

# Corporate Identity: An Analysis of Evolution Over Time

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## *Abstract*

*The aim of the research is to explore the evolution of the Corporate Identity (CI) construct by identifying what constructs of CI are fundamental in each decade, and develop an updated Corporate Identity Taxonomy based on systematic literature review, Big-Data analysis, and exploratory primary research. A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted, accompanied by a Big-Data analysis of the SLR through word frequencies, word search, and word cloud functions. Based on the SLR, the Big-Data Analysis, compared and aligned with the industrial development of each decade, the fundamental constructs of CI in each decade were identified, forming an updated CI Taxonomy. The study clarifies the fundamental Corporate Identity constructs as emerged in each decade and the formation of a Corporate Identity Taxonomy through the systematic literature review and the big-data analysis that were researched. A significant part of the proposed model was based on clues retrieved from existing research.*

**Keywords:** Corporate Identity, Systematic Literature Review, Big Data Analysis, Industrial Development, Global Markets, Global Competition

## 1. Corporate Identity Evolution

The industrial development created for corporations the need for identification. Corporate Identity (CI), that could be defined as a projection of “what the organization is” (Balmer, 1995; Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997), or the “*set of meanings by which an object allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it*” (Suvatjis & de Chernatony, 2005), could turn into a tool for differentiation and competitive advantage. As the weight of the CI was realized, its strategic importance was increased. Through its emergence, CI was

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identified as unity of elements that interact and coexist as a living organism; starting from Newman's reference to the Identity of Macy's in New York in 1953 (Balmer, 1998), to reach the current state of CI in 2020. Being a concept that has developed tremendously throughout these decades, this study offers a systematic literature review (SLR) that gathers, summarizes and forms various concepts investigated since its introduction. Also, supported by big-data analysis, it provides an updated CI taxonomy enriched with all elements of CI that have been introduced up to now. That may be of significant assistance for managers and researchers since it approaches CI through multidisciplinary lenses. The aim of the research is to explore the evolution of Corporate Identity by identifying what constructs of CI are fundamental in each decade, and developing a CI Taxonomy of the elements that consist CI. There is a significant range of factors that affect the internal and external environment of the corporations. Combined by a degree of overlap between CI elements and the vast amount of research that has been performed up to now, this study intends to create a holistic picture of the CI gathering and summarizing the most reliable sources, forming an updated CI Taxonomy through its analysis.

RQ1: How has the Corporate Identity structure evolved through the decades?

RQ2: What constructs of the Corporate Identity are fundamental in each decade, under study?

RQ3: Are there external factors influencing the formulation of the Corporate Identity construct?

The structure of the paper is the following: first, a review of the literature is provided, taking a historical perspective since 1950s, next the results-discussions are presented, implications are discussed and conclusions for businesses, and academia are drawn.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 1950s – 1970s: Concern on Corporate Image**

The Third Industrial Revolution in 1969 emerged change in the information theory and power of data (Phillbeck & Davis, 2019). It introduced more efficient tools and methods via information technology that had as a consequence the automation and digitalization of manufacturing (Choi et al., 2019). The growth of business schools in universities was testified during the period of the post-World War II, where the first important histories of management were written and outlined the field's noble origins. Main characteristics of that period are considered to be the rapid industrialization and the popularity of division of labor. Yet, poor production efficiency and unsystematic management decisions were observed, as the production methods were crude, and the human workforce used to produce less than it was capable of due to inefficient work methods (cited in Cummings & Bridgman, 2016). Newman's reference to the identity of Macy's in New York could be characterized

as case point for CI in 1953 (cited in Balmer, 1998). Corporate image should not be confused with CI; a corporation's identity consists of "*its own creation and communications to the public what it is*" (Marguiles, 1970), while a corporation's image refers to what the public believes that the corporation is. Each corporation owns a CI from day one - an identity that represents what it has achieved to convey publicly what it is (Marguiles, 1970).

A corporation is defined as an impersonal form of organizational structure whose main challenge is the building of CI from the moment of its syllepsis. Its image, which may be an outcome of million dollars spent and the various publics with which it associates, should communicate its unique meaning to the public and should be emerged through the continuous alignment of the corporation's name with the activities/products/services it is engaged (Feldman, 1969). Feldman (1969) also states that its name should be "distinctive and memorable". Its decision may be a conspicuous element of their marketing plan, especially in an era of merger and diversification. When CI began to gain impetus, it was perceived as a problem of graphics. The concept has broadened to include everything associated with the company; nomenclature, company signs, graphics, and the surroundings (cited in Dreyfus, 1970). The first attempt for corporations' name changes was through name initialization due to diversification, pronouncing difficulties, and abandonment of firms' original purpose (Feldman, 1969). Every company holds a special identity that is communicated in every action, just like individuals. The need may emerge due to outmoded name, change in management, failing sales curve, industry change, a merger or acquisition. Corporate identification may be impactful only when top level management supports a comprehensive plan that embraces each element (Marguiles, 1970).

Yet, CI was found to have implication not only to the corporate design, but it could also fit into the corporation's structure since it would be properly planned and would have top level management support. CI works as a connection between itself and other segments of the company as part of total communication. It has the ability to improve horizontal communications among departments concerned creating an internal alignment of the corporation (Click, 1973). CI should be aligned with both employees and stakeholders; employees should be acquainted with the aims, goals, and culture of the company along with their role in its success, while stakeholders should be aware of the short-term and long-term image of these actions. Thus, the corporate philosophy, corporate design, and corporate communication are introduced for the first time (Marguiles, 1970). Since then, the concepts of Corporate Image and CI were seen only in visual terms (Balmer, 1995).

## **2.2 1980s: Corporate Culture & Corporate Communication**

Toffler (1980) takes the societal diagnosis of corporate change a step further by introducing the third tidal wave in history of change. The first one took place 10,000 years ago through the agricultural revolution, the second one by the beginnings of the industrial revolution, and the third one is creating a new civilization. Corporations tend to emphasize their unique characteristics that reflect the actual needs, values, and lifestyles of a demulsified third wave society. In order to overcome the identity crisis that

is upheld, go beyond the boards of mass production and economic profit for the first times; they also want to contribute to the solution of complex ecological, racial, moral, sexual, social, and political problems turning into multipurpose institutions (Toffler, 1980). These multipurpose institutions, according to Toffler (1980), would serve as a response to five revolutionary changes in actual conditions of production.

In 1980s, due to the growing emphasis on CI, the need for differentiation emerged CI as a strategic performance factor to the wide financial Industry (Balmer & Wilkinson, 1991). CI though consists of its business mix, name and nomenclature, products and services, visual presentation, management style and depth, plus communication styles and policies. As cited in Bick et al. (2003), CI was regarded as an assembly of visual cues – both physical and behavioral which can make a company be recognized and distinguished from others (2003). Downey (1986) along with Portugal and Hallogan (1986) tends to embrace as well the fact that CI regards the comprehensive and orchestrated presentation of what a corporation is, where it is going, and how it is differentiated. Both mention the market participations and competitive distinction, the business mix, while Downey (1986) adds the unique history of the corporation, the communication policies and practices, and nomenclature. Portugal and Hallogan (1986) added the communication of a corporation's strategic commitments, the organizational character and standards of performance. Identity could be used as a source of creating credibility, understanding and support among a range of key publics; and Corporate Culture could be described as the window on the corporate soul (i.e. CI) (Downey, 1986). It reflects the corporate personality, influencing every part of organizational life and shaping interactions both within the company and with the external environment (Brondoni, 2002). According to Downey (1986), Corporate Culture is framed through the corporation's shared values, beliefs and behavior, while Corporate Image as the way a corporation is perceived by its various publics (1986).

An effective CI analysis and framework may create a better differentiation margin for the corporation, lead to more accurate spending decision-making, and increase the ability of top-level management for targeted appraisal in the business environment. All these factors may contribute to Business Strategy, providing the corporation with a competitive advantage towards its competitors. (Ackerman, 1983). A pure CI could provide a base from which advertising and other deliberate corporate communications may generate impact. Through proper execution, it projects all the decisions and methods applied that build focus, differentiation, gravity and identification towards the external environment, emerging it into a critical strategic activity. (Portugal & Halloran, 1986). Thus, corporate image and culture, communicated properly to the internal and external environment, may emerge the strategic decision-making of a company through a more powerful CI.

### **2.3 1990s: Corporate Personality, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Brand Management, ACID Identity, Corporate Marketing & the International Corporate Identity Group**

During the 1990s, globalization has changed the economic reality; competencies of multinational companies become more mobile and knowledge intensive, as foreign direct investment strategies tend to be commonplace (Narula & Dunning, 2000). Moreover,

sustainable development has affected policies from local to international as a result of growing interest in industrial ecology since the Earth Summit of 1992. That tendency reflected the need for improved standards of living for the majority of world's population in developing countries (Deutz & Gibbs, 2004). On top of that, new technology and production processes, changing forms of international dependency, and the appearance of new social parameters has also emerged through this decade (Portes & Kincaid, 1989).

Balmer and Stotvig (1997) support that in order to acquire a favorable image, top level management should achieve in-depth understanding and efficient management of the organization's CI. Effective management of CI creates a positive perception of the organization's key stakeholders, via the acquisition of favorable corporate image, and corporate reputation over time, (Balmer & Wilson, 1998). By ensuring this positive perception, the main objective of the CI Management is also achieved. As a result, Balmer et al (1997), support that an organization may "*achieve competitive advantage which ultimately contributes to the bottom line and business survival*". CI encompasses corporate strategy, philosophy, history, business scope, plus the range and type of products and services offered. It is multi-dimensional and draws on multiple disciplines, while it actively depends on the corporate personality (Balmer & Stotvig, 1997). Balmer (1995) characterizes Corporate Personality as the cornerstone of CI information, while Balmer and Stotvig (1997) add that it could be described as values held by employees within the corporation. The fact that differentiates Strategic Corporate Personality though, according with Balmer (1995), is that these values, information, ideologies reflect the organization's mission and philosophy. A strategic perspective is also introduced to the definitions of CI and Corporate Image as well. Strategic CI refers to the alignment of organization's innate character and the organization's mission and philosophy. Strategic Corporate Image refers to the mirroring of the perceptions held of a corporation by its major publics to the Strategic CI of the organization emerging a likeliness to be positive (Balmer, 1995). The elements comprising the CI mix have been variously framed as strategy, culture and communications (Balmer, 1995), symbolism, behavior and communication and culture, market, communication design, product and services (Schmidt, 1995), also projected in previous decades as well.

Balmer and Soenen (1999) introduce the new CI Mix which consists of three main pillars; the Soul (core values, culture, internal images, employees' affinities, history), the Voice (symbolism, controllable communication, non-controllable communication personnel and corporate behavior, indirect communication), and the Mind (vision and philosophy brand architecture, product and services performance strategy, corporate performance, corporate ownership) of the organization. These three pillars are surrounded and counter-interact with the stakeholders, reputations, and the environment. Communication is an important asset of Corporate Identity, as introduced by Balmer & Soenen (1999) through the Voice. Corporate Communication is categorized as three-part focus system (primary, secondary, tertiary), and as Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) – the integration of management, organizational, and marketing communication – according to Schultz in 1994 (cited in Balmer & Gray, 2000). Integrated communication justifies the level of commitment expected from the corporation, as it has become essential due to increasing competition and the complexity of management (Gnecchi, 2006).

Moreover, the ACID test was introduced. ACID is the acronym for Actual, Communicated, Ideal, Desired identity. Actual identity refers to what the organization is. Communicated identity refers to how the organization is perceived by the publics and how it communicates. Ideal identity refers to the optimum positioning of the organization in its market, taking into consideration its pros and cons and the external environment. Desired identity refers to the identity which the C-suite and the top-level management wish to acquire. Such an approach transforms CI consultancy, management, and scholarship to a management discipline that is more proactive and strategically oriented; where gaps occur between the ACID identities, then corrective actions are needed (Balmer & Soenen, 1999). “*The modus vivendi of the framework is that senior executives should ensure that there is a dynamic congruence among the identity types*” (Balmer et al., 2009). The responsibility of an organization’s identity lies in the Chief Executive Officer, the C-Suite, and the top-level management in general. It is frequently observed the inseparability between CI and Corporate Culture in the Literature Review. Also, Visual Identity could be described as the translation of Corporate Culture. Visual symbolism may play a vital part in encapsulating organizational reality and transform into a key factor in Corporate Culture through effective Corporate Communication (Balmer, 1995). All these dimensions are included in the new CI mix mentioned above, through the soul, voice and mind of the organization. The process of changing or creating a corporate image and reputation though is complex and directly connected with the management of an organization’s CI; what marketers sometimes prefer to call the Corporate Brand (Balmer & Stotvig, 1997).

Another characteristic of this phase is the notion of the Corporate Brand. The principles of Branding extensions to CI have tended to align it closer with marketing (Balmer, 1998). Corporate brands, also mentioned as “*services brands*” (Balmer 1995; De Chernatony, 1999), has replaced reference to CI. Actually, the acquisition of strong corporate brand has been identified as an objective of CI management (cited in Balmer & Gray, 2000). Establishing the desired CI involves proper Corporate Branding, or the ‘positioning’ of the whole company (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Successful Corporate Brand management lies in adopting a concrete corporate mission and philosophy, along with deeply understanding the company’s corporate personality and CI (Balmer, 1995). Part of the problem was that CI was perceived as design-based rather than a management area based on marketing mix. It is observed that the 5<sup>th</sup> “p” of marketing – people – tends to be neglected. Efficient customer-company interaction is crucial in developing an effective projection of the CI (Balmer & Wilkinson, 1991). These elements could create positive impact only if they are communicated well.

As corporations grow, their portfolio expands, along with business models, services, and products; so, their needs for a strategic brand portfolio. And “the more complex and varied is a company brand portfolio, the more difficult is the competitive settlement that deals in conjunction with other epochal moments of its life (acquisitions, mergers, change of shareholders or top management)”, as Gneccchi & Ricotti pinpoint (2001). Brand & corporate architecture is an emerging necessity as the development of business models demands contemporary solutions in order to create competitive advantage.

It is also important to highlight a landmark of this field, as in the mid-1990s this area gained greater attention through the launch of the International Corporate Identity Group (ICIG) at the House of Lords in 1996, framed by the Strathclyde statement on CI (Bick et al., 2003). According to the ICIG, every corporation is identified through its unique identity. It articulates the corporate ethos, aims and values and represents a sense of individuality that is able to increase the differentiation level of the organization within its competitive environment, when well-managed. CI may turn into a mighty means of various disciplines & activities essential to a corporation's success. It may also advance the visual cohesion needed to ensure coherence between all corporate communications and result in the alignment of corporate image consistency with the organization's defining ethos and character. An organization develops the ability to build understanding and commitment channels among its diverse stakeholders through effectively managing its CI. That fact may be manifested by attracting and retaining customers and employees, achieving strategic alliances, gaining the support of financial markets and generating a sense of direction and purpose. Hence, CI is a strategic issue; it is differentiated from traditional brand marketing as it is interconnected with all of a corporation's stakeholders and the multifaceted way in which an organization communicates (ICIG, 1995).

#### **2.4 2000s: Ethical Identity & Formation of Multi-dimensional Corporate Taxonomy**

The external environmental forces have may occurred a remarkable impact on the evolution of CI during the 2000s. Economic globalization has efficiently affected the premium on manufacturing, and especially of the exportable kind as world markets offer near-limitless demand for manufactured exports from developing countries (Rodrick, 2006). On top of that, the creation of technology-income relationship is emerged through innovative investment as the development of new technologies is perceived as fundamental in the structural dynamics. The key to the transformation though is not the computer nor the effects or productivity of IT but the network, plus the market-creation prospects of Information & Communication Technology products and the internet (Gualerzi, 2010).

Corporate Communication is the process through which stakeholders perceive the CI, image and reputation of an organization. Consequently, CI and Corporate Communication may imbue a distinct competitive advantage in many organizations, if they are managed from a strategic perspective (Balmer & Gray, 2000). A company should communicate with a consistent and effective tone of voice in order to establish strong corporate brand and accomplish competitive advantage (Melewar, 2003). Ethical standards and justice are also seen as a key factor in the implementation of Corporate Communication as well (Bendixen & Abratt, 2007). "*The concept of ethical identity transcends the notion of corporation as a discrete entity*" (Balmer et al., 2007, p.13). By identifying ethics through social connectedness, openness, critical reflexivity, and responsiveness, the need for alignment between actual, communicated, desired, ideal and conceived identity becomes of paramount importance (Balmer et al., 2007). The identity, according to Abratt et al. (2003), is

defined as the embodiment of the corporation. It constitutes the communication, both visual and behavioral media, of the core values, strategy and philosophy of the corporation through the interaction with the consumer via its products/services. Thus, both Melewar (2003) and Suvatjis and de Chernatony (2005) frame the CI as the set of meanings through which an organization gets to be known and through which people are allowed to describe, remember and relate to it.

As for Corporate Branding, Abratt et al. (2003) describe it as a manifestation of the feature that differentiates a corporation from its competitors and a reflection of the corporation's ability to satisfy consumer's needs. The acquisition of a favourable corporate branding is a main objective of business identity management. The senior management of a corporation is involved in corporate branding, establishing the attributes of the corporation's identity via a clearly defined branding proposition. The concept of corporate branding is interrelated with the concepts of corporate reputation and corporate image, while there is also a degree of correlation with perception as well (Balmer, 2001). Most authors tend to agree that the corporate brand expresses the identity, values, vision and culture of a company (Balmer & Grey, 2003; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Keller, 2000), therefore becoming the element that provides cohesion and a point of reference in the relationship between the corporation and the stakeholders (cited in Villagra et al., 2015). Its focus is on all internal and external stakeholders and networks, based on a broader marketing mix, and is experienced via total corporate communication (Balmer, 2001).

As various concepts were emerged in a corporation level through time, Balmer and Greyser (2006) emerged Corporate Marketing framing these concepts into one. For the first time, a solely marketing approach on corporate identity is introduced. A corporate marketing philosophy is a natural step forward to marketing evolution and introduces a revised corporate marketing mix (the 6Cs) as an illustrative framework representing the key element that underpin this expanded point of marketing; Character (CI), Communication (Corporate Communications), Constituencies (Marketing and stakeholder management), Covenant (Corporate Brand Management), Conceptualisations (Corporate Reputation), Culture (Organizational Identity). It can be perceived as a vortex that synthesizes corporate level perspectives and concepts that have been defined and involved from the 1950s. Thus, the orchestration of these concepts provides the cornerstone of Balmer's corporate marketing mix (Balmer & Grayser, 2006).

CI has been approached through different perspectives; it is the first time though that these perspectives are gathered under the same frame. Melewar (2003) developed an expanded multi-dimensional taxonomy of the elements that CI consists of; these are Corporate Communication (Controlled, Uncontrolled, Indirect), Corporate Design, Corporate Culture (values, mission, philosophy), Behavior, Corporate Structure, and Corporate Strategy. Identity is also distinguished into faces: actual, communicated, desired, ideal, and conceived (Balmer et al., 2007). On top of that, the notion that CI is not only identifiable, but can also be managed, is flourished through the 2000s. These elements discussed from Melewar (2003), combined with the literature already existed and the concepts of corporate branding, corporate reputation and corporate personality, frame the CI taxonomy in the 2000s.

## 2.5 2010s-Present: Digitalization and Corporate Social Responsibility Practices

Introduced in the World Economic Forum in 2016, the term Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) or Industry 4.0 is a fact. 4IR focuses on digital technologies that may enhance the workflow coherence (Phillbeck & Davis 2019), and the quality of the biophysical and social environment serving as a key economic factor in the next-generation society through environmental industry. It may also be of strategic importance for strengthening economic competitiveness (Dezhina & Ponomarev, 2014). 4IR intends to emerge strategic dialogue beyond the digital revolution, which is considered to be as the transition from the industrial to information age. 4IR is set up on the foundations of datacentric Third Industrial Revolution, through rapid exchange of information. Technologies such as internet of things, genetic modifications, artificial intelligence, advanced materials, robotics, neurotechnologies, and machine vision are gradually integrated into people's physical, political and social environment (Phillbeck & Davis, 2019).

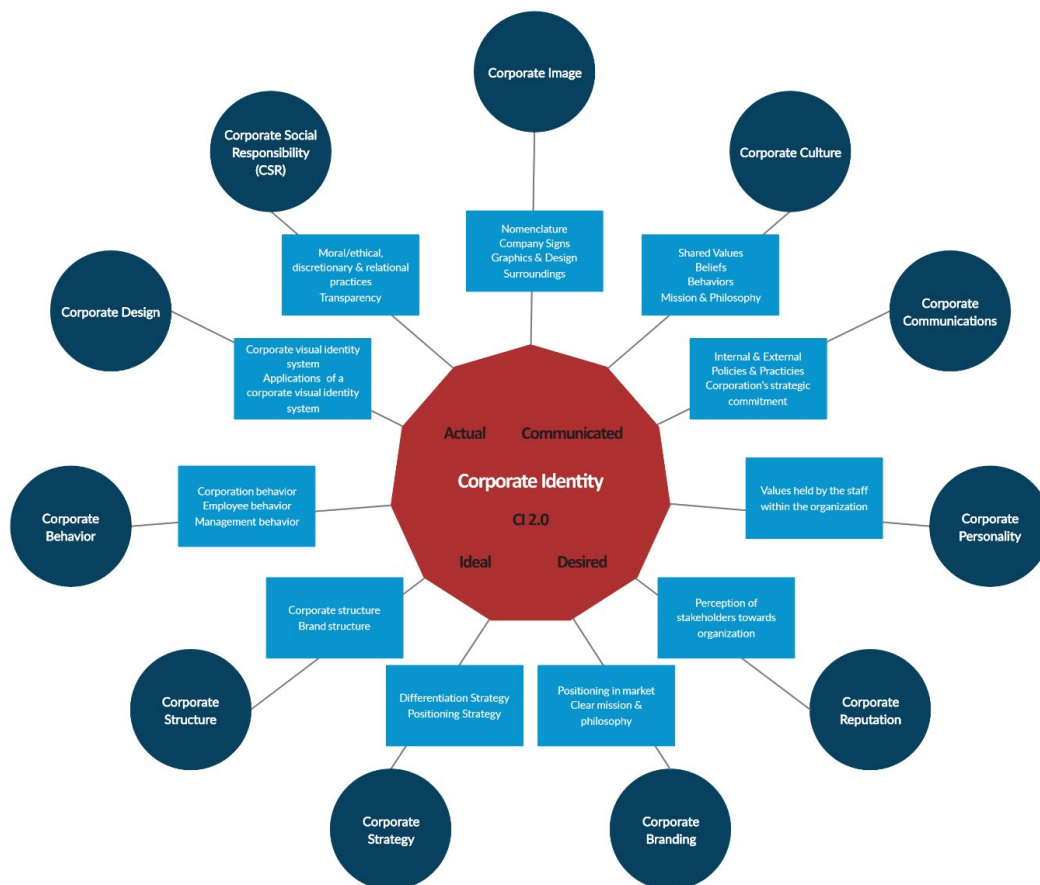
The CI benchmark is connected with measurement of profitability, long-term competitive advantage, use of social media, value and experience-based activities. The fact that use of social media creates two-way communication and facilitation of relation building substantiates the benchmark of CI (Jain et al., 2016). Social media (SoMe), as cited in Devereux et al. (2017), are defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user generated content. SoMe has pushed organizations to redefine their strategies, which is large part of CI. The development of SoMe may create particular reverberations on brands, organizations and the associated with them. Actually, SoMe may have urged a form of anarchy for CI due to increasing consumer power, as true identity may emerge through dialogic process. Even though a new identity may emerge, e.g., e-CI or social media identity or CI 2.0, it may detract from the corporate nature of what is being discussed. As a result, an unnecessary identity gap may be created. While social media tends to become an integral part of marketing and management though, it would be ideal to frame all this identity activity as a united corporate whole. Especially by adopting the view that CI is affected by everything an organization does, CI could be contributed and conveyed characteristics of each stage of SoMe use. SoMe has opened a swarm of platforms which can work as an identity dissemination towards the organizations' stakeholders. Consequently, this may emerge an environment suitable for an organization to develop its identity and learn not only about itself, but about its stakeholders as well (Devereux et al., 2017).

As corporate culture constitutes an important driver of developing corporate identity, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices impact corporate culture, including values, attitudes, beliefs, customs and norms of an organization, and consequently CI (Mousiolis & Bourletidis, 2014). As cited in Tourky et al. (2019), CSR entails "*actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and those ... required by law*" (McWilliams et al., 2006, p. 1) and that firms are expected to advance corporate behavior "*to a level ... congruent with ... prevailing social norms, values and expectations of performance*" (Sethi, 1975, p. 62). CI constitutes a significant variable in implementing CSR via communication

and senior management behavior which affects employee identification with organizational values, goals and behavior. CSR roots strategically from CI values and founder's vision as clarified in mission statements, which legitimize CSR and develop a shared culture. Strategically, CI (through the founder, culture, core values and mission) helps point out the internal drivers and can set the vision for CSR as part of what the company is and what it stands for; this consequently leads to sustainable and continuous CSR strategies. CSR actually shapes the corporate identity of the company strategically, as companies focus to key determinants such as moral/ethical, relational and discretionary practices (Tourky et al., 2019). As competitiveness between businesses increases nowadays, performance depends on a firm's ability to manage intangible assets, such as CI (cited in Tourky et al., 2019). Managers are required to follow an ethical and socially responsible manner promoting fair competition and environmental sustainability (Tourky et al., 2019).

The current CI Taxonomy, as derived from the SLR, is concluded in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** *CI in 2010s.*



### 3. Method

The Research was based in three main pillars; systematic literature review, big data analysis, and exploratory primary research.

#### 3.1 Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

Literature review was based on a systematic design with the intention to capture the full frame of the evolution of corporate identity. As massive amount of research is produced every year, occasionally with conflicting content, the overall picture may become vague or which findings may be more reliable. Hence, systematic reviews intend to address these hurdles through identifying, critically evaluating and integrating the findings of all these relevant, high-quality researches (Cooper, 2003). One of the main reasons of choosing an SLR is to provide summary and evaluation of existing work in a specific research area, point out gaps and offer work suggestions to address them (cited in Zarour et al., 2019). Research papers considered for inclusion in this SLR are written in English, published since the first observation of the term, accessible through the libraries of American College of Greece. The main electronic databases that were utilized in the search process are EBSCOhost, JSTOR and ScienceDirect using a search string semantically equivalent to “corporate identity”. The resulting articles (N=456) were reviewed based on the inclusion criteria, the availability of the papers, and the duplicands.

#### 3.2 Big Data (BD) Analysis

BD analytics refer to sets of dynamic data with high level of volume, velocity, and variety that exceed the capabilities of traditional data management approached (cited in Wang et al., 2015). They include capturing data, data mining, data storage, data analysis, searching and visualization. This method is widely used in order to discover patterns, correlation and other insights from vast amounts of information which are transformed to numeric and/or text formats, and consequently new opportunities. In this study, NVivo was used as a text-mining tool, and more specifically its word frequencies, word search, and word cloud functions. Word clouds provide comments through compressing texts into words that appear with the highest frequency, in a visually appealing way. The data analyzed contain the SLR articles mentioned above, and their analysis period consist of 5 periods (Table 1).

**Table 1:** *Dataset Used.*

Period (years)	Period 1 (1950s-1970s)	Period 2 (1980-1989)	Period 3 (1990-1999)	Period 4 (2000-2009)	Period 5 (2010-2019)	Total
Number of articles	10	8	17	26	44	105

### 3.3 How is CI Perceived in the 20's?

An experimental survey about this study entitled “Corporate Branding and Employer Branding as determinants of organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit on job seekers” was designed and conducted. Realizing the alignment between the subject and the opportunity risen, upon agreement, the questions presented below were added exclusively on the CI study (Table 2). This survey is not considered as a complete research based on scales; its intention is to depict the perception of the younger generations towards CI and its possible alignment with the literature review researched. A possible alignment would either verify the current literature review tendency, or uncover room for future research.

**Table 2:** *Survey Questions.*

<b>Questions of Survey</b>	
	Please select which of the following you perceive as elements of the Corporate Identity.
	Please rank the following Corporate Identity elements from highest importance to lowest.

The sample consisted of 180 respondents, all of them current ACG students and job seekers. This sample was selected as they consist the new generation of workforce. They have shaped an introductory image for businesses and CI through experience and knowledge of their academic career and their first steps in the business world, along with opportunities offered from the School of Business and Economics of ACG. The respondents belong to Millennials and Generation Z, in balanced ratio. The detailed demographics are projected on Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** *Survey Demographics.*

Age	22.81 years old
Gender	60% Female, 39% Male, 1% Other
Educational background	Bachelor's degree
Current working status	Students: 60.6% Employed: 27.2% Not employed, looking for a job: 11.1% Not employed, not looking for a job: 1.1%
If employed, type of job	Part-time: 53% Full-time: 45% Internship: 1.64% Apprenticeship: 0.66%
Working experience	2.14 years

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Big-Data Analysis

The BD analysis of the study is conducted in two stages; word frequencies through word clouds and targeted word search. The word clouds as the first analysis tool were applied to 105 articles. According to these, the words with the highest frequency are “corporation”, “identity” and “brand”. In every period though, there are worth-mentioning words that describe the notion of CI accordingly.

### 4.2 Word Clouds

More specifically, during the period 1950s-1970s, the words that stand out are “identification”, “design”, “visual”, “names”, “foundation”, “brand”, “image”, “packaging” and “symbol”.

The words that project the tendency of the 1980s are “image”, “differentiation”, “change”, “visual”, “social”, “influence”, and “society”.

As for the 1990s, “community”, “brand”, “reputation”, “culture”, “consulting”, “strategy” and “advertising” are words that depict the direction of CI during that period.

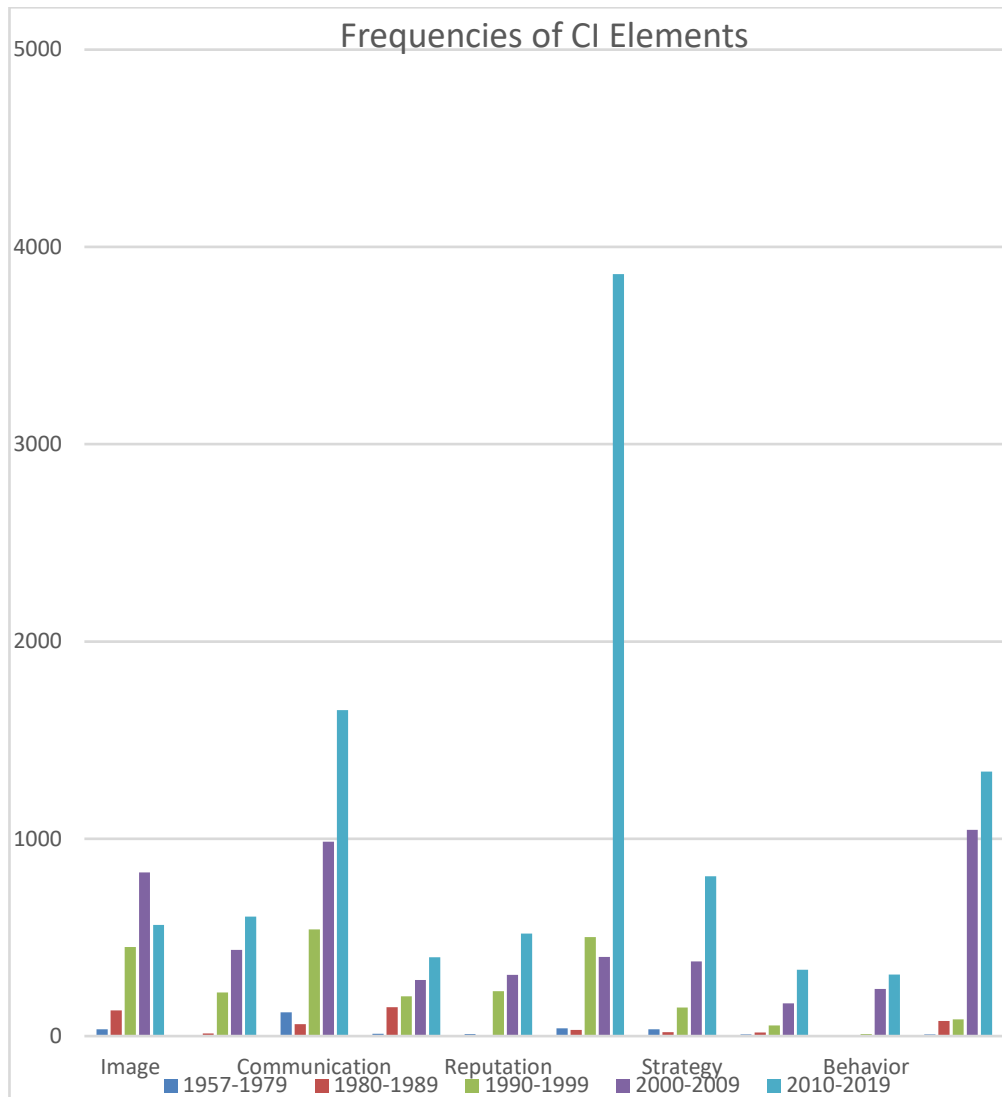
“Ethics”, “socially”, “stakeholders”, “values”, “brand”, “strategy”, “relationships” and “behaviors” are the words that operate as indicator of the 2000s towards the CI.

Last but not least, the words that are more related with the tendency of CI in the 2010s are “heritage”, “social”, “strategy”, “values”, “sustainable”, “culture”, “process”, “consuming”, “media”, “innovativeness”, and “digital”.

### 4.3 Targeted Word Search

As far as the word search is concerned, each of the CI elements (Image, Culture, Communication, Personality, Branding, Reputation, Strategy, Structure, Behavior, CSR), according to the SLR and research, was measured in terms of frequency in each time period. Through this, two indicators could be observed; the most frequently used elements in each period, and the high peak of each element. During 1950s-1970s, the 80s and the 00s, Corporate Communication is the most frequently used CI element in the SLR researched, while Branding is the one for the 90s and CSR for the 2010s. As for the high peaks, it is interesting the fact that although the volume of literature is significantly higher in the 2010s, Corporate Image’s, Personality’s and Reputation’s peaks are in the 1990s.

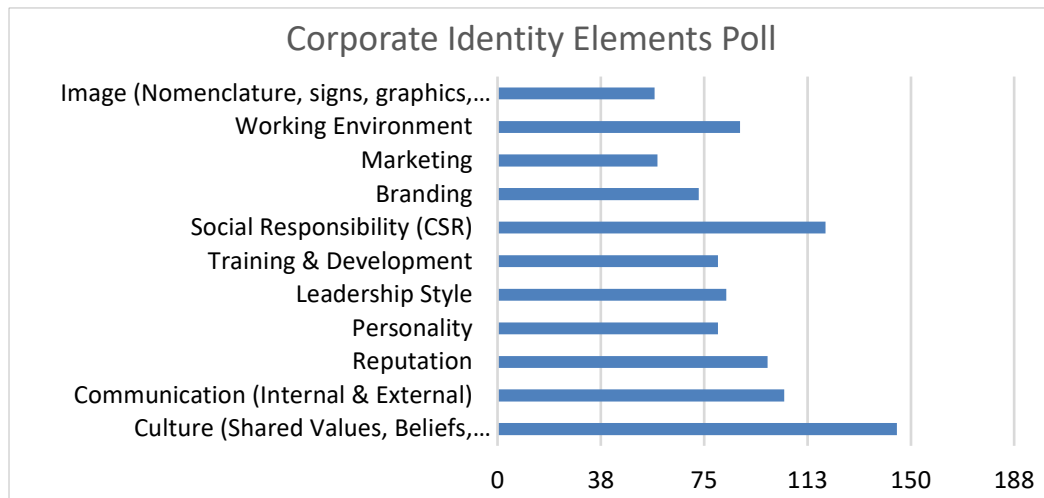
**Figure 2:** *Frequencies of CI Elements.*



**4.4 How is CI Perceived in 2019?**

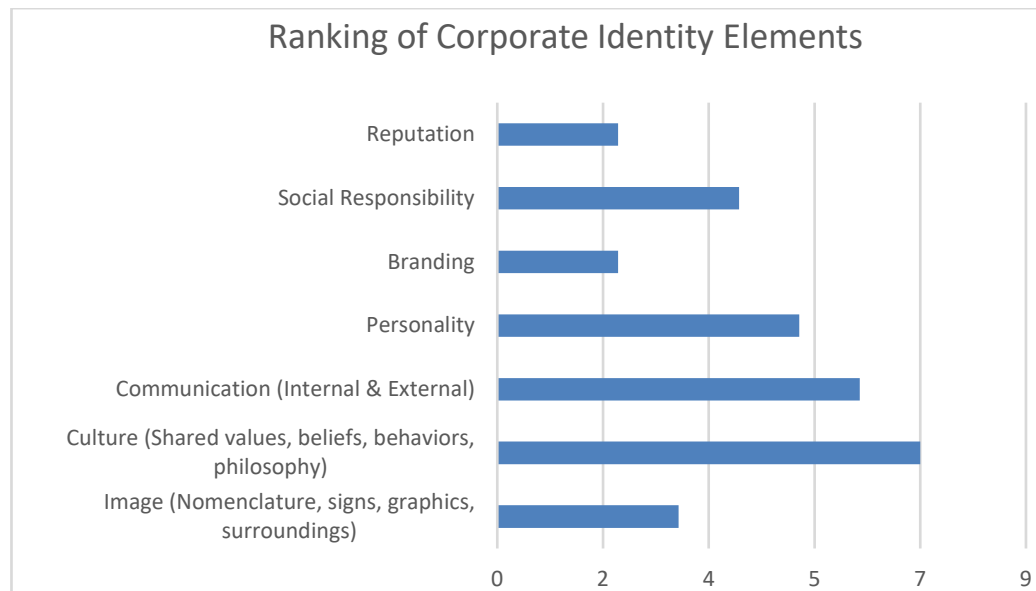
Having been asked to select which of the listed they perceive as elements of CI, 72.5% of the respondents selected Culture, 59.5% selected CSR, and 52% selected Communication; reputation, working environment, leadership style, personality, training and development, branding, marketing, and image followed in ascending order (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** *CI Elements Poll.*



Then, respondents were asked rank seven CI elements (Image, Culture, Communication, Personality, Branding, CSR, Reputation) from highest importance to lowest. Culture and Communication dominated as first and second respectively, while Personality, CSR, Image, Branding and Reputation followed in ascending order, but with marginal differences (Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** *Ranking of Corporate Identity Elements.*



## 5. Limitations

The study follows an interdisciplinary approach, trying to observe the concept of CI through different angles and various perceptions. The macro-environment that may have a probable influence on the formation of CI through the decades is not studied. In order to implement an SLR, the research was operated through the Database of Deree – the American College of Greece (ACG); yet, a limitation on the resources is probable. The vast majority of the papers concerning CI are theoretical, and the confirmation of the constructs is based on theory without having been measured. Concerning the survey, the sample consisted of current students of ACG. The fact that they do not possess a holistic working experience may alternate their perceptions, even though they constitute a capable sample of younger generations. Last, the use of Nvivo may provide the usage of concepts in terms of numbers, yet it cannot depict how the terms or the practices used on these concepts may change over time, unveiling different meaning in different times.

## 6. Implications

CI is transmitted to a corporation's stakeholders; the strategic management of its elements may offer a competitive advantage when claimed effectively. While the CI taxonomy serves as a useful guide, it remains largely theoretical — indicating a potential gap in implementation.

Turning this theory into practice through case studies could form a valuable research path, offering insights into how corporations' approach and apply CI in real settings, connecting business and branding. Moreover, future research could explore the relationship between branding, marketing, and advertising, examining how these concepts are interconnected and where they diverge in theory and practice. This may shed light on how they collectively shape and support CI in a more structured and strategic way. The translation and depiction of business strategy to a concrete brand identity through design could also be an interesting future research path.

## 7. Conclusion

Research on the CI and its elements has been excessive; yet an SLR that gathers, summarizes and frames the various concepts investigated since its introduction seems needful. Corporate Identity (CI) consists an evolving synthesis of a corporation's visual language (logotype, typography, color palette, brand elements etc.), culture, communication, behavior, and values, strategically managed to express its unique character. It adapts over time, reflecting broader social, and technological shifts, shaping how a corporation is understood both internally and externally. On top of that, it provides the opportunity to highlight the dominant CI elements of each period, reasoning the evolution of CI through the industrial development, and end up to an updated CI taxonomy (Figure 1).

During 1950s-1970s, literature review identifies the first attempt of corporations for identification, communicating their Corporate Image through nomenclature, signs, designs, and philosophy. A highlight of that period is the third industrial revolution in 1969, which emerged rapid industrialization and popularity of division of labor, while low production efficiency and unsystematic management decisions were observed (cited in Cummings & Bridgman, 2016). BD analysis indicates Communication, Branding, Image and Strategy as most frequently used CI elements in the Literature covered. By taking a closer view on the word cloud of this period, we may come up that corporations intend to create their foundations by identifying their image through a visual design consisted of names, brand, packaging and symbols. Wrapping it up, the communication of the Corporate Image is the dominant characteristic of this period, while the notion of branding starts to emerge in an abstract, yet, way.

During the 1980s, the growing emphasis on CI emerged the need for differentiation. In order to achieve that, corporations focused on developing their Culture (shared values and beliefs) through proper communication policies both internally and externally. That is furtherly supported by the business background of the decade. Businesses' tendency was to go beyond mass production and economic growth incorporating five revolutionary changes in physical environment, the line-up of social forces, the role of information, government organization and morality (Toffler, 1980). The BD analysis emerges Design, Personality, Image, CSR and Communication as the most frequently used CI elements in the literature covered. By observing the word cloud, we identify the notions of identification and change that may be produced through the visual image of a corporation which may influence the society's perception. Connecting the dots, Culture, Communication, Personality and Image may evolve to valuable elements of CI in order to adjust to the business tendencies observed in the '80s. Diversification and reflection of values are pursued, and the higher morality level works as an indicator of the social responsibility that is introduced.

The 1990s could be characterized as a turning point for CI. Through the effect of globalization, the dominance of multinational companies, foreign direct investment strategies (Narula & Dunning, 2000) and the concept of industrial ecology (Deutz & Gibbs, 2004), the notion that CI is manageable cultivated. A new CI Mix and the ACID Test were introduced by Balmer and Soenen (1997), providing a new prism and possible multiple perspectives that CI may possess. Moreover, the development of Corporate Branding has tended to align the concept of CI more closely with marketing. Yet, the launch of the International Corporate Identity Group (ICIG), in 1996, consolidates the notion and the increasing popularity of CI. Literature review introduces the elements of Personality, Reputation and Branding as elements of CI. The BD analysis is aligned with branding; a high frequency is also observed about the concepts of communication and image, while a remarkable usage increase is detected on Culture, Reputation, Design, and Identity as a concept. The excessive use of Consulting, strategy and advertising according to the word cloud, verify the tendency that corporations are capable to manage their identity.

During the 2000s, the economic globalization continued to affect the premium of production, mostly in developing countries, as world markets tended to flourish (Rodrick, 2006). New technologies arose mainly through innovative investments. Key of the flourishing is considered to be the networking opportunities and the Information & Communication Technology products and the internet (Gualerzi, 2010). For the first time, a CI taxonomy was introduced by Melewar, introducing the concepts of Strategy, Structure, Design and Behavior. In extension of the development of Branding, the concept of Corporate Marketing was also emerged. The BD analysis distinguished CSR, Communication, Image, Culture and Branding as the most frequent elements of CI in the '00s. The word cloud analysis indicated the proliferation of the usage of ethics, stakeholders, values, culture, brand, strategy, relationships and behaviour. By blending the information, the development of world markets and multinational companies increased the need for more targeted strategies and solid structure for corporations. The need for a more social and responsible image starts to be recognised in order to create sincere and transparent relationships between the organizations and the stakeholders. Also, the gradual emergence of CSR as a concept could be justified through the presence of ethics, values, and relationships as the aftermath of the 1990s industrial ecology development.

As for the 2010s, the term Fourth Industrial Revolution was introduced, focusing on digital technologies, internet of things, artificial intelligence, and machine vision among others, and emerging strategic dialogue beyond the digital revolution (Phillbeck & Davis, 2019). Aligned with the industrial orientation of the decade, the emergence of social media has developed a new prism of identity for corporations, e.g., e-CI or CI 2.0, which should be integrated as a united corporate whole. CI was also distinguished into Soft-drive and hard-drive creating a strong relationship with sustainable Corporate Performance and Innovation Product. Also, CSR has emerged into an element of CI implemented via communication and senior management behaviour. The BD analysis indicated Branding, Communication, CSR, Strategy, and Culture as the most frequently used elements of CI in the '10s according to the Literature review. By looking closer the word cloud of the decade, digital identity comes forth as a concept which boosts innovation and consequently differentiates the standards to CI and Branding as exist by now. Hence, strategic decision-making becomes more crucial, and CSR acts as tool towards this direction as well, projecting the values, vision and philosophy of the corporations.

An interesting perspective about how CI is perceived, through the eyes of Millennials and Generation Z, is projected through the Survey conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tasoulis. Concerning which concepts are perceived as elements of CI, Culture, CSR, Communication and Reputation scored higher by respondents, while Branding and Image gathered the lowest scores. Then, respondents ranked Culture, Communication, Personality, and CSR (in descending order) as the most important CI elements, while Branding and Reputation were ranked last. Comparing it with the theoretical background researched through the literature review, several engrossing conclusions were formed. Even though Branding is considered to be a top-grossing element during the last two decades, that is not recognised by the respondents, perceiving it as a less important element. On the other hand, Culture

“monopolizes” the preference of respondents; yet, even though it is consistently referred on literature through the ages, it has not been thoroughly researched. There is indeed alignment between respondents’ perception and literature review emphasis on Communication. Moreover, High ranking on CSR confirms the literature review, and the tendency of the last two decades over this concept that is highly grossed.

To conclude, the biggest challenge constitutes the fact that these elements are ever-changing. On one hand, a term may change throughout the years, affecting its framework and its power of interaction to its environment by introducing new perspectives. Thus, a term may have a substantial difference in terms of meaning during different periods of time. On the other hand, that can also happen through the practices that are implemented in an element, which are subject to change through the development of technology, information and consequently knowledge. Thus, the same term may convey the same meaning, yet that may be approached in a totally different way due to the different practices implemented during decades. These facts create a probability of overlap between the CI elements which may consequently derive different meaning during each time period. These changes though cannot be detected by the use of software such as Nvivo. By studying the literature review, an updated taxonomy (Figure 1) has been created, gathering all the CI elements into a single framework; its flow operates vice versa. Undeniably, the technological breakthrough may emerge new paths for future exploration.

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