha .70) were “Managers stimulate us to learn more about our work” and “My manager does not explain why particular tasks must be carried out.” We used statements such as “There is consultation between business units and the board of directors” and “I am well informed about what is going on in our organization” to measure the variable *Internal Communication* (eight items, Cronbach’s alpha .79). Finally, we included the variable the variable *Open and Dynamic* (five items, Cronbach’s alpha .68), to measure the extent to which an organization operates in a dynamic environment and therefore has to act flexibly

and anticipate changes. Statements used here were “Most of the work can be organized by the staff themselves” and “Our organization continually anticipates new developments.”

We distinguished three characteristics that relate to the way the CVI is managed: *Knowledge of CVI Strategy*, *CVI Tools and Support* and *CVI Socialization Processes*. The variable *Knowledge of CVI Strategy* (three items, Cronbach's alpha .70) focused on the employees' knowledge of the rationale behind the CVI and its objectives. Examples of the statements we used are: “I understand the rationale behind our company logo,” and “The CVI helps others recognize our organization.” The variable *CVI Tools and Support* (five items, Cronbach's alpha .85) was measured using statements such as “Our CVI guidelines are up-to-date,” and “In our organization we have tools that make it easy for us to apply the CVI.” The variable *CVI Socialization Processes* (five items, Cronbach's alpha .73) focused on formal and informal learning processes as well as the behavior of managers, through which both existing members of an organization and newcomers come to understand the types of behavior that are expected in relation to the CVI. Examples of statements are: “When I do not apply the CVI, I get criticized,” and “Newcomers in our department always get an induction course on the CVI.” The CVI management characteristics were derived from literature on the strategy, structure, and culture of organizations. All responses were perceived judgments of the respondents, measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

### **CVI Management Instruments**

We also presented the respondents with a list of specific management tools that may be used to ensure the consistency of the CVI: *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines*, *Access to CVI Guidelines*, *Extensive CVI Guidelines*, *Regular Consultation with Users*, *Preferred Suppliers* for providing, for instance, signs on buildings, corporate clothing, or printed materials, *Technical Tools* such as templates for word processing and presentations, *Managers setting an Example*, *CVI as a Topic in Induction Programs*, and the existence of a *CVI Helpdesk* and/or *CVI Manager*. Respondents were asked to indicate whether these ten management instruments were used in their organization. Since it is quite possible that employees may not always be aware of the existence of a particular management instrument, they were also given the option to answer “Don't know.”

Table 7.1 provides an overview of the dependent and all independent variables included in this study: organizational characteristics, CVI management characteristics, and CVI management instruments.

**Table 7.1 Overview of Dependent and Independent Variables used**

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Organization and CVI management characteristics</b>	<b>CVI management instruments</b>
Consistent CVI	Knowledge of Organization Strategy	Up-to-date CVI Guidelines
	Tools and Support	Access to CVI Guidelines
	Managerial Quality	Extensive CVI Guidelines
	Internal Communication	Regular Consultation with Users
	Open and Dynamic	Preferred Suppliers
		Technical Tools
		Managers setting an Example
	Knowledge of CVI Strategy	CVI as a Topic in Induction Programs
	CVI Tools and Support	CVI Helpdesk
	CVI Socialization Processes	CVI Manager

**RESULTS**

In the first part of this section, we report on the differences found between manufacturing and service organizations. In the second part, we present the differences between profit-making and nonprofit organizations. We will start with the descriptions of the variables Organizational and CVI management characteristics. This is followed by a linear regression enter analysis, which measures their influence on the consistency of the CVI. Then we present the results that relate to the use of specific CVI management instruments in the various types of organizations. Finally, we conduct a linear regression enter analysis to investigate the influence of these tools on the consistency of the CVI. The tables compare the different types of organizations: manufacturing versus service and profit-making versus nonprofit.

**Differences between Manufacturing and Service Organizations**

Table 7.2 shows the means, standard deviations, and differences (using t-tests) of the Organizational and CVI management characteristics. Except for the variables *CVI Tools and Support* and the variable *Open and Dynamic*, no significant differences were found between manufacturing and service organizations. In the perception of respondents, manufacturing organizations focus more on tools and support related to CVI and they are less open and dynamic. The linear regression enter analysis produced an explained variance ( $R^2$ ) of 62% in manufacturing organizations and 53% in service organizations (see Table 7.3). The results imply

that CVI management characteristics are of major importance in maintaining a consistent CVI. In both types of organizations, the strongest influence was *CVI Socialization Processes* and *Knowledge of CVI Strategy*, followed by *CVI Tools and Support*. The other characteristics did not influence the consistency of the CVI in either manufacturing or service organizations. The consistency of the CVI is clearly influenced by CVI management characteristics, regardless of whether the organization is engaged in manufacturing or service-oriented.

Next we conducted analyses to investigate the influence of specific CVI management instruments. Table 7.4 presents the results with respect to the use of CVI management instruments in manufacturing and service organizations. Significant differences (measured by Chi-Square) were found in *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines*, *Access to CVI Guidelines*, *Regular Consultation with Users*, and in *Technical Tools*. Except for regular consultation, which was used more frequently in service organizations, the use of these instruments was higher in manufacturing organizations.

To explore the influence of CVI management instruments on the consistency of CVI, we conducted a linear regression enter analysis with the consistency of the CVI as the dependent variable and the CVI management instruments as independent variables (see Table 7.5). The explained variance was 29% in manufacturing organizations and 28% in service organizations. *Managers setting an Example* had a major influence in both types of organizations. *Access to CVI Guidelines* was of significant influence in manufacturing organizations, and *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines*, *Preferred Suppliers*, *CVI as a Topic in Induction Programs*, and the existence of a *CVI Manager* were significant in service organizations. It is worth noting that the *Access to CVI Guidelines* was found to be an important predictor in manufacturing organizations and not in service organizations. On the other hand, *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines* was a reliable predictor for the consistency of the CVI in service organizations and not in manufacturing organizations. *Extensive CVI Guidelines*, *Regular Consultation with Users*, *Technical Tools*, and a *CVI Helpdesk* did not seem to contribute significantly, either in manufacturing or in service organizations.

**Table 7.2: Means and Standard Deviations of Organizational and CVI Management Characteristics and Differences between Types of Organizations**

	Manu- facturing	Service	Difference Manufacturing/ Service	Profit- making	Nonprofit	Difference Profit-making/ Nonprofit
Number of organizations	4	16		9	11	
N	144	542		274	412	
Consistent CVI	3.56 (.68)	3.49 (.66)	t = 0.95 df = 655	3.66 (.67)	3.41 (.64)	t = 4.69** df = 655
Knowledge of Organization Strategy	4.03 (.68)	4.07 (.62)	t = -0.56 df = 660	4.13 (.65)	4.01 (.62)	t = 2.33* df = 660
Tools and Support	3.57 (.73)	3.66 (.61)	t = -1.40 df = 187	3.60 (.69)	3.68 (.60)	t = -1.52 df = 508
Managerial Quality	3.40 (.73)	3.44 (.61)	t = -0.59 df = 189	3.45 (.69)	3.41 (.60)	t = 0.68 df = 505
Internal Communication	3.44 (.64)	3.33 (.58)	t = 1.88 df = 629	3.39 (.62)	3.32 (.58)	t = 1.49 df = 629
Open and Dynamic	3.95 (.71)	4.10 (.51)	t = -2.10* df = 159	4.00° (.66)	4.11 (.48)	t = -2.16* df = 417
Knowledge of CVI Strategy	3.90 (.97)	3.88 (.86)	t = 0.20 df = 200	4.04 (.90)	3.78 (.86)	t = 3.83** df = 675
CVI Tools and Support	3.53 (.92)	3.23 (.89)	t = 3.42* df = 663	3.48 (.91)	3.17 (.88)	t = 4.45** df = 663
CVI Socialization Processes	2.94 (.76)	2.93 (.81)	t = 0.15 df = 661	3.10 (.79)	2.82 (.79)	t = 4.49** df = 661

\*\* p < .001 \* p < .05

° skewness < - 1.0

**Table 7.3: Linear Regression (Method Enter) Analysis with Organizational and CVI Management Characteristics as Predictors for a Consistent CVI**

	Manufacturing	Service	Profit-making	Nonprofit
R <sup>2</sup>	.62	.53	.59	.49
F	18.65**	61.14**	35.84**	39.34**
N	101	439	208	332
<b>Beta</b>				
Knowledge of CVI Strategy	.29*	.28**	.27**	.27**
CVI Tools and Support	.24*	.23**	.24**	.22**
CVI Socialization Processes	.30**	.32**	.30**	.33**
Knowledge of Organization Strategy	.07	.06	.14*	.02
Tools and Support	.07	.03	.06	.05
Managerial Quality	-.06	.00	-.09	.01
Internal Communication	.03	.04	.02	.05
Open and Dynamic	.13	.07	.12*	.07

\*\* p < .001 \* p < .05

**Table 7.4: Percentages and Differences in the Use of CVI Management Instruments**

	Manu- facturing	Service	Difference Manufacturing/ Service $\chi^2$	Profit- making	Nonprofit	Difference Profit-making/ Nonprofit $\chi^2$
Up-to-date CVI Guidelines	61 (87)	49 (264)	7.23*	67 (183)	41 (168)	46.86**
Access to CVI guidelines	68 (97)	50 (267)	15.35**	64 (174)	47 (190)	21.05**
Extensive CVI guidelines	48 (68)	37 (196)	5.84	51 (139)	31 (125)	29.41**
Regular Consultation with Users	10 (15)	14 (77)	12.14*	17 (47)	11 (45)	5.87
Preferred Suppliers	43 (61)	48 (257)	4.02	53 (144)	43 (174)	9.52*
Technical Tools	84 (120)	73 (392)	7.60*	83 (225)	70 (287)	13.62*
Managers setting an Example	25 (35)	27 (146)	3.21	31 (84)	24 (97)	4.65
CVI as a Topic in Induction programs	25 (36)	20 (107)	2.00	28 (77)	16 (66)	15.55**
CVI Helpdesk	37 (52)	31 (167)	3.27	34 (92)	31 (127)	1.99
CVI Manager	45 (65)	47 (250)	0.21	54 (147)	41 (168)	10.48*

(N) \*\* p < .001 \* p < .05

**Table 7.5: Linear Regression (Method Enter Analysis) with Management Instruments as Predictors for a Consistent CVI**

	Manufacturing	Service	Profit-making	Nonprofit
R <sup>2</sup>	.29	.28	.25	.28
F	4.71**	19.32**	7.86**	14.22**
N	124	503	242	385
<b>Beta</b>				
Up-to-date CVI Guidelines	.00	.21**	.13	.16*
Access to CVI Guidelines	.23*	.03	.12	.05
Extensive CVI Guidelines	.10	.01	.00	.03
Regular Consultation with Users	.09	.00	.08	-.04
Preferred Suppliers	.15	.12*	.18*	.10*
Technical Tools	.07	.05	.06	.06
Managers setting an Example	.24*	.20**	.23**	.20**
CVI as a Topic in Induction Programs	.08	.10*	-.05	.15*
CVI Helpdesk	.01	.03	-.05	.07
CVI Manager	.16	.13*	.15*	.12*

\*\* p < .001 \* p < .05



### **Differences between Profit-making and Nonprofit organizations**

Differences between profit-making and nonprofit organizations were found in CVI Consistency, *Knowledge of Organization Strategy*, the *Open and Dynamic* variable, and all three CVI management characteristics (see Table 7.2). Profit-making organizations had significantly higher scores, except for *Open and Dynamic*. These higher scores suggest a higher degree of consistency in the CVI, better knowledge of the organization's strategy and more effort put into CVI management in profit-making organizations. In the perception of respondents, nonprofit organizations were more open and dynamic, which suggests that these are more influenced by their environment than profit-making organizations. There was no significant difference with respect to other organizational characteristics.

The linear regression enter analysis for all of the organizational and CVI management characteristics resulted in an explained variance of 59% for profit-making organizations and 49% for nonprofit organizations (see Table 7.3). All three CVI management characteristics significantly influenced the consistency of CVI in both types of organizations. The best predictor was found in *CVI Socialization Processes*, followed by *Knowledge of CVI Strategy*, and *CVI Tools and Support*. Knowledge of the organizational strategy also influenced the consistency of the CVI in profit-making organizations. Apparently, employees need to know the strategy of the organization before they can support the CVI and apply the guidelines. Nonprofit organizations had a significantly higher score on the variable *Open and Dynamic*; however, this did not affect the consistency of the CVI. Although profit-making organizations were less open and dynamic, this variable significantly influenced the consistency of the CVI.

We also analyzed the differences between profit-making and nonprofit organizations within the group of service organizations (see Figure 7.1). There was no significant difference in the variable *Open and Dynamic*. However, as discussed above, this variable was significant when comparing all profit-making with all nonprofit organizations. Therefore, this characteristic must be ascribed to the manufacturing organizations, which had the lowest score of all differentiated types of organizations. The highest score on *Open and Dynamic* was found in nonprofit organizations, which suggests that these organizations have to be flexible and react to their environment. Another significant difference was found in *Knowledge of Organization Strategy*. However, this was not a predictor for the consistency of the CVI in profit-making service organizations nor in service nonprofit organizations. The linear regression enter analysis of profit-making service organizations resulted in an explained variance of 56% with the same set of predictors as in nonprofit service organizations.

Another subdivision we made was that between profit-making manufacturing

and profit-making service organizations. Significant differences were found in *Consistent CVI*, *Knowledge of Organization Strategy*, *Knowledge of CVI Strategy* and *CVI Socialization Processes*. Profit-making service organizations had the highest scores for all of these variables, even higher than those for manufacturing organizations. This implies that the differences must mainly be ascribed to the profit-making service organizations.

Next, we explored the differences between profit-making and nonprofit organizations for specific CVI management instruments (see Table 7.4). For seven instruments a significant difference was found. For all of these seven instruments, the percentage of use was higher in profit-making organizations. Profit-making organizations apparently put more specific instruments into practice to ensure the consistency of the CVI. We also conducted linear regression enter analysis (see Table 7.5). The explained variance was 25% in profit-making organizations and 28% in nonprofit organizations. *Managers setting an Example* had the most influence according to both linear regression analyses, which shows that the perceived behavior of managers is a very good predictor for the consistency of the CVI. The existence of a *CVI Manager* and *Preferred Suppliers* were also significant in both types of organizations. *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines* and *CVI as a Topic in Induction Programs* significantly influenced the consistency of CVI in nonprofit organizations. Nevertheless, only a minority of the respondents indicated that these instruments were used in their organization (see Table 7.4).

We conducted the same analyses to measure the differences between the subgroups profit-making manufacturing and profit-making service organizations as well as between profit-making and nonprofit organizations in the service sector. Significant differences were found in *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines*, *Extensive CVI Guidelines*, *Regular Consultation with Users*, *Preferred Suppliers*, *Managers setting an Example*, *CVI as a Topic in Induction Programs*, and the existence of a *CVI Manager*. In the perception of respondents, profit-making service organizations used these instruments the most. Significant differences were also found in *Access to CVI Guidelines* and *Technical Tools*, and the highest use of these instruments was found in manufacturing organizations. Profit-making service organizations were perceived to put more effort into the use of CVI management instruments; however, linear regression enter analysis (with an explained variance of 25%) resulted in only two significant predictors for the consistency of the CVI: *Up-to-date CVI Guidelines* and *Managers setting an Example*. This suggests that a variety of CVI management instruments can be put into practice, but not every CVI management instrument will significantly influence the consistency of the CVI.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to assess the differences of employees' perceptions among various types of organizations regarding consistency of the CVI, organizational characteristics, and CVI management instruments that influence the consistency of the CVI. We investigated ways in which manufacturing organizations differ from service organizations and how profit-making organizations differ from nonprofit ones. Before discussing the differences, we will concentrate on similarities in the way organizations manage their CVI. These were found in the CVI management characteristics that influence the consistency of CVI. In general, all such characteristics – *Knowledge of CVI Strategy*, *CVI Tools* and *Support* and *CVI Socialization Processes* – appeared to be important predictors of the consistency of the CVI. Regardless of the type of organization, managing the CVI had a positive impact on how the consistency of the CVI was perceived internally. In organizing CVI management, a combination of knowledge, attitude, and behavior turned out to be crucial.

Knowledge of the CVI – both the aims and the rationale behind the design – provides useful background information on the reasons for and the design of the corporate visual identity. Attitude and behavior are the results of socialization processes, including both formal and informal learning. Managers play an important role in learning processes and they must set a good example. Explanations for this can be found in modeling (Bandura, 1986) and the influence of attitudes and behavior of significant others in the working environment (Monge and Contractor, 2001). Another element related to socialization is the use of advanced technologies, which is assumed to be important for newcomers (Flanagin and Waldeck, 2004). Our earlier research showed that CVI tools and support correlate both with the knowledge of CVI and with socialization processes (Van den Bosch, Elving and De Jong, 2006). Tools and support positively influence the knowledge of CVI and help people learn how to apply guidelines.

In discussing the differences, we will first look at the initial research question, which concerns the distinction between manufacturing and service organizations. The perceived consistency of the CVI did not differ significantly between manufacturing and service organizations; neither did the organizational and CVI management characteristics, except for the openness and dynamics of the organization and CVI tools and support. In service organizations, up-to-date guidelines were an important predictor for the consistency of the CVI. In contrast, in manufacturing organizations the accessibility of the CVI guidelines was an important predictor. It may be that in manufacturing organizations, guidelines are part of production processes. It is plausible that employees in the office not only have to rely on tools, but also need to be knowledgeable about the CVI

for correspondence, presentations, promotional materials, and so on. Another reason for this difference might be found in the nature of the types of activities service organizations engage in. Because of a general need to share written information, appropriate means are made available, including those for communicating the CVI. In general, up-to-date, accessible CVI guidelines are crucial if employees are to be able to retrieve such information.

The most differences in our study were found between profit and nonprofit organizations (our second research question). CVIs were considerably more consistent in profit-making organizations. Our analyses also showed significantly higher scores in profit-making organizations for CVI management characteristics and most of the CVI management instruments. It may be that profit-making organizations try harder and put more instruments in place in order to improve their CVI. Nonprofit organizations may not feel the same need to invest in these instruments. Another noteworthy difference we found was that nonprofit organizations were more open, and that they operated in a more dynamic environment. In our research, this group consisted mainly of organizations dedicated to public service – a type that has to follow government rules. Political influence might be one explanation for this dynamic environment. In the Netherlands, governmental organizations undergo frequent changes in their practices due to new national and European rules. Although nonprofit organizations are more open and dynamic, this characteristic did not appear to have any impact on the consistency of the CVI. On the other hand, the characteristic concerning openness and dynamism did influence the CVI in profit-making organizations. Perhaps they more often need to react to changing situations in a way that affects their CVI.

Another difference between profit-making and nonprofit organizations was knowledge of the organization's strategy. There was more knowledge of the strategy in profit-making organizations and this also appeared to have a direct influence on the perceived consistency of CVI. Maybe employees in profit-making organizations feel a need for their organization to be visible and recognizable. Knowing about the organization strategy seems to help them implement the CVI guidelines, which results in greater consistency. Or perhaps the use of the CVI in their environment as well as in promotional campaigns motivates personnel to apply the CVI. In the perception of the respondents in this study, profit-making service organizations put the most CVI instruments into practice.

An important limitation of this study is the fact that we measured the *perceived* judgment of the respondents. We did not measure the consistency of CVI by running a visual audit, which measures consistency by analyzing the visual materials used by the organizations. Further study could include supplementary information, such as the results of a visual audit.

We also did not address the type of identity structure in the organization. There might be a difference between organizations that have a single corporate logo (monolithic identity) and those with multiple logos and visual identities (endorsed or branded identity structure).

Further research could also include studies on CVI in different types of organizations. Do, for instance, employees in service organizations have other needs with respect to information on the CVI than their counterparts in manufacturing organizations? Do profit-making organizations put more effort into support and tools for enhancing the consistency of their CVI? The degree of effort and the size of the investments made could also be a subject of future research.

In this study, we found both differences and similarities that we believe are important for corporate identity and communications managers and specialists. In general, profit-making organizations put the most effort into managing their CVI; however, efforts put into managing the CVI will result in more consistency in the use of the CVI in each type of organization. Those responsible for managing the CVI need to be aware of the management instruments they can use for enhancing the consistency of CVI, regardless the organizational characteristics.

# 8

## Auditing Corporate Visual Identity management: development and use of a qualitative research instrument

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) management not only comprises the design of a CVI, but also the way the CVI is put into practice. Based on a model for assessing quality management, a qualitative research instrument was developed to audit CVI management, consisting of three methods: document analysis, a self-assessment meeting and in-depth interviews. The instrument was used to assess CVI management in three organizations in the Netherlands. The results underline the usefulness of the instrument as well as the comprehensiveness of CVI management. The value of this instrument is that it will help CVI managers to gain more insight into the organizational aspects of CVI management in their organization. With the results of the audit, CVI management can be developed in a structured and planned way.

### INTRODUCTION

The corporate identity mix consists of symbols, communication and behavior (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986), which must all be in alignment to create a strong and unambiguous impression of an organization. Research on corporate identity may focus on the corporate identity mix (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Leitch and Motion, 1999; Balmer, 2001), the relationship between corporate identity – what the organization wants to be – and corporate image – how the organization is perceived – (cf. Markwick and Fill, 1997; Stuart, 1999), or the relationship between the actual and the ideal identity of an organization (cf. Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Illia, Schmid, Fischbach, Hangartner and Rivola, 2004). In theoretical frameworks for corporate identity (cf. Van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Stuart, 1999; Cornelissen and Elving, 2003) there is insufficient emphasis on managing corporate visual identity (CVI). Symbols such as the logo, name, typography, color palette and graphics are primarily perceived as instrumental in expressing the identity of an organization (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000; Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Nevertheless, many companies spend millions on developing or adjusting their CVI. Unilever, for example, invested ten million euros in developing and implementing a new

logo. Considering the size of these investments, one may assume that the company considers it to be important that the CVI is effectively embedded in an organization after implementing the visual elements. Little is known on the return of investments in CVI. Studies in the area of CVI tend to focus on standardization by design (Melewar and Saunders, 1999; Melewar and Saunders, 2000; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2000; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2001) and the perceived impact on, amongst other things, sales, consumer goodwill, market share and executive recruitment (Melewar and Saunders, 1998). In chapter 5, we distinguished various CVI management measures and it turned out that the number of measures taken significantly influences the consistency of CVI. In chapter 6, we discovered that knowledge of the CVI strategy was an important predictor, and that this was influenced by the knowledge of the strategy of the organization as a whole. We also found that learning processes have a significant influence on CVI as well as on the use of tools and support.

This paper addresses the assessment of corporate visual identity using a 'CVI management audit.' This audit is designed to shed light on relevant practices involving the use of CVI, and focuses on the way a CVI is managed and embedded in the organization. It is assumed that the causes of problems relating to the consistent use of a CVI can be found in the CVI management practices within the organization. The audit instrument was used to evaluate CVI management in three organizations. The results of these case studies shed light on the usefulness of the instrument.

First, we discuss the various approaches to auditing, in particular organizational auditing and audits of organizational communication and corporate identity. Then, the design and rationale of the CVI management audit instrument is outlined. After that, the use and results of the instrument in the three case studies is addressed. The paper concludes with a discussion of the value of the audit instrument and suggestions for future research as well as the practical implications for CVI management that can be derived from the case studies.

## AUDITING IN ORGANIZATIONS

In general, audits are conducted to gather information about strengths and weaknesses within organizations and to provide a foundation for future developments. Auditing is a familiar phenomenon in a variety of fields and professions. Below, we briefly explore organizational audits, communication audits, corporate identity audits, and finally the visual audit.

The underlying principle in organizational audits is continuous improvement of the performance of these organizations. A key concept is quality management, which was originally developed in the context of manufacturing. One of the main

frameworks for managing quality is Total Quality Management (TQM). Factors such as customer orientation, leadership commitment, employee participation and process orientation are measured to gain insight into the level of quality management in the organization. During an audit, the factors investigated are based on specific research objectives and the focus differs among authors (cf. Dale, Boaden Wilcox and McQuater, 1997; Jones and Ryan, 2002; Castka, Bamber and Sharp, 2003; Li and Yang, 2003; Lloréns Montes, Verdú Jover and Molina Fernández, 2003). Methods used are content analysis of documents, self-assessments, surveys and interviews. The advantages of a generic TQM model are its application longitudinally, the fact that it can be applied across business units, and the possibility to compare results among a variety of organizations (Silvestro, 2001; Lagrosen, 2003). The TQM framework has been used in various types of business – such as higher education, healthcare, local authority, e-business, hotel industry – and for studying various areas within the organization such as, for example, knowledge management and information and communication technology (ICT) management.

Communication audits focus on the internal and/or external communication of organizations. A communication audit, which is an assessment of an organization's communication health, is designed to address the efficiency of communication and information management. It analyses formal and informal information flows and describes the communication climate and verbal and non-verbal communicative underpinnings of culture (Loughman, Fleck and Snipes, 2000). It helps senior management to coordinate tasks and responsibilities that are necessary for achieving the goals of the organization (Goldhaber and Rogers, 1979). The results of a communication audit provide a foundation for communication strategies, which should ultimately improve organizational effectiveness (Gray and Laidlaw, 2004). Problems in communication may lie in, for instance, a lack of information on tasks or strategy, poor upward communication, faulty channels and lack of visibility of senior managers. Questions such as who the organization should communicate with, what it should communicate about – and how – can be resolved with an audit. Audits can be used to determine the impact of new communication programs or organizational innovations, to identify the current organizational structure or key communication groups prior to restructuring, to gain insight into communication costs or to develop communication training to solve problems identified by the audit (Goldhaber and Rogers, 1993). Communication audits conducted in organizations undergoing change may generate knowledge that can be helpful in designing communication strategies for similar situations in the future (Quinn and Hargie, 2004). Methods used in communication audits include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, communication logs, observation, network analysis and the critical incidents technique (cf. Hargie and Tourish,



2000; Downs and Adrian, 2004). Well-known is the communication audit of the International Communication Association (ICA), which was originally developed to obtain standardized procedures for assessing the communication system of organizations, and was intended to facilitate comparisons among organizations (Goldhaber and Rogers, 1979; Goldhaber, 2002).

Audits in the area of corporate identity focus on ways in which employees perceive the organization (cf. Van Rekom, 1998; Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000) or external stakeholders (cf. Dowling, 1993). The main methods used are surveys and interviews. Van Rekom (1998) developed an instrument for finding a concise representation of an organization. Via laddering-technique employees are being asked what they do and why it is important. A self-assessment tool for corporate identity was developed by Olins and Selame (2000): it is a survey containing questions about, for instance, how much internal and external stakeholders know about an organization, what its products and services are and what opinions and judgments different stakeholders have about the company. This audit is helpful in the analysis phase of designing a corporate identity program and to (re)define the corporate identity structure. For the latter, Olins (1989) distinguished three types. Where there is a monolithic identity, all activities carry the same brand. An endorsed identity has separate brands, developed for products and services, or parts of the organization; however a visual cue or a descriptor shows its connection with the parent organization. Finally, a branded identity has several brands without any visual or verbal connection to each other or to the parent. Reasons for conducting a corporate identity audit are acquisitions, mergers, diversifications, organizational changes or other types of structural, strategic or management change. Other reasons are misunderstanding of corporate values, or growth of the organization, which may have resulted in mixed messages about what the company is and stands for.

A limited assessment of corporate identity is a visual audit, which only focuses on the visual expressions of the organization and which is usually considered when an organization decides to design a new visual identity. The visual audit consists of an investigation and analysis of how various parts of the organization present themselves in nomenclature, heraldry and symbols, typefaces, uniforms and dress, stationery, publications, advertisements, signage and vehicles (Olins, 1995). Documents and photographs are collected and presented on a ‘wall of shame.’ The idea is that various visual expressions of an organization will result in discussions – and decisions – on the right or wrong way to go in CVI development. A visual audit may also be used as an instrument to give feedback on the materials produced by several departments in the organization and their use of the CVI.

As useful as a corporate identity audit and a visual audit may be in practice, neither focuses on the internal causes of inconsistencies in the CVI. Corporate ident-

ity audits focus on current perceptions of the organization and a visual audit merely shows inconsistencies in presentation; however, both can be very confrontational. The CVI management audit which we present in this paper focuses on the question why such deviations in CVI occurred. Auditing CVI management will be a combination of a visual audit and an organizational audit: the first shows deviations in the application of the CVI and the second is designed to reveal management practices in relation to the CVI which help or hinder applying it consistently. Conducting an audit for CVI management should result in 1) insight into the current situation – strengths and weaknesses in management practices – and 2) options for improvement.

## THE BACKGROUND OF THE INSTRUMENT USED TO AUDIT CVI MANAGEMENT

Within organizational audits, TQM is one of the main frameworks for managing quality. The European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence model is a standardized method within the TQM approach (see [www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org)). This model consists of five attention areas related to organizational aspects, four attention areas to results and a feedback loop (for innovation and learning). The framework is flexible and may be used for auditing specific parts of the organization or specific subjects. We decided to adapt the model of EFQM into an instrument for auditing CVI management because: a) the attention areas in the model were applicable to CVI management practices, b) the model was familiar to many in a wide variety of organizations, c) it included strategic, tactical and operational aspects, and d) it can encompass both structural and cultural practices.

We resolved to focus on the attention areas in the organization part of the EFQM model when designing an instrument for auditing CVI management. In our view, these areas consist of enablers, which determine CVI management and thus the output of the corporate visual identity. The five attention areas in the organization section of the EFQM model are: 1) Leadership, 2) Policy & Strategy, 3) People, 4) Partnerships & Resources, and 5) Processes.

### **Leadership**

Leadership refers to involvement and commitment by senior management, not only in the development phase of a new or adapted CVI, but also during maintenance and management. If they do not foster the CVI and neglect their function as a role model, this will have negative consequences. Managers have to set the right example. Otherwise, the authority of the department charged with implementing and maintaining the CVI will be undermined. Critical factors are vision on corporate identity (what is the organization and what does it stand for?) and corporate

visual identity, the way leaders implicitly or explicitly preach about it, as well as their behavior in practice (applying the CVI guidelines). In chapter 5 we found that the behavior of managers has an effect on the consistency of a CVI.

### **Policy & Strategy**

The goals of the organization should ideally be transformed into a clear policy and strategy, together with plans, budgets, and information and communication about it. There is a significant correlation between knowledge of CVI strategy and the consistency of a CVI (see chapter 6). The main issues in the strategy and policy of CVI management are: 1) to what extent has the positioning of the organization and the central idea of corporate identity been elaborated into a design strategy? 2) the definition of an identity structure (with possible subdivisions such as monolithic, endorsed and branded) and 3) the development and maintenance of practical CVI guidelines for relevant application areas and carriers.

### **People**

The attention area called People relates to the employees. Although a single department may be formally responsible for the development of CVI management, almost every staff member has influence on the outcomes of CVI. The optimal situation is when applying the CVI is perceived as a mutual responsibility and all employees know about the CVI guidelines. Socialization processes, such as formal learning by induction programs or informal learning by feedback or imitating managers, have a significant influence on the consistency of a CVI (see chapter 6). Earlier research in another field showed that employees not always put guidelines into practice (Van Gemert, 2003). When this is the case, it is important to know why not. Knowledge about the CVI should not be restricted to guidelines (how to use CVI), but also include the design strategy of the CVI and its relation to the organization (why use CVI and why it fits the organization).

### **Partnerships & Resources**

Within the working environment, staff members need information and suitable instruments to apply the CVI. What technology is used to distribute information (for instance a digital manual on the Internet) and to support producing and ordering, for instance, technical tools? It is also helpful when staff can rely on selected preferred suppliers and partners who have the necessary knowledge and skills to apply the CVI standards and guidelines. Suppliers and partners may be design agencies or suppliers who produce, for instance, signage (inside and/or outside buildings) or apply the corporate visual identity on vehicles. Earlier research has shown that access to guidelines and preferred suppliers are important instruments for those managing the CVI (see chapter 5).

## Processes

Processes comprise the division of tasks and responsibilities (Who is in charge of developing, ordering and producing CVI items? How do departments work together and are their processes geared to each other? And how are processes monitored and improvements implemented?) Within CVI management, the design of a process may depend on the application area. For example, the design of a leaflet or direct mailing can not be predetermined in detail. It will depend on the professionalism of the staff members who are responsible for producing these communication materials. For application areas such as signage for buildings and vehicles, on the other hand, there is a need for detailed standards and guidelines, and of preferred suppliers with knowledge of the CVI. In this case, procedures will be helpful in producing consistent CVI materials.

Critical factors when measuring the five attention areas in the CVI management audit are based on EFQM and adapted for CVI management, using knowledge gained from earlier studies. An exploratory study on managing the CVI distinguished several dimensions in the management of CVI, which were related to structure, culture and technology (Van den Bosch, 2000). Each dimension included characteristics and practices within the organization helping or hindering consistent use of the CVI. Subsequent empirical studies explored the influences of single measures in managing the CVI, and organizational characteristics and CVI management characteristics on the consistency of a CVI (see chapters 5 to 7). These studies offered some insight into the mechanisms of CVI management and the results were incorporated into the attention areas of the CVI management audit. Table 8.1 shows the critical factors in each attention area of the CVI management audit.

For the reason that the audit should result in improvement options, we adopted the Deming cycle, named after W. Edwards Deming. In the 1950s he proposed that continuous improvement could be analyzed with the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. With regard to CVI management, *Plan* stands for the starting point of the CVI and the intended CVI management practices, *Do* for actual practices, *Check* relates to the assessment of Do in relation to the Plan, and *Act* deals with adjustment and changes needed to make improvements, which should be described in the next version of the Plan. Adopting the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle should result in continuous improvement. In addition to critical factors when managing the CVI, we distinguished factors that affect continuous development, such as assessment practices, identifying suggestions for improvement and developments in each attention area (see Table 8.1).

Insight into critical factors and continuous improvement in each attention area should result in a comprehensive view of managing the CVI in an organization. For assessment, information is needed at a strategic, tactical and operational level.

**Table 8.1: Attention areas, critical factors and continuous development in CVI management**

Attention Area	Critical Factors	Continuous Development
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision on corporate identity</li> <li>• Involvement and commitment of CEO and senior management</li> <li>• Management setting the example</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of organizational developments related to the CVI</li> <li>• Involvement of management in CVI development</li> </ul>
Policy & Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design strategy of CVI and philosophy of CVI design</li> <li>• Definition of identity structure</li> <li>• CVI guidelines for relevant application areas and carriers</li> <li>• Means available for implementing CVI (capacity and budgets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and planned development of CVI, identity structure and CVI management</li> <li>• Monitoring environmental changes and validating their impact on the (use of) the CVI</li> </ul>
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction programs and information for new hires</li> <li>• Investment in knowledge (organization and CVI strategy) and skills of specialists</li> <li>• Knowledge of tools and information channels of CVI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structural and incidental feedback on use of CVI</li> <li>• Encouragement of bottom-up communication related to the CVI</li> </ul>
Partnerships & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital manual which is actual, accessible and applicable</li> <li>• Instruments and technical tools to apply CVI, and order and maintain CVI carriers</li> <li>• Helpdesk</li> <li>• Selection of preferred suppliers</li> <li>• Service Level Agreements with internal and external suppliers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular updates in Digital Manual</li> <li>• Monitoring helpdesk records</li> <li>• Maintenance of CVI carriers</li> <li>• Assessment and corrective actions towards preferred suppliers based on Service Level Agreements</li> </ul>
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization for CVI development and management (tasks, responsibilities and skills)</li> <li>• Regular consultation between corporate identity manager and key figures applying the CVI</li> <li>• Procedures for purchasing CVI carriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bottom-up investigation of problems and suggestions for improvement</li> <li>• Assessment responsibilities and internal departments</li> <li>• Project teams for improvement programs and implementing actions</li> </ul>

## AUDITING CVI MANAGEMENT

We distinguish three steps in the use of the research instrument to audit CVI Management: 1) defining the scope, 2) data collection, and 3) analysis and reporting.

### **Defining the scope**

In the first step the scope of the audit must be defined. For instance, depending on the size and number of locations (including those abroad), a number of specific business units or locations can be selected. Another selection criterion may be the CVI applications. Problems may occur related to the use of CVI on printed materials, whereas the signage on buildings may not need auditing as this may be consistent with the guidelines. These choices have an impact on the selection of auditors. It may be that knowledge of specialized operational areas (for example, ICT issues, vehicles or buildings) is needed in the audit team.

Internal and external documents, such as websites, annual reports, strategy statements, customer documentation, internal and external newsletters provide insight into the business and structure of the organization. These documents also give an impression of how the organization presents itself, either in words or visually. The corporate visual identity handbook – whether printed or available in digital form – shows the CVI guidelines (logo or logos, color palette, typography, images, etc.), their applications and an indication of when the latest revision took place. An intake interview with the person who is responsible for CVI management provides an initial impression of good points as well as bottlenecks in managing the CVI. Information gathered from an analysis of documents and the intake interview is structured into attention areas and critical factors and practices for continuous improvement (see Table 8.1).

The scope of the audit is defined. Key individuals and departments are identified to participate and suitable auditors are selected, depending on the scope.

### **Data collection**

The data collection method consists of a self-assessment carried out by a focus group, a meeting to instruct interviewers, and interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire.

We developed a workbook to use in a self-assessment meeting. This was based on the self-assessment workbook of the Instituut Nederlandse Kwaliteit (INK), the Dutch equivalent of EFQM (see [www.ink.nl](http://www.ink.nl)), and adapted for CVI management. Self-assessment is perceived as a comprehensive and systematic review of an organization's activities and results, which identifies strengths and areas in which improvements can be made (Balbastre Benavent, Cruz Ros and Moreno-Luzón,

2003). In the workbook assessment of CVI management, critical factors and factors related to the continuous improvement of each attention area (see Table 8.1) are presented as multiple-choice propositions about the performance of the organization. Participants choose the most applicable proposition: A, B or C. An A indicates limited attention to CVI in the organization and a C indicates the highest dedication to managing the CVI, underpinned by, for instance, co-operation between different departments and units, and structural attention to improvements in managing the CVI. The B choice represents an intermediate position. Table 8.2 shows examples of propositions in the various attention areas. The example in the attention area People relates to continuous development.

The propositions are discussed in a self-assessment meeting with key figures of key departments and a moderator – an auditor. Visual materials, collected in advance, are used as an illustration of practical situations or to stimulate discussion. Assessing the visual materials is comparable with a visual audit. Pitfalls for focus groups are “groupthink” (Janis, 1982) or group polarization through a “risky shift” or a “cautious shift” (Brown, 1986). To minimize these effects, participants first choose the propositions individually. Participants who have made extreme choices explain their reasons. Then, after some discussion, the final choice is determined. The results of the self-assessment are the choices of the group, which provide an initial indication of strengths and weaknesses in attention areas, and “blind spots” of which the group is unaware, and areas that require further research. Choices A indicate underdeveloped areas (weaknesses) and C choices indicate areas of CVI management which are fully developed (strengths). Information gathered in the self-assessment meeting is checked during in-depth interviews with other members of the organization.

The semi-structured questionnaire for the interviews covers questions on issues in all attention areas (see Table 8.1). Each level (strategic, tactical and operational) has its specific focus. Organizational developments can be explored more fully in interviews at a strategic level, and interviews at a tactical and operational levels deal with issues such as familiarity with and usability of guidelines, preferred suppliers, information channels to get specific information, and the availability and usability of tools. Interviewees are asked to collect visual materials from their unit or department in advance. Interviews are the best method for gathering qualitative information using in-depth questions. Interviewees are able to refer the questions to others if they do not know the answer themselves, and the auditor can go into the process of a special issue: who made decisions on design, where did this person obtain the guidelines from, what was missing in the guidelines, who were involved internally and externally, who selected the supplier, what problems did they come across, and how did they deal with them? When the interviewer asks for a description of the process of producing specific materials,

**Table 8.2: Examples of propositions in a variety of attention areas**

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**Leadership: managers setting the example**

- (A) Managers do not pay much attention to CVI. It is the sole responsibility of the communication department.
  - (B) Managers say that the CVI is important, but they fail to set an example themselves.
  - (C) Managers are aware in their role of setting an example. They encourage the use of the CVI and are critical when it is not applied.
- 

**Strategy and Policy: defining the identity structure**

- (A) The corporate identity structure has been developed in the past but we do not know the reasons for the choices made.
  - (B) Background information on the corporate identity structure has been described and can be found in <to be addressed>.
  - (C) Background information on the corporate identity structure has been described and can be found in <to be addressed>. Criteria for future development are also described.
- 

**People: Incidental feedback (continuous development)**

- (A) Mistakes in applying the CVI are noticed, but nobody talks about them.
  - (B) Mistakes in applying the CVI result in criticism. On the other hand nobody says anything when the CVI is applied correctly.
  - (C) In our organization good use of the CVI is noticed. Mistakes are used to make future improvements.
- 

**Partnership and resources: accessibility of CVI guidelines**

- (A) CVI guidelines are accessible to a select group of employees.
  - (B) CVI guidelines are accessible to the majority of employees.
  - (C) CVI guidelines are accessible to employees and for suppliers of our organization.
- 

**Processes: consultation**

- (A) We do not have regular meetings with CVI on the agenda. Ad-hoc solutions are common.
  - (B) CVI is a subject on the agenda of meetings within the communication department.
  - (C) CVI is also a subject on the agenda in meetings with other departments at an operational level.
-



this provides insight into various critical factors in several attention areas.

Before conducting the interviews, the audit team is provided with information about the organization, the scope of the audit, the interviewees, why they were selected for the audit, and finally instructions for interviewing. For reason of accuracy the interviews are tape recorded (with the permission of the interviewee) and transcribed. To enhance the usefulness of data, every auditor is asked to identify areas, which need to be checked in other interviews (Quinn Patton, 2002). The transcript of the interviews has a fixed order: 1) information about the department, interviewer and relation to CVI management, 2) good points in CVI and CVI management within the organization, 3) wishes, requirements and improvements in CVI and CVI management, 4) influences inside and outside the organization which may have an impact on the CVI and CVI management in the near future and 5) information which should be checked in other interviews or in written documents. The report on 2) and 3) covers all the attention areas (see Table 8.1).

The data-collection phase delivers the results of the self-assessment meeting, which are checked in the interviews. Information gathered in interviews is cross-checked in other interviews or by written documents. Take for example CVI guidelines for specific applications. In interviews it is carefully checked whether interviewees know about the guidelines and how they were given instructions (in an induction program – suitable for the attention area People – or in a manual – suitable for the attention area Partnerships & Resources). When an interviewee mentions guidelines, it is checked whether the guidelines are put down in writing and put into practice. When an interviewee mentions the lack of guidelines, it is crosschecked whether these actually exist and whether the interviewee has in fact been shown them or could have knowledge of.

### **Analysis and reporting**

The last step of the CVI management audit consists of analyzing the results of the self-assessment and the interview reports, a meeting with the auditors to discuss their findings and formulate conclusions and recommendations, and finally the delivery of an audit report.

In preparations for the meeting, the results of the self-assessment are compared with interview reports. Is there a consistent result in critical factors and in practice in use for continuous development? If not, this needs extra attention in the discussion in the meeting with the audit team. Within the meeting, the analysis involves connecting and interpreting the data, qualifying what is more or less important, distinguishing between general findings and those just affecting some parts of the organization and between CVI (design) and CVI management. The meeting results in findings, conclusions and recommendations to improve CVI manage-

ment. Although the CVI management audit mainly focuses on the organizational aspect, which is divided into the attention areas, results may also touch on the design of CVI or on identity issues. Therefore the recommendations may comprise:

- *Identity:* These recommendations are related to the starting points of the design, the design philosophy and the development of the CVI in relation with organizational developments. For instance, new markets and strategic repositioning may need further exploration and strategic decisions about the CVI. The CVI management audit will not produce answers, but it will bring to light what needs to be studied in depth.
- *Design:* Developing a CVI does not always imply introducing a new logo. It may be that typography or the color palette needs adjustments to modernize the CVI or to enhance the applicability of the CVI. Further development may be needed for some application areas.
- *Organization:* There are various possible recommendations for managing the CVI, which are related to one or more of the attention areas covered by the instrument (see Table 8.1). These recommendations do not concern the design of the CVI, but rather the organizational perspective. What needs to be done within the organization to enhance the correct use of the CVI?

The final result is an audit report with findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Conducting a CVI management audit has some practical prerequisites. First, the composition of the audit team should reflect the scope of the audit. For instance, more specialized knowledge may be needed for the various applications of CVI, such as ICT, corporate wear, vehicles or signage on buildings. The audit team includes specialists on specific CVI applications as well as generalists with knowledge of organizational and managerial issues. This approach involves auditors working collaboratively with practitioners (see Jones, 2002). There is a risk of 'interviewers' belief', in which interviewees seek for evidence of their own opinion. They must be objective, unbiased and have some knowledge about CVI applications. Each auditor needs to be trained to listen carefully, to interpret in an unbiased way, and to give good feedback and ask in-depth questions to bring the real issues to the surface.

Second, employees may feel the audit is designed to check whether they are doing things right. Therefore, a letter from someone at a senior level (preferably the CEO) should introduce the audit and ask for everyone's co-operation. Above all, one should emphasize the fact that the most important objectives are to identify current best practice and directions for improvement.

Third, the self-assessment meeting may not be suitable for every organization,

for instance because this type of meeting might previously have had some negative side-effects, it may take too much of the participants' time (they may therefore not get permission from their managers to attend), or there may be frictions between departments. Research has shown that several approaches to self-assessment can be successful, but whatever approach is chosen, it must fit the organization and self-assessment must be considered from a holistic perspective to get the best results (Samuelsson and Nilsson, 2002). Without a self-assessment, extra interviews will be needed to gather sufficient qualitative information.

**CASE STUDIES**

The audit instrument was used to assess CVI management in three organizations in the Netherlands. Two were manufacturing organizations (profit) and one was service-oriented (nonprofit). To ensure anonymity, letters are used to describe the organizations. Table 8.3 provides an overview of the organizations, the scope of the audit and the methods used. We have limited the case descriptions to the main issues and recommended actions.

**Table 8.3: Overview of the organizations, the scope of the audit and methods used**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Methods</b>
A. A multi-utility company (among other things, supplier of energy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All business units</li> <li>• Loose ends in implementation of CVI</li> <li>• Organizational issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• document analysis</li> <li>• intake interview</li> <li>• self-assessment meeting</li> <li>• 13 persons interviewed</li> </ul>
B. A national pension fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization of one of the two brands owned by the fund</li> <li>• CVI (design)</li> <li>• Organizational issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• document analysis</li> <li>• intake interview</li> <li>• self-assessment meeting</li> <li>• 15 persons interviewed</li> </ul>
C. A pharmaceutical company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operations in the Netherlands</li> <li>• CVI (design)</li> <li>• Organizational issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• document analysis</li> <li>• intake interview</li> <li>• self-assessment meeting</li> <li>• 9 persons interviewed</li> </ul>

*Organization A* was the result of many mergers. In general, employees liked the CVI because of the design quality and its application on a range of carriers. The CVI had supported the integration process after the latest merger. *Organization A* was also the owner of many other (product and service) brands, which were inherited from previous mergers and acquisitions. The communication specialists in the business units lacked knowledge of these brands and how to use them in relation to the CVI. New products and services resulted in even more brands. A major organizational issue was a decision on a forthcoming change in the purchasing processes. A central facilities organization was set up to purchase CVI items such as stationery and signage for buildings and vehicles as well as arrange the maintenance of these carriers. Internal and external suppliers were therefore also interviewed and they were asked to record what went well and what could be improved.

The first recommendation concerned purchasing, maintenance and the service level agreements between internal departments as well as between the organization and external suppliers. Second, communication specialists needed to know about the identity structure of CVI – the core brand and its relationship to all the other brands (for products and services). A third recommendation of the audit concerned strategic decisions such as acquiring and selling parts of the company. Negotiations about selling or liberalizing parts of the company also affect the CVI. The CVI carriers have to be adapted or neutralized. Neutralization is necessary to prevent, for instance, vehicles (in bad condition) still being found in the corporate colors after many years. Even when the logo has been removed, a vehicle with conspicuous colors will be recognized and connected to the company, which no longer owns the carrier.

Partly based on our findings, *Organization A* decided to restructure all their brands into a system of four quadrants, which made clear how prominent the corporate logo was, why and when. The first quadrant gave maximum visibility to the corporate (parent) brand, while in the fourth quadrant the corporate logo was not used at all. Over time, sub-brands may develop in one of these extreme directions. The system made clear what the core competences were and which activities were earmarked for sale.

This company conducted a second audit two years after the first one. This time, the focus was on the internal facilities department, which had become responsible for ordering CVI items and maintaining CVI carriers. Maintenance was divided into regular and incidental maintenance – for instance of signage and vehicles – as well as replacing carriers.

Self-assessment in *Organization B* resulted in awareness that there was a lack of cooperation among the various departments involved in the CVI. The communication department was responsible for the CVI, the ICT department for the templates

and the facilities department for mailings to clients. Each department had problems, which could not be solved on their own. Co-operation among the departments would not only help to solve the problems and improve efficiency, but it would have a positive impact on the consistency of CVI as well. During the self-assessment the three departments took the decision to collaborate and work on an improvement plan. The self-assessment also revealed blind spots in the organization, such as the public affairs department, and other departments that needed further assessment, as they felt that they were applying the CVI guidelines correctly. It turned out that the public affairs department simply went their own way and did not feel obliged to comply with the CVI guidelines distributed by the marketing department. Besides, they worked closely with the CEO, who was not sensitive to CVI issues. It turned out that the department that thought they did very well could not see the difference between a good and a wrong layout of a simple item such as a letterhead.

The audit resulted in recommendations and a plan of approach, in which a number of actions were defined. In the first year one employee was given responsibility for CVI development and, step by step, the corporate communications department got visibly involved in CVI management. Although CVI was not at the top of the management agenda, practical action plans and solutions – together with more efficiency (and cost-savings) – were helpful in showing the need for CVI management. There is still co-operation between the departments, which have experienced the value of working together to solve problems. Later the organization hired a corporate communication manager, who is a member of the management team, which is chaired by with the CEO. He is responsible for public affairs activities and there are plans to move CVI management from marketing to corporate communications.

*Organization C* had implemented an appealing CVI and all the employees were proud of it. The designer was still providing consultancy to this organization and especially the in-house studio, which was responsible for applying the CVI on marketing communication materials, such as direct mailings, and packaging. The self-assessment showed that few people knew how to use the CVI and that not every department had access to either the guidelines or the appropriate tools needed to apply the guidelines. For instance, the ICT department did not install the templates that were necessary to create correspondence and presentations according to the CVI guidelines. This was simply not defined in their working procedures. The in-house studio was responsible for archiving materials, but these were not accessible to others, as they worked with different computer systems (Apple, whereas the other employees used computers with Microsoft Windows software). The marketing department wanted a more differentiated CVI for several markets and for special

purposes. An operational CVI team discussed issues monthly, but there was a lack of decisiveness and clear actions to develop the CVI. They just discussed the guidelines and neglected organizational aspects. The CVI itself fitted the type of organization and was greatly appreciated by both the CEO and the staff. Everyone liked to talk about the design philosophy. However, the CVI was stuck at the level of design and was not developed further into guidelines for communication and marketing purposes. The in-house department did not have the knowledge and skills to make this step.

The recommendations we made consisted of a mixture of actions. A strategic CVI platform needed to be created for investigating and developing the CVI – together with external experts – for various markets and audiences. On a tactical level, look-and-feel sessions were recommended for the in-house design team – together with the designer – to extend their knowledge about practical applications. In the operational CVI team knowledge of organizational processes was needed as well as more decisiveness with clear action plans and service-level agreements between departments – for instance to set working procedures and ensure that employees would have the equipment and tools they needed to apply the CVI as well as access to CVI guidelines via the company’s intranet.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the audit was to develop an instrument for assessing CVI management. Its use should result in pinpointing strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommending actions to improve the management of the CVI. In the first part of this section, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the instrument, and in the second we discuss general findings and practical implications for managing the CVI.

The instrument for assessing managing CVI was based on the principles of the Dutch equivalent of EFQM. The advantage of the model was its approach, with areas for attention, in which managing the CVI could be structured in specific practices. It turned out that the attention areas of the EFQM model were applicable for CVI management. Judging actual practices in relation to the Plan-Do-Check-Adapt cycle showed where continuous development was getting stuck and what might help to make improvements. Take for example an organization with outdated guidelines. According to the cycle, new developments may well be checked against the original plan, but when the guidelines have never been adapted (into a new plan), this will hinder continuous development.

The self-assessment brought various issues to light at a very early stage of the audit. Apart from illuminating areas for improvement, self-assessment provides an important cultural benefit because it encourages an ethos of continuous improve-

ment, promotes a holistic perspective and allows people to gain a broader understanding of the business (Samuelsson and Nilsson, 2002). The case studies show that self-assessments may produce positive side effects, which are valuable for CVI management. In general, participants became aware of the reach of CVI management and their role in it. They realized that their view was a partial one and that many had neglected to look further than the boundaries of their own department. In one organization three departments decided to take immediate actions and collaborate. There is always a risk that a self-assessment meeting may generate what's known as 'groupthink' (Janis, 1982) or that group polarization may take place (Brown, 1986). For example, the participants may have a limited vision, the group may be highly selective in presenting information, or that the group may be overconfident about its ideas. We minimized such risks by arranging for propositions to be chosen individually. However, in the discussion afterwards, there is still a risk. Therefore, we had to crosscheck information from the self-assessment with in-depth interviews and additional documents. In one case, for instance, we found a biased self-image. The people in the department thought they were applying the guidelines correctly, but it transpired that they could not see the difference between a correct and faulty application of the CVI in a letter. In-depth interviews were of major importance to collect qualitative information. Crosschecking interviews resulted in more useful information and an ongoing in-depth knowledge of management practices related to the CVI as well as past and upcoming developments in the organizations that would influence CVI and CVI management. Take for example a restructuring of the business, which may create the need for a change in the way CVI management is organized.

Practical issues may influence the results of an audit. Points to consider are the timing of the audit and the authority of the initiator of the audit. The contact person for the audit might not be respected within the organization, which will become apparent during the audit. In a period of organizational change participating departments are not always willing to provide information. There are two prerequisites for conducting a successful CVI management audit: it must be introduced and clearly supported by top management, and secondly, there must be a positive atmosphere. Furthermore, the organization should not be in the middle of a change process. If other processes are likely to interfere with the audit, it is better to postpone it.

The audit instrument is developed to gather qualitative information and make it possible to identify areas that are not covered as well as areas where people just pay lip service to the CVI, but don't actually implement it. Areas can be distinguished that are partially implemented or widely and systematically implemented across the various departments in the organization. The question is whether findings related to managing the CVI could have been revealed in other types of audits.

Another type of audit may touch on aspects of CVI management, just as the CVI management audit may touch on aspects of management practices in other areas. The characteristic of an audit is that it can be applied to a specific subject or to specific business units or departments in the organization. Applying the EFQM produced an instrument for assessing CVI management that was based on a standardized method. A CVI management audit can easily be included in other type of audits, which will result in a more comprehensive view of the organization.

Another important question is the usefulness of the instrument. Most of the critical factors and factors for continuous development have been studied in previous research. However, more research needs to be done to assess the usefulness of the items in the attention areas. To acquire useful data, it was necessary to cross-check information among the methods used, and between interviewees. Occasionally we had to modify or refine the data with information from other sources. Multi-method triangulation and more auditors are necessary to judge the usefulness of the information gathered. Another way to check the usefulness of findings is a feedback presentation for members of the organization. They must be able to recognize their own organization in the findings. Longitudinal studies in the same organizations will enhance knowledge of the robustness of the instrument and the effects of carrying out recommendations.

Further development of the instrument may include other areas of the EFQM model. The audit instrument for CVI management which we developed and used was adapted from one part of the EFQM model: the attention areas of the organization. The other part of the EFQM model, which we did not use, was the result areas, which consisted of 1) employee-related results, 2) customer and supplier-related results, 3) societal results and 4) final results. In the CVI management audit, we assessed the results by producing visuals which provided insight into the presence and use of CVI guidelines. Although it may be difficult to study the result areas of the EFQM model with regard to CVI management, it may be worthwhile including three of them in the further development of the instrument. First, for employee results an employee satisfaction survey could include questions on, for instance, the appreciation of tools used to apply the CVI and the information available on the CVI. Second, customer and supplier results address two types of stakeholders. To gain more insight into customer results, a corporate identity audit (Olins and Selame, 2000) may be useful. To gather more information about supplier results, interviews with suppliers of the organization can be included. Finally, an attempt can be made to adapt the performance indicators of “societal results” in the EFQM model into measurable indicators with respect to the visibility of the organizations corporate social responsibility and the contribution of the CVI to this. For instance, stakeholders can judge various aspects of corporate social responsibility, when the name of the organization and the brand(s) are presented.



Even when the involvement with products and services is low, associations with the corporate social responsibility of a corporate brand can be addressed (Berens, 2004).

In the second part of this section, we discuss some general findings and practical implications of managing the CVI. The case studies have shown that the cause of the problem should not always be attributed to the design of the CVI or unwillingness among employees, but that one should also investigate the conditions under which the guidelines are applied. There may be insufficient cooperation between departments, limited knowledge of the CVI, and poor access to information and tools.

Some authors do not view the management of the visual identity as the most important issue (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Hansen, 2000; Bromley, 2001). However, the results of the CVI management audits show that organizations became aware of the attention they need to pay to management practices related to CVI. The audit revealed the impact of strategic organizational developments on CVI and operational issues related to applying the guidelines. The case studies show that the reason why the CVI needed to be developed was often organizational or overdue maintenance of the CVI. Although most managers responsible for the CVI like to liaise with design agencies, most of the solutions must be found in the organization itself (Murphy, 1989). Implementing a new CVI will not work when management practices are weak.

The involvement of top management and their interest in CVI is essential to get manpower and budgets needed to invest in CVI management. Efficiency and effectiveness in communication may be good motivators, when whoever is responsible for CVI management detects limited interest in the subject among top management. And it is important that the departments responsible for CVI set an example themselves. Comparing the three organizations, we found differing levels of consistency. It seems that expectations of a CVI are higher when it is more consistent and the quality of the CVI carriers is high.

It is widely acknowledged that CVI is a useful instrument for expressing organizational development and a reasonably easy asset to change (see for example Grunig, 2003; Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Conducting a CVI management audit is a good start towards studying CVI in a broader perspective than just design and guidelines. The value of this instrument is that it will help CVI managers to gain more insight into the organizational aspects of CVI management and become aware of their role in managing it. The case studies have shown that the professionals in charge of managing the CVI need to have knowledge of strategic organizational developments – to monitor the fit between CVI and the new situation of the organization – as well as tools and processes applying CVI guidelines at the operational level.

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## Conclusions and discussion

The central theme of this dissertation is managing corporate visual identities (CVI). Three perspectives for studying CVI management are presented: 1) identity, image and reputation, 2) design, and 3) the organizational perspective. The first deals with the objective of a CVI. The second perspective investigates the CVI as means to an end and focuses on its design. The third perspective focuses on processes, instruments and practices applied in order to ensure the correct use of the predefined CVI design. This dissertation focuses on the third perspective, as expressed in the research question:

*What is the impact of management practices and characteristics of the organization on the consistency of Corporate Visual Identity?*

The following sub-questions are derived from the research question:

1. *Which management practices are being used to manage a CVI, what is their perceived importance, and what is the impact of management practices on the consistency of CVI?*
2. *What is the influence of organizational characteristics on the consistency of the CVI?*
3. *What differences in management practices and organizational characteristics can be discerned among different types of organizations?*
4. *How can the management of a CVI be monitored in an organization?*

In this final chapter, first the answers to these four sub-questions are summarized, and then the main research question is answered. Subsequently, various theoretical implications and methodological considerations are addressed, and suggestions for further research discussed. Finally, a number of practical implications that can be derived from this research are presented.

### SUMMARY: ANSWERS TO THE FOUR SUB-QUESTIONS

1. *Which management practices are being used to manage CVI, what is their perceived importance, and what is the impact of management practices on the consistency of CVI?*

Chapter 5 was an investigation on the measures taken in an organization to manage the CVI. A significant relationship was found between the number of organizational measures taken and the perceived consistency of the CVI. It appears to be crucial to have CVI guidelines that are up to date. According to the respondents, a CVI helpdesk, extensive guidelines and regular opportunities for consultation with users, which are scarcely used, seem to be relatively unimportant and are not related to the perceived consistency of the CVI. No relationship could be found between the availability of technical tools, such as for instance templates, and the perceived consistency of the CVI. Remarkable in this study is the importance of managers setting an example. Most organizations do not effectively use this type of norm-setting behavior by people in managerial functions, whereas it proves to be relatively important in the perception of employees and influential for ensuring the consistency of a CVI.

*2. What is the influence of organizational characteristics on the consistency of the CVI?*

In chapter 6 the question was addressed as to whether organizational characteristics influence the perceived consistency of a CVI. A model was developed in which characteristics at the level of the organization as a whole and at the level of CVI management were distinguished. The analysis shows that all CVI management characteristics significantly influence the consistency of a CVI. Knowledge of the CVI provides employees with reasons for maintaining the visual identity, whereas socialization processes can be seen as internalization, resulting in behavior related to the visual identity that is infused with motivation and feeling. Having tools for applying the CVI and support is also relevant to the consistency of a CVI. In the first study (chapter 5), no significant relationship was found between the availability of technical tools, such as for instance templates, and the perceived consistency of the CVI. This can be explained by the wide availability of these types of tools. In the study described in chapter 6, Likert scales and composed variables were used. CVI Tools and Support consisted of five items, not only technical tools, but also information, via up-to-date guidelines, and adequate support.

Organizational characteristics influence CVI management characteristics to some extent and thus have an indirect influence on the consistency of CVIs. Only one organizational characteristic turned out to have a direct influence on CVI consistency. Organizations that have an open and dynamic nature appear to use their CVI more consistently.

*3. What differences in management practices and organizational characteristics can be discerned among different types of organizations?*

In chapter 7, the differences among various types of organizations were analyzed. The most differences were found between profit-making and nonprofit organizations. CVIs are perceived as far more consistent in profit-making organizations. Our analyses also showed significantly higher scores for CVI management characteristics and most of the CVI management instruments in profit-making organizations. Although nonprofit-based organizations are of a more open and dynamic nature, this did not appear to have a significant impact on the consistency of the CVI. On the other hand, an open and dynamic nature did influence the CVI in profit-making organizations. One may assume that profit-making organizations need to react more often to changing situations in a way that affects the perceived consistency of their CVI. Another noteworthy difference between profit-making and nonprofit-based organizations was knowledge of the organization's strategy. This was significantly higher in profit-making organizations and also appeared to have a direct influence on the perceived consistency of the CVI. Knowing about the organization's strategy seems to help in the implementation of the CVI, which results in greater consistency. In the perception of the respondents, profit-making service organizations put the most CVI instruments into practice.

The perceived consistency of the CVI did not differ significantly between manufacturing and service organizations; neither did the organizational and CVI management characteristics, except for significantly more openness and dynamics in service organizations, and the tools and support, which were used significantly more often for CVI in manufacturing organizations.

#### *4. How can the management of a CVI be monitored in an organization?*

In chapter 8, the development and use of a CVI audit was described. The objective of the audit is to monitor CVI management in organizations. The instrument has been designed to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommend actions to improve the management of CVIs.

The instrument used to assess the way a CVI is managed was based on the principles of the Dutch equivalent of the European Foundation for Quality Management (see [www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org)). The methods used were document analysis, a self-assessment meeting and in-depth interviews. The main advantages of the model were that it is structured into areas for attention, and that many organizations already use this model for other purposes. The attention areas of the EFQM model were applicable to CVI management. Judging actual CVI management practices in relation to the Plan-Do-Check-Adapt cycle showed where continuous development was getting stuck and what might help to make improvements.

The self-assessment brought various issues to light at a very early stage of the audit. Crosschecking interviews resulted in more useful information and an ongo-

ing in-depth knowledge of management practices related to the CVI as well as past and upcoming developments in the organizations that would influence CVI and CVI management.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In general, there is a belief that the CVI can easily be managed by the use of guidelines. The proposition underlying this research is that guidelines are necessary, but not sufficient. Managers who are responsible for the CVI spend a great deal of time with design agencies, but tend to neglect important internal organizational factors (Murphy, 1989). But where should they look? And what measures can be taken to enhance the consistency of a CVI?

*What is the impact of management practices and characteristics of the organization on the consistency of Corporate Visual Identity?*

Efforts to manage the CVI will result in more consistency and the CVI management mix should include structural, cultural and strategic aspects.

Guidelines, procedures and tools can be summarized as the *structural* aspects of managing the CVI. Guidelines must be up to date and accessible for employees, and it may be helpful to embed the guidelines in tools. A good support system for applying the CVI is a *sine qua non* for consistent use of the CVI by employees. However, as important as the structural aspects may be, they must be complemented by two other types of aspects.

Among the *cultural* aspects of CVI management, socialization – i.e. formal and informal learning processes – turned out to influence the consistency of a CVI. Managers are important as a role model and they can clearly set an example. This implies that they need to be aware of the impact of their behavior, which has an effect on how employees behave. If managers pay attention to the way they convey the identity of their organization, including the use of a CVI, this will have a positive effect on the attention employees give to the CVI.

Further, it seems to be important that the organization communicates the *strategic* aspects of the CVI. Employees need to have knowledge of the CVI of their organization – not only the general reasons for using the CVI, such as its role in enhancing the visibility and recognizability of the organization, but also aspects of the story behind the CVI. The story should explain why the design fits the organization and what the design – in all of its elements – is intended to express.

The influence of management practices and organizational characteristics on the consistency of a CVI may differ between types of organizations. Knowledge of the strategy within profit-based organizations turned out to be directly related to

the consistency of the CVI. Within all types of organizations, there is a clear relationship between the strategy of the organization and the strategy of the CVI. It is therefore recommended to link the two and tell about this internally. The CVI, including its all of various elements and the visual identity structure, is meaningful in expressing the organization and thus emphasizes the strategy of the organization. The CVI can be used to communicate the organization's strategy internally.

In general, organizational characteristics are related to management characteristics, but the way the CVI is managed is not defined by organizational characteristics. There is always a degree of freedom in shaping the management of CVI in organizations. On the other hand, managing the CVI may set an example for other areas and enhance discussions on how best to engage with and support employees in general.

Before the research described in this dissertation, there was very little known about the way organizational characteristics influence the consistency of the CVI. The results show that there is more to managing the CVI than just creating and monitoring the visual design and the guidelines for using it. CVI management efforts certainly do not stop, after the introduction of a new or adapted CVI.

The definition of the CVI in chapter 1 can therefore be adapted as follows:

*CVI management involves the planned maintenance, assessment and development of a CVI as well as associated tools and support, anticipating developments both inside and outside the organization, and engaging employees in applying it, with the objective of contributing to employees' identification with and appreciation of the organization as well as recognition and appreciation among external stakeholders.*

In this adaptation, tools and support have been added to the definition, as they contribute to knowledge of the CVI. Tools and support are used to apply the guidelines or to communicate more information on the use of a CVI. The other addition concerns the involvement of employees in applying the CVI, and this can be achieved once the CVI is linked to the desired identity of the organization.

## THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

As far as we know, the research presented in this dissertation is the first on CVI management within the field of communication. Research within organizational communication (or business or corporate communication) often focuses on identity, image and reputation. With this dissertation, we stress the importance of CVI within communication studies, since CVI is acknowledged to be one of the most tangible aspects of the identity of an organization.

An initial implication of the findings in the previous chapters concerns the relationship between organizations' internal and external communication. The literature on corporate and organizational communication postulates a strong relationship between internal and external communication (cf. Van Riel, 1992; Jablin and Putnam, 2000). The dominant models of image and reputation management reflect a rather one-way, straightforward perspective on the internal-external relationship (cf. Stuart, 1999; Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001). More recent research has drawn attention to the complexity of this relationship. Various studies have focused on the inverse relationship between external and internal communication – i.e. the extent to which aspects of external communication affect employees. The perceived external prestige of an organization (i.e., how employees think outsiders will view their organization) appears to have a significant effect on the identification and commitment of employees (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Bhattacharya, Rao and Glynn, 1995; Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel, 2001; Carmeli, 2005). These studies underline the idea that the relationship between corporate identity and corporate reputation should not be seen as a one-way causal relationship; in practice, developments in corporate identity tend to influence corporate image or reputation, and vice versa.

The research reported in this dissertation draws attention to another aspect of the 'internal-external' relationship. The studies clearly show that projecting an organizational identity may involve complicated internal processes in organizations, in which employees must be seen as key players. The relationship between internal identification and external expression is dialectic. The identity of an organization is the result of internal practices, i.e. how employees are supported in expressing the identity of their organization and how employees' perceived image of their organization influences their behavior when communicating the identity of the organization.

Birkigt and Stadler (1986) distinguished communication, behavior and symbolism within the identity of organizations. The CVI, as part of the symbolism, is supposed to be easy to manage with guidelines. Most attention is paid to communication and behavior, as those are perceived as more difficult to manage. Internal processes that affect the way organizations express their identity are still seen as something of a 'black box'. Research on CVI management, however, has opened the black box, showing that management effort is required to maintain consistency in the presentation of an organization. Further, it shows that the distinction that is often made between communication, behavior and symbolism may well be an artificial one. Organizations that are working seriously on their internal and external representation tend to extend their CVI from a purely visual concept to one that comprises communicative and behavioral aspects as well. If such a development takes hold, the problem of monitoring and enhancing the consistency of CVI is likely to become even more complex.

Another boundary that seems to be fading is that between strategy and execution. On the one hand, strategic awareness is needed at all levels in an organization. Given the important role played by employees, they must be aware not only of the CVI they are supposed to apply, but also of the strategic considerations behind it and the way it is used. On the other hand, the CVI appears to be a convenient, tangible starting point for more general discussions about abstract strategies and organizational identity (cf. Baker and Balmer, 1997). A change in a CVI should be part of an integrated approach to repositioning an organization. Given these considerations, it seems questionable whether the traditional idea of first deciding on a corporate identity and then operationalizing this into a CVI is tenable in organizational identity, image and reputation management.

Motivating employees and sense making are becoming increasingly important for internal processes. Recent organizational communication research stresses the importance of social capital for knowledge sharing (cf. Van den Hooff, 2005) and change management in organizations (cf. Bennebroek Gravenhorst, Werkman and Boonstra, 2003; Elving, 2005). It is acknowledged that social capital is crucial, and that interaction and dialogue with employees are prerequisites for success (Ridder, 2004). Our research on CVI management has produced similar insights, since the cultural and strategic influences on CVI management are also connected to the social capital in organizations.

The research reported in this dissertation also draws attention to the problem of compliance with rules or guidelines. CVI guidelines are just one example – there are many other guidelines employees have to comply with, including general norms such as not stealing and engaging in respectful behavior, as well as following safety precautions and/or official procedures. Such research is scattered across various disciplines, but the problem is essentially the same. Earlier research by Van Gemert (2003) – in the area of infection prevention protocols in hospitals reveals the fact – that the availability of guidelines is not sufficient to ensure compliance among employees. Van Gemert focused mainly on the usability of the protocols, and the extent to which they are geared to the employees' working situations. Elling (1991) investigated the use of safety rules in industry, and focused strongly on their textual quality. The studies reported in this dissertation focused not so much on the characteristics and quality of the CVI guidelines, but more on the organizational and contextual influences that may affect compliance. With respect to guidelines, it will be fruitful to extend the academic research on organizational communication to a more systematic investigation of the factors affecting compliance among employees in a variety of contexts.

In the introduction to this dissertation, a distinction was made between three research perspectives: 1) the identity, image and reputation perspective, 2) the design perspective and 3) the organizational perspective. The latter is the main



focus in this dissertation. But it is evident that a CVI is a means to an end, and its consistency is related to identity, image and reputation. CVI management is tripartite, involving all three perspectives. The identity, image and reputation perspective has to do with the internal-external relationship, while the design can be seen in terms of symbols or carriers which are used to link the internal and external organization. Design is the carrier that allows the identity of an organization to be visualized and thus supports the image and reputation of the organization. There is also a complex, intertwined relation with organizational practices. Efforts made in the organization ultimately influence both the development of design of the CVI as well as its identity, image and reputation. The organizational perspective is of course internal, although it might also be influenced by external developments.

## METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This dissertation is based on an empirical study within twenty Dutch organizations. In total, responses from 686 employees were processed. The first comment concerns the population of the study. External stakeholders were not included in the study, because the aim of this dissertation was to provide insight into the internal organizational perspective.

The population had to include employees for three reasons. First, employees must apply the CVI guidelines and have the greatest influence on its consistency. Second, employees have a clear overview of management practices and the consistency of the CVI in their organization. Besides, external stakeholders may have an impression of the consistency of a CVI, but they cannot judge the managerial practices within an organization that are related to the CVI. The third reason was a practical one, as it was easier to include employees than customers of an organization in our research. Initial contacts, usually a corporate communication or corporate identity manager, were asked to select employees from different departments and at different hierarchical levels who have to deal with the CVI directly or indirectly.

The dependent variable was the *perceived* consistency of a CVI. An alternative way to measure the consistency of a CVI might have been a visual audit. However, there are reasons for not carrying out such an audit. First of all, an objective judgment of the CVI requires guidelines that are up to date. In most cases development of the CVI does not start with guidelines, but is followed by guidelines. The results of the study in this dissertation show that guidelines are not always up to date. Second, guidelines are not always unambiguous. Third, it would require very extensive research to collect all the materials and define the way to rate consistency. This would require an additional study to create a validated scale for CVI consistency.

In this research we deliberately left out some aspects of the corporate visual identity and its management. Although we now have a good overview of the factors that influence the consistency of CVI, the following limitations should be noted.

#### 1. Identity structure of the organization

Assessments of CVI consistency do not have to be restricted to organizations with a single logo. We disregarded the type of identity structure in the organization. There might be a difference between organizations that have a single corporate logo (monolithic identity) and those with multiple logos and visual identities (endorsed or branded identity structure). All design elements and applications need to be reviewed to check consistency with respect to the use of the visual identity structure as well as the design elements defined for applications within that structure.

#### 2. Authority in relation to the development of a CVI

In the research, we have tried to make a distinction between employees involved in the development of CVI and those who were not. However, the results of descriptive analyses showed inconsistent answers and therefore we did not further explore differences between respondents who are involved in development of the CVI and those who are not. One can assume that employees directly involved may need different or additional management instruments for the CVI.

#### 3. Centralized and decentralized management

When assessing a CVI within an organization, we found that employees were not always aware of the measures that had been taken. This suggests that within an organization the management of CVI might differ among departments and business units. In this research, we did not explore differences between head offices and decentralized operating organizations, nor did we measure differences among business units and departments.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Every study answers some questions while raising others. Further studies may focus on managing the CVI or this study may be adapted and transformed into studies in other areas. Below, three suggestions for further study are described.

#### 1. Additional organizational aspects

Until now, corporate visual identity has not been studied from an organizational perspective. In developing and using an audit instrument for qualitative research, we identified a number of aspects, which could be added in further studies. For

instance, the issue of communication departments setting an example, the type of involvement of management and departments – e.g. for consultation or asking for decisions, and cooperation between departments with respect to the CVI. In future empirical studies on CVI management these could be included as measures or management instruments. Another question could explore how CVI management is organized centrally, what is done decentrally and how people operating at these two levels cooperate? The variables could be extended to include perceived authority, both centrally at the corporate level, as well as at the peripheries of the organization. Decentralized organizations may be operating companies within a country and/or abroad. Some useful questions might be: where do respondents get information on the CVI, whether guidelines are adapted for decentralized organizations, and who takes the final decisions on adapting a CVI.

## 2. Design and production quality

In this study, we found that organizational characteristics at the level of managing the CVI have a major influence on the consistency of a CVI. In addition, the design may also influence the consistency. We suggest that further studies in this area should include design and the production quality of a variety of applications. The consistency of a CVI could also be partially determined by the quality of its design and the quality of the production of carriers.

As far as the quality of design is concerned, design associations could be linked to the desired reputation of the organization. Respondents could be asked to select a number of characteristics that they associate with the reputation of their organization as well as associations that are linked to the design of the CVI of their organization. Respondents outside the organization could also be asked to select associations of CVIs and perceptions of the reputation of the corresponding organizations. It would be interesting to examine the differences between respondents who know about the organization and its CVI compared to respondents who are unfamiliar with the organization and the CVI.

Further, respondents could be asked to judge the perceived production quality of applications carrying the CVI. In specific application areas judgments could be made of the quality of the materials used for signage and printing quality (both as regards the use of paper and technique). Even the number of applications that use the CVI might have an affect. As one of the respondents in a focus group put it: ‘you can’t help being proud of our CVI and you want to apply it, because it looks so good and the production quality is so high’. Including the quality of the design – linked with the associations referring to corporate identity – would further enhance the multidisciplinary approach in this field of study.

### 3. Identification with the organization

We focused on organizational characteristics and did not include measures for exploring employees' identification with their organization and how this might affect the use of CVI guidelines and thus the consistency of a CVI. The results of the focus groups suggest that there might be a difference in the degree of motivation to comply with CVI guidelines between employees who identify strongly with the organization they work for and those who do not. It would be interesting to know whether employees' identification with the organization influences motivation and commitment to applying CVI guidelines. Research in the area of CVI management could be extended with questions relating to employees' identification with the organization, as well as their motivation and commitment to applying CVI guidelines.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The research on CVI management was designed to bridge the gap between academics and professionals. The latter – mostly communication or identity managers – are interested in mechanisms for enhancing the consistency of a CVI. Managing CVI should be seen as an integrated approach for expressing the organization via internal and external communication. Providing employees with CVI guidelines that are up to date and accessible seems to be a necessary condition for consistent use of the CVI. Embedding the guidelines in easy-to-use tools will not only make them more efficient, but also provide more effective means of presenting the organization. Such tools and guidelines have to be developed systematically in such a way that they meet employees' needs. Furthermore, employees need to know that such tools exist and where to find them. As easy and straightforward as this may sound, organizations still have many problems with the dissemination and the usability of CVI guidelines.

However, the results of the studies reported here suggest that there is more to CVI management than just providing guidelines and templates. To enhance the intrinsic motivation of employees to comply with the CVI guidelines, they must know enough about the strategic importance of the CVI and the rationale behind it. The rationale for the CVI may be incorporated in the corporate story (Van Riel, 2000) in such a way that the design philosophy of the CVI is connected to the associations the organization wants to establish in its corporate identity. In an ideal CVI design strategy, corporate values are transformed into visual expressions of the organization. CVI visualizations of the corporate story help explain what the advantages of the CVI are with respect to visibility, distinctiveness, transparency, consistency and – where applicable – authenticity. This will make the guidelines that prescribe how to apply the CVI more meaningful.

Furthermore, conveying the CVI should be perceived as a collective responsibility. Serious attention should be paid to the various levels of management by providing appropriate information and challenging managers to contribute to the image and reputation of the organization by using the CVI. Managers must be made aware of their powerful potential contribution as role models.

Corporate visual identity should be managed using a multi-channel approach. Ideally, a CVI manager or coordinator must be appointed, or at least there should be someone with the responsibilities of a CVI manager. He or she needs to have a clear vision on the CVI in relation to strategic developments in the organization. This knowledge is needed at an early stage, as the CVI may be used for visualizing the organization's strategy. The CVI manager needs to have the necessary competencies and resources to develop CVI management in terms of identity-image-reputation and design as well as organizational aspects. In managing the CVI, developing the design of the CVI may seem to be the most appealing and productive thing to do. However, once the design has been presented, it may well be that an even more challenging task lies ahead.

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# Appendix to chapter 1, 2 and 4

## Corporate Visual Identity applications

Depending on the type of business, the following applications may carry one or more elements of the corporate visual identity. The following list is not intended to be complete, but it does provide an overview of possible applications.

### Buildings

#### *Architecture*

#### *Outside building*

signage on building  
signage at entrance  
information column  
flags  
banners  
signposting in the area  
signposting on the street

#### *Inside the building*

entrance  
reception/information desk  
signposting  
plans  
room signs  
displays  
badges  
furniture  
lecterns

#### *Interior decoration*

carpets  
floor covering  
window decoration

#### *Restaurant items*

crockery  
cutlery

tablecloth  
placemats  
napkins  
sugar and milk sachets  
menu card  
displays  
ashtrays

#### *Office items*

pens  
memo bloc  
writing pad  
binders (spines)  
agenda  
mouse pad  
paperclips  
stickers for diskettes/CD-ROMs  
postage stamps  
tape

### Fleet

vehicles  
boats  
airplanes  
trains/trams  
buses  
transport trolleys  
supermarket trolleys  
promotion trolleys

## **Corporate clothing**

representative clothes  
working clothes  
safety clothes  
promotional clothes  
sport clothes  
promotional gifts (scarves/ties)

## **Printed materials**

### *Stationery*

letterheads  
envelopes  
business cards  
memos  
reports  
address label  
response card  
with compliments card  
press letterhead  
fax

### *Forms*

### *Informative or promotional items*

annual report  
brochures/leaflets  
catalogue  
manuals  
instructions for use  
newsletters  
magazines  
posters  
advertising (corporate or human resource)  
advertising (commercial)  
direct mailings

### *Value items*

ID cards  
contracts  
policies  
certificates

### *Digital/screen*

Internet (Web design)  
displays on mobile phones  
PowerPoint presentations  
TV  
screensaver  
banners on Internet  
e-mail address block

### *3D presentation*

displays  
presentation systems  
exhibition stand  
packaging  
bags

### *Sponsoring*

billboard or advertising column  
stadium signage

### *Presentation in guides*

telephone guide  
Yellow pages  
street plan

## **Business gifts**

### **Miscellaneous<sup>1</sup>**

signature tunes for radio  
ring tones for mobile phones  
voice response systems

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<sup>1</sup> Although these are not strictly visual, they can nevertheless be considered as identity carriers

## Appendix to chapter 6

The selection of organisational characteristics and CVI management characteristics is based on an earlier exploratory study by Van den Bosch (2000). The 'Leiden Octahedron' was used as a model to explore the dimensions that influence the consistency of a CVI. The model was adapted from Leavitt (1965) and developed in the Netherlands by Demenint, Van der Vlist en Allegro (1989). The 'Leiden Octahedron', which visualises the way an organisation reacts to a dynamic environment, consists of six clusters of variables: organisation goals, strategy, structure, culture, technology and people. People work towards common goals and the results are influenced by strategy, structure, culture and technology. In the exploratory study general theories and concepts were applied to CVI management. In this research on the impact of organisational characteristics on Corporate Visual Identity, the results of the exploratory study were transformed into a questionnaire, which was sent to a number of organisations in the Netherlands.

## Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

# Huisstijlmanagement: praktijken, impact en evaluatie

Dit proefschrift gaat over het managen van een huisstijl. Het doel is om meer inzicht te krijgen in maatregelen die worden toegepast en hun effect op de consistentie van de huisstijl. De vraagstelling voor dit onderzoek startte acht jaar geleden toen ik operationeel verantwoordelijk was voor de huisstijl van Digital. Ik vroeg mijzelf af hoe het kwam dat de huisstijl geen voet aan de grond kreeg in het bedrijf. In de inleiding (hoofdstuk 1) is een aantal praktijksituaties beschreven die inzicht geven in de omgeving waarin het managen van een huisstijl kan plaatsvinden. De anekdotes illustreren de praktijk bij een (minimale) wijziging van het beeldmerk, verandering van strategische bedrijfsdoelstellingen die leiden tot aanvullingen op de huisstijl, logo's voor producten die oneigenlijk worden toegepast, nieuwe leveranciers, de inzet van internet als nieuw medium, en de situatie bij een overname.

In Nederland staat het begrip huisstijl ondubbelzinnig voor de presentatie van een organisatie, met gebruikmaking van visuele elementen, zoals logo, kleurpalet, typografie en aanvullende symbolen. Met 'de stijl van het huis' wordt de reikwijdte van het begrip groter. Ook de toonzetting, de manier van communiceren en het gedrag van medewerkers vallen dan onder de 'stijl van het huis'. Vertaling van 'huisstijl' in het Engels is lastig, omdat 'housestyle' vaak wordt geassocieerd met interieur design. Corporate identity sluit nauwer aan bij de 'stijl van het huis'. In dit proefschrift is gekozen voor de vertaling in 'Corporate Visual Identity' (CVI), enerzijds omdat dit het begrip 'huisstijl' het best duidt en anderzijds omdat in reeds verschenen literatuur over het onderwerp eveneens CVI is gehanteerd. De algemene vraagstelling van het onderzoek luidde:

*Wat is de impact van maatregelen en organisatiekenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl?*

Om deze vraag te beantwoorden zijn vier deelvragen gesteld:

1. *Welke maatregelen worden gebruikt om de huisstijl te managen, hoe belangrijk zijn deze en wat is de impact van deze maatregelen op de consistentie van de huisstijl?*
2. *Wat is de invloed van organisatiekenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl?*
3. *Wat zijn de verschillen in maatregelen en organisatiekenmerken tussen verschillende typen organisaties?*
4. *Hoe kan huisstijlmanagement worden geëvalueerd in een organisatie?*

In het eerste, theoretische hoofdstuk (hoofdstuk 2) worden kort enkele ontwikkelingen beschreven in onze westerse maatschappij die van invloed zijn geweest op de huisstijl van een organisatie. Er worden drie perspectieven gepresenteerd om huisstijlmanagement te onderzoeken.

Binnen en buiten de organisatie vinden ontwikkelingen plaats die van invloed zijn op de huisstijl. Drie externe ontwikkelingen worden onderscheiden. Allereerst, het begrip merk ('brand') wordt niet meer alleen voor producten en organisaties gebruikt. Inmiddels wordt het begrip ook toegepast voor personen of steden (denk aan het 'branden' van New York en Amsterdam met slogans als I♥NY en I *amsterdam*). Ten tweede, consumenten zijn kritischer geworden en willen de organisatie achter de producten kennen. Begrippen als maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen en de reputatie van een organisatie worden geïntroduceerd. Ten derde, de technologische vooruitgang van de massamediale communicatiemiddelen zoals televisie en internet heeft meer mogelijkheden gecreëerd voor visualisatie van communicatie. In onze westerse maatschappij worden we bedolven onder visuele prikkels. In de organisatie zijn twee ontwikkelingen van invloed geweest op het managen van een huisstijl. Het personeel werkt niet meer voor het leven bij een organisatie. Allerlei voorzieningen die in het verleden personeel aan de organisatie bonden, zijn afgebouwd. Toch wil de organisatie haar medewerkers binden aan het bedrijf. Bedrijfswaarden en beelden van organisaties lijken nu het bindmiddel te zijn. De tweede ontwikkeling betreft de autonomie van het werk. Technologische ontwikkelingen hebben geleid tot meer mogelijkheden die tegelijk risico's in zich dragen voor het managen van de huisstijl. Vroeger hadden enkele afdelingen met de huisstijl te maken, zoals secretariaten en typekamers waar brieven en rapporten werden getypt. Logo's werden verstrekt door de afdeling communicatie of public relations en een drukkerij of ontwerpbureau leverde het 'artwork'. De technologische ontwikkelingen hebben geleid tot autonomie in de werksituatie. Iedereen schrijft brieven en maakt gebruik van e-mail. Logo's worden van het internet gedownload, met het risico dat de resolutie niet geschikt is voor andere toepassingen dan het beeldscherm. Dit heeft tot gevolg dat veel meer medewerkers invloed hebben op de visuele uitstraling van hun organisatie.

Huisstijlmanagement kan worden bestudeerd vanuit drie perspectieven. Het eerste perspectief, dat van identiteit, imago en reputatie, heeft betrekking op het doel van de huisstijl. In literatuur over identiteit en imago zijn concepten gepresenteerd, waarin de huisstijl (visuele presentatie van de organisatie) wordt genoemd. In één model wordt de huisstijl gewaardeerd als een onderdeel van de corporate strategie (het bepalen van de merkenstructuur) of de corporate identiteit (de symboliek die de organisatie representeert). In een ander model wordt huisstijl gezien als een belangrijk onderdeel van de corporate communicatie. Onderzoeken in dit perspectief richten zich vooral op het meten van reputatie en de relatie met ele-

menten die de identiteit van een organisatie bepalen. Aan de hand van recente literatuur lijkt de waarde van een merk steeds belangrijker te worden. Het is nog onduidelijk wat daarin het aandeel van een consistente huisstijl is. Huisstijlmanagement in het tweede perspectief, het design-perspectief, heeft te maken met huisstijl als middel om het doel te bereiken. Onderzoeken in dit perspectief betreffen vooral huisstijlelementen of geselecteerde toepassingen, zoals logo, consistentie op het web, of huisstijlelementen op verpakkingen. Onderzoek in dit perspectief zou huisstijl meer holistisch kunnen benaderen vanuit de combinatie van elementen. Een ander vraagstuk is wat de levensduur van een huisstijl is, waarbij het aannemelijk is dat het beeldmerk een langere levensduur heeft dan additionele elementen, zoals typografie, fotografie en kleurenpalet. Het derde perspectief betreft huisstijlmanagement vanuit het organisatieperspectief, waarbij de focus ligt op de processen, activiteiten en praktijken in een organisatie om een huisstijl te managen. In literatuur is aangegeven dat bij veranderingen door fusies en overnames de visuele presentatie van de organisatie het gemakkelijkst is aan te passen. De richtlijnen geven vervolgens aan hoe de huisstijl toegepast moet worden. Er is echter nog weinig onderzoek verricht naar het organisatieperspectief van huisstijlmanagement.

Hoofdstuk 2 eindigt met de conclusie dat het managen van een huisstijl, als zichtbaar en tastbaar aspect binnen de corporate identiteit, meer aandacht verdient. Het ondersteunt daarmee tevens de kritiek van een aantal wetenschappers, die van mening zijn dat corporate identiteit teveel vanuit alleen het grafisch ontwerp wordt bekeken, en dat bij toekomstig onderzoek een combinatie van communicatiestudies en organisatiestudies gewenst is. De focus van dit proefschrift ligt vooral op het organisatieperspectief.

In hoofdstuk 3 vervolgt de theoretische verkenning met de vraagstelling hoe de huisstijl de corporate reputatie zou kunnen ondersteunen. Aan de hand van het reputatiemodel van Fombrun en Van Riel (2004) is per dimensie bekeken op welke manier de huisstijl kan bijdragen. De vijf dimensies zijn: zichtbaarheid, onderscheidend vermogen, authenticiteit, transparantie en consistentie. Aan de hand van voorbeelden wordt duidelijk dat in principe op elke dimensie de huisstijl reputatie kan ondersteunen. De vijf dimensies zijn nauw met elkaar verbonden. Toch willen we de rol van huisstijl binnen reputatie niet overschatten, omdat andere aspecten zoals communicatie en het gedrag van de organisatieleden eveneens een belangrijke invloed hebben op de reputatie van een organisatie.

De volgende vier hoofdstukken vormen de kern van het proefschrift. Hierin wordt het empirisch onderzoek naar huisstijlmanagement vanuit het organisatieperspectief beschreven.



In hoofdstuk 4 is de manier van dataverzameling beschreven en worden descriptieve resultaten gepresenteerd. In twintig organisaties zijn circa zeventig vragenlijsten verspreid. De selectiecriteria voor de organisaties waren: het hoofdkantoor is in Nederland gevestigd, de organisatie is van een bepaalde grootte (minimaal circa 400 personeelsleden) en de organisatie is niet met een huisstijlverandering bezig (de laatste wijziging minimaal twee jaar geleden). Deze eis is gesteld omdat tijdens een huisstijlverandering de huisstijl mogelijk meer aandacht krijgt. De twintig organisaties bestonden uit profit- en non-profitorganisaties, uit producerende en dienstverlenende organisaties en organisaties die zich op de zakelijke en/of consumentenmarkt richten. In dit onderzoek richten we ons op de mening van de medewerkers; zij moeten namelijk de richtlijnen van de huisstijl toepassen, hebben een goed overzicht of de huisstijl volgens de richtlijnen wordt toegepast en weten welke maatregelen worden ingezet voor het managen van de huisstijl. In totaal zijn 686 vragenlijsten verwerkt. De analyses uit de hoofdstukken 5, 6 en 7 zijn gebaseerd op dezelfde vragenlijst.

Zeventien procent van alle respondenten heeft aangegeven direct betrokken te zijn bij de ontwikkeling van de huisstijl en hen is gevraagd inzicht te geven in de huisstijl. Huiskleuren werden het meest genoemd, gevolgd door het logo en de lettertypes. Iets meer dan de helft van de direct betrokken respondenten kende de achtergrond bij de visuele elementen en het beeldmerk. Een derde gaf aan dat de gewenste identiteit was beschreven. Opmerkelijk is dat binnen dezelfde organisatie, respondenten die hebben aangegeven direct te zijn betrokken bij de ontwikkeling van de huisstijl, niet altijd dezelfde antwoorden gaven. Respondenten die niet direct betrokken waren bij de ontwikkeling van de huisstijl, gaven aan via diverse kanalen informatie over de huisstijl te vinden. Tevens was de optie gebruikt om tekst toe te voegen. Daarin werd aangegeven dat de informatie niet aanwezig of verouderd was. Een eerste voorlopige conclusie is dat de actualiteit van de informatie van invloed kan zijn op de consistentie van de huisstijl.

Vervolgens zijn drie bijeenkomsten met focusgroepen gehouden in drie organisaties, die respectievelijk hoog, gemiddeld en laag scoorden op de consistentie van de huisstijl. De centrale vraag was of de scores uit hun organisatie waren te verklaren met de eigen indruk over de huisstijl en de organisatorische aspecten van de huisstijl. De uitkomsten leiden tot de veronderstelling dat de beschikbaarheid van richtlijnen en sjablonen niet voldoende is. De verschillen tussen de organisaties doen vermoeden, dat huisstijlmanagement praktijken en organisatiekenmerken van invloed zijn op de huisstijl, en dat de consistentie van de huisstijl niet toegeschreven kan worden aan één aspect. Tenslotte bleek dat in de organisatie met de hoogste score op consistentie de huisstijl ook taalgebruik en klantenbehandeling omvat. In de andere organisaties bleef huisstijl beperkt tot de visuele presentatie.

In hoofdstuk 5 staat de beantwoording op de eerste deelvraag centraal: welke maatregelen worden gebruikt om de huisstijl te managen, hoe belangrijk zijn deze en wat is de impact van deze maatregelen op de consistentie van de huisstijl? De maatregelen die zijn onderzocht, zijn onderverdeeld in structuurgerelateerde maatregelen en cultuurgerelateerde maatregelen. Structuurgerelateerde maatregelen zijn: uitgebreide huisstijlrichtlijnen, actuele huisstijlrichtlijnen, toegang tot de huisstijlrichtlijnen, inzet van technische hulpmiddelen (zoals bijvoorbeeld sjablonen), aanwezigheid van een helpdesk voor de huisstijl, aanwezigheid van een huisstijlmanager en de aanwezigheid van voorkeurleveranciers. Cultuurgerelateerde maatregelen zijn: huisstijl als onderwerp in een introductieprogramma, voorbeeldgedrag van managers en regelmatig overleg met gebruikers van de huisstijl. Niet alle toegepaste maatregelen werden even belangrijk gevonden. In het algemeen werden de cultuurgerelateerde maatregelen het minst toegepast in organisaties. Het gedrag van managers werd als erg belangrijk gewaardeerd, terwijl volgens de respondenten slechts 27% van de managers daadwerkelijk het voorbeeldgedrag toonde en de huisstijl goed toepaste. In een regressieanalyse is de invloed van de maatregelen op de consistentie van de huisstijl onderzocht. Zes van de onderzochte maatregelen bleken van invloed op een consistente huisstijl: het voorbeeldgedrag van managers, actuele richtlijnen, de aanwezigheid van een huisstijlmanager, voorkeurleveranciers, toegang tot de richtlijnen en huisstijl in het introductieprogramma. In een volgende regressieanalyse bleek dat de toegevoegde variabele van het totaal aantal toegepaste maatregelen de meeste impact heeft. Daarnaast waren het voorbeeldgedrag van de managers en de actuele richtlijnen cruciaal voor een consistente huisstijl. We komen tot de conclusie dat het wel degelijk loont om een huisstijl te managen.

In hoofdstuk 6 wordt de invloed van de organisatiekenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl beschreven (deelvraag 2). Er zijn vijf algemene organisatiekenmerken samengesteld en drie op het niveau van het managen van de huisstijl. De vijf algemene organisatiekenmerken zijn: 1) kennis van de organisatiestrategie, 2) hulpmiddelen en ondersteuning, 3) kwaliteit van managers, 4) interne communicatie en 5) de openheid/dynamiek van de organisatie. Op het niveau van huisstijlmanagement zijn de kenmerken: 1) kennis van de huisstijlstrategie, 2) huisstijlhulpmiddelen en ondersteuning, en 3) socialisatie of leerprocessen (formeel en informeel) over de huisstijl. De gekozen variabelen zijn gerelateerd aan de strategie, structuur (hulpmiddelen en ondersteuning) en cultuur (managers en socialisatie) van de organisatie. Er zijn drie sets hypothesen geformuleerd. In de eerste wordt de directe invloed van de organisatiekenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl verondersteld. De tweede set veronderstelt een directe invloed van de huisstijlmanagement kenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl. De derde set variabelen veronderstelt een directe invloed van organisatiekenmerken op de kenmer-

ken van huisstijlmanagement. De AMOS-analyse resulteerde in een directe invloed van de huisstijlmanagement kenmerken en van de openheid/dynamiek van de organisatie op de consistentie van de huisstijl (verklaarde variantie .50). De drie huisstijlkenmerken werden beïnvloed door de organisatiekenmerken, met een verklaarde variantie tussen .13 en .30. Er is een duidelijke relatie tussen de huisstijlmanagement kenmerken en de consistentie van de huisstijl en hoewel de kenmerken van huisstijlmanagement een relatie hebben met de algemene organisatiekenmerken, worden ze er niet door bepaald. Organizatiekenmerken hebben een indirecte invloed op de consistentie van de huisstijl. Dit geeft huisstijlmanagers mogelijkheden om voor een groot deel zelf huisstijlmanagement in te richten.

Een resultaat dat niet in een hypothese was opgenomen, was de directe invloed van de huisstijl hulpmiddelen en ondersteuning op de kennis van de strategie van de huisstijl en op de leerprocessen op het gebied van huisstijl. De inzet van hulpmiddelen en ondersteuning helpt medewerkers informatie over de (achtergronden) van de huisstijl te vergaren en daarmee krijgen zij kennis over de strategie van de huisstijl in de eigen organisatie.

In hoofdstuk 7 wordt de derde deelvraag beantwoord: wat zijn de verschillen in maatregelen en organisatiekenmerken tussen verschillende typen organisaties? Er is onderscheid gemaakt tussen profit- en non-profitorganisaties en tussen producerende en dienstverlenende organisaties. Gekeken is naar de maatregelen op het gebied van huisstijlmanagement die zijn genomen in de verschillende organisaties, en naar de invloed van de organisatiekenmerken en de huisstijlmanagement kenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl. De regressieanalyses resulteerden in voorspellers voor een consistente huisstijl.

In elk type organisatie was het voorbeeldgedrag van managers een belangrijke voorspeller voor een consistente huisstijl. In dienstverlenende organisaties bleken daarnaast het up-to-date zijn van de huisstijlrichtlijnen, voorkeurleveranciers voor de productie van middelen, het onderwerp huisstijl in een introductieprogramma en de aanwezigheid van een huisstijlmanager voorspellers te zijn. In producerende organisaties bleek juist de toegang tot de huisstijlrichtlijnen een belangrijke voorspeller te zijn. De consistentie van de huisstijl verschilde niet significant tussen producerende en dienstverlenende organisaties. Met uitzondering van de openheid/dynamiek van de organisatie waren er ook geen significante verschillen in de algemene organisatiekenmerken en huisstijlmanagement kenmerken.

De meeste verschillen zijn gevonden tussen de profit- en non-profitorganisaties. In profit-organisaties waren, naast het voorbeeldgedrag van de managers, voorkeurleveranciers en de aanwezigheid van een huisstijlmanager van belang en bij non-profitorganisaties de up-to-date huisstijlrichtlijnen, voorkeurleveranciers, het onderwerp huisstijl in een introductieprogramma en de aanwezigheid van een

huisstijlmanager. De huisstijl is consistentier in profit-organisaties en de scores op de kenmerken van huisstijlmanagement waren eveneens significant hoger. Hieruit concluderen we dat profit-organisaties meer inspanning leveren voor een consistente huisstijl. In profit-organisaties hadden de kennis van de strategie van de organisatie en de openheid/dynamiek van de organisatie een directe invloed op de consistentie van de huisstijl. Een mogelijke verklaring is de noodzaak voor een profit-organisatie om zichtbaar en herkenbaar te zijn. Als medewerkers zich hiervan bewust zijn, kan dit leiden tot een betere toepassing van de huisstijlrichtlijnen.

In hoofdstuk 8 wordt de derde deelvraag beantwoord: hoe kan huisstijlmanagement worden geëvalueerd in een organisatie? Hiervoor is de ontwikkeling en toepassing van een huisstijlmanagement audit beschreven. Dit instrument heeft tot doel om binnen een organisatie te kijken naar sterktes en zwaktes in het managen van de huisstijl en om aanbevelingen te doen voor verbeteringen. Het instrument is gebaseerd op het model van de European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM), dat wordt gebruikt voor kwaliteitsmanagement. Dit model bestaat uit negen aandachtsgebieden, waarvan vijf in het organisatiedeel en vier in het resultaatendeel van het model. Het organisatiedeel is uitgewerkt voor de huisstijlmanagement audit. Voor de aanpassing van de meetcriteria in de aandachtsgebieden is gebruik gemaakt van resultaten uit de eerdere kwalitatieve en kwantitatieve studies (uit hoofdstukken 4-7) op het gebied van huisstijlmanagement. De vijf aandachtsgebieden zijn: leiderschap, beleid en strategie, medewerkers, partners en middelen en, tot slot, processen. Het kwalitatief meetinstrument bestaat uit de analyse van algemene informatie over de organisatie en de huisstijl, een zelfevaluatie met een focusgroep en diepte-interviews. Verzameling van visueel materiaal illustreert de toepassing van de huisstijlrichtlijnen. De zelfevaluatie is gebaseerd op een methode van INK, de Nederlandse variant van het EFQM. Triangulatie door het toepassen van meer methoden en door de inzet van meer interviewers leidt tot bruikbare informatie.

Het instrument is ingezet in drie organisaties. Dit resulteerde in de bevinding dat de zelfevaluatie in een vroeg stadium knelpunten aan het licht kan brengen. Bij een zelfevaluatie moet wel rekening worden gehouden met het risico van groepsdenken.

Hoofdstuk 9 staat in het teken van conclusies en de beantwoording van de onderzoeksvraag. Vóór dit onderzoek was weinig bekend over de invloed van maatregelen en huisstijlkenmerken op de consistentie van de huisstijl. Het leek vanzelfsprekend dat huisstijlrichtlijnen beschikbaar waren. Deze richtlijnen moeten wel actueel zijn. Het is zinvol om de richtlijnen zoveel mogelijk in te bouwen in hulpmiddelen. Richtlijnen, procedures en hulpmiddelen zijn te beschouwen als

een structurele aanpak in het managen van de huisstijl. Een culturele aanpak is socialisatie, waarbij medewerkers door formele en informele leerprocessen worden aangezet om de huisstijl toe te passen. Het voorbeeldgedrag van de managers speelt hierin een belangrijke rol. Als zij huisstijl belangrijk vinden en toepassen, zal dit een positief effect hebben op het omgaan met de huisstijl bij de ondergeschikten. Het blijkt dat de kennis over de strategie van een huisstijl eveneens van invloed is op de consistentie van de huisstijl. Medewerkers moeten niet alleen kennis hebben over het hoe toepassen van de huisstijl, maar ook over het waarom. Het gaat dan niet alleen om de algemene functies van een huisstijl, zoals de herkenbaarheid van de organisatie, maar ook over de achtergronden bij de huisstijl: het verhaal achter het logo en waarom de visuele elementen passen bij de identiteit die de organisatie wil uitdragen.

Tot slot wordt de nieuwe definitie van huisstijlmanagement geformuleerd:

*Huisstijlmanagement is het planmatig onderhouden, evalueren en ontwikkelen van een huisstijl, de hulpmiddelen en ondersteuning voor het toepassen ervan, daarbij anticiperend op de ontwikkelingen in en om de organisatie, en het engageren van medewerkers, met als doel mede een bijdrage te leveren aan intern de identificatie van medewerkers met en waardering van de organisatie en extern aan de herkenning en waardering van de organisatie.*

### **Theoretische implicaties**

In literatuur over corporate en organisatiecommunicatie wordt een sterke relatie verondersteld tussen interne en externe communicatie (zie o.a. Van Riel, 1992; Jablin and Putnam, 2000). Modellen over imago en identiteit laten deze relatie zien vanuit één richting, van intern naar extern (zie o.a. Stuart, 1999; Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001). Recent onderzoek toont aan dat de relatie complexer is en dat de perceptie van medewerkers over hoe buitenstaanders hun organisatie zien, van invloed is op hun identificatie met de organisatie (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Bhattacharya, Rao and Glynn, 1995; Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel, 2001; Carmeli, 2005). In deze studies komt naar voren dat de relatie niet in één richting gaat, maar dat intern en extern elkaar beïnvloeden. In dit proefschrift komt een ander aspect in de relatie intern-extern naar voren. De resultaten tonen dat complexe interne processen, waarin medewerkers de actoren zijn, van invloed zijn op hoe een organisatie zich extern presenteert. Hiermee is de relatie dialectisch geworden. Interne processen zijn van invloed op de presentatie van de identiteit en omgekeerd is de perceptie van het imago van de organisatie van invloed op het gedrag van medewerkers.

De identiteits-mix van Birkigt en Stadler (1986), waarin communicatie, gedrag

en symboliek zijn onderscheiden, is kunstmatig. Organisaties die veel inspanning leveren om zich door middel van hun huisstijl te presenteren, beperken zich niet tot het visuele aspect. Het managen van een huisstijl wordt daarmee nog complexer.

De grenzen vervagen eveneens tussen strategie en uitvoering. Als medewerkers zo belangrijk zijn in het uitdragen van de identiteit, moeten zij zich bewust zijn van de strategische keuzes van een huisstijl. Omgekeerd kan de huisstijl bijdragen tot de discussie over de strategie van de organisatie (Baker and Balmer, 1997). Het motiveren van medewerkers en de zingeving worden steeds belangrijker. Medewerkers zijn het sociaal kapitaal in een organisatie en de dialoog met medewerkers is een voorwaarde voor succes (Ridder, 2004). Het onderzoek naar huisstijlmanagement geeft vergelijkbare inzichten, omdat cultuurgerelateerde maatregelen en de kennis van de strategie achter de huisstijl ook verbonden zijn met de medewerkers, het sociaal kapitaal.

Voor het toepassen van de huisstijl moeten regels en richtlijnen opgevolgd worden. Eerder onderzocht Van Gemert (2003) regels en richtlijnen op een ander gebied: het functioneren van infectiepreventie-protocollen. Van Gemert richtte zich op de bruikbaarheid van de protocollen. Elling (1991) onderzocht de veiligheidsregels in de industrie en richtte zich op de kwaliteit van teksten. In dit proefschrift over huisstijlmanagement gaat het niet om de kwaliteit van de richtlijnen, maar wel over de organisatorische en contextuele factoren die van invloed zijn op het naleven van de richtlijnen.

In het begin van het proefschrift (hoofdstuk 2) is een onderscheid gemaakt tussen drie perspectieven. Het perspectief van identiteit, imago en reputatie heeft te maken met de relatie intern-extern. Het tweede perspectief, het design, is als het ware de drager van de symboliek en fungeert als link tussen intern en extern. Het derde perspectief, het organisatieperspectief, heeft een complexe relatie met zowel intern als extern. De interne praktijken kunnen zowel het design van de huisstijl als de beeldvorming van de organisatie extern beïnvloeden. Het organisatieperspectief is intern, maar wordt ook beïnvloed door externe ontwikkelingen.

### **Praktische implicaties**

Huisstijlrichtlijnen zijn noodzakelijk voor het goed toepassen van de huisstijl. Deze richtlijnen moeten wel actueel en toegankelijk zijn, en het is efficiënt om de richtlijnen in te bedden in gemakkelijk te gebruiken hulpmiddelen. Dit lijkt evident, maar toch blijkt dat veel organisaties hiermee problemen hebben. Echter, er is meer dan richtlijnen en sjablonen. Het is zinvol als medewerkers de strategie van een huisstijl kennen. De suggestie is om visualisaties van de huisstijl op te nemen in een 'corporate story' (Van Riel, 2000) en aan te geven wat de beoogde effecten zijn in relatie tot de zichtbaarheid, het onderscheidend vermogen, transpa-

rantie, consistentie en – indien toepasbaar – authenticiteit. Veel organisaties maken zich vooral zorgen over hun reputatie. Er zijn echter vooral investeringen nodig in de interne organisatie. Aandacht moet worden besteed aan verschillende managementniveaus. Zij moeten worden uitgedaagd om bij te dragen aan de gewenste reputatie en zij moeten zich bewust worden van hun rolmodel.

Een huisstijlmanager of -verantwoordelijke moet een heldere visie hebben op de huisstijl in relatie tot de organisatorische ontwikkelingen. Deze ontwikkelingen moeten vroegtijdig bekend zijn, omdat de huisstijl ook kan bijdragen tot het visualiseren van de strategie van de organisatie. De huisstijlmanager moet de competenties en middelen hebben om zowel het design van de huisstijl te ontwikkelen als de organisatorische kant ervan in te vullen. Hoe aantrekkelijk en productief de design-kant van de huisstijl ook is, daarna komt pas écht de uitdaging.

## Curriculum Vitae

**Annette L.M. van den Bosch** (1956) was born in Den Ham (Overijssel). In 1975 she received her V.W.O. (Atheneum-B) certificate from the Van Maerlantlyceum in Eindhoven. She studied Industrial Design at the Academie Industriële Vormgeving in Eindhoven, (which was subsequently renamed The Design Academy) and got her degree in 1980. From 1980-1984 she worked for an audiovisual department in a college in Utrecht, and from 1984-1999 in the marketing and corporate communications departments at Digital, a large international computer and software company. During the period from 1992-1999, she also studied social sciences at the University of Utrecht. In cooperation with NykampNyboer she wrote her thesis on maintaining corporate visual identities. A practice-oriented book on corporate visual identity management – based on her doctoral thesis – was published in the Netherlands in 2000. Since March 1999 she has been a senior consultant at NykampNyboer, a Dutch company which specializes in implementing and managing corporate visual identities for national and international clients. Alongside her consulting activities for NykampNyboer, she worked on her PhD at the Department of Communication Studies of the University of Twente in the Netherlands.



