

Developing a Communication Strategy based on Employee Perceptions of a Non-Profit's Organisational Identity

- Case: Crisis Management Initiative

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Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate employee perceptions of a non-profit organisation's identity in order to provide guidelines for developing a communication strategy. The case organisation, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), is a Finnish non-profit organisation, which operates globally in the fields of crisis management, conflict resolution and peace mediation. This study investigated the perceptions of CMI's employees in order to provide answers to the following three research questions: 1) How do CMI's employees perceive the features of CMI's organisational identity? 2) How do CMI's employees perceive CMI's organisational reputation? and 3) How do CMI's employees perceive the practises and challenges for CMI's internal and external communication?

Methodology and Data

This research used a qualitative single-case study design and the empirical data consisted of 17 semi-structured interviews, which were conducted among all CMI's employees in Helsinki and Brussels. Themes for the semi-structured interviews arose from the theoretical framework, which highlighted the importance of employees' understanding of organisational identity as a starting point for developing a communication strategy. Data collection and analysis concentrated on three themes: features of CMI's organisational identity, CMI's organisational reputation and the challenges and practises for communication.

Findings and Conclusions

As a result of the interviews, several positive features were attached to CMI's identity and reputation but also some uncertain areas of identity were identified. The interviewees pointed out that CMI is a highly appreciated expert in its field, an innovative and flexible organisation, known for its high-quality work and wide networks. Still, there was uncertainty about some areas of CMI's identity, particularly related to CMI's vision and future direction, core competence areas and the level of the networks. Hence, describing CMI's operations and future direction for external stakeholders in an explicit way can be sometimes difficult. In addition, time for internal communication is limited which makes it hard to stay aware of internal matters and processes. A shared view among the employees was that CMI has a good reputation but it differs to some extent between stakeholder groups. Those who work in the same field know CMI and appreciate its work but those who do not know the field are confused about CMI. Even though CMI's reputation was seen positive, the organisation's internal processes are somewhat inconsistent with its reputation. As organisational identity forms the core of a communication strategy, the positive areas of the identity can be utilised when developing the communication strategy. Also, the uncertainties related to the identity need to be paid attention to when planning communication. As a result, recommendations on how CMI could, in the future, start developing a communication strategy based on its organisational identity were given for CMI's management.

Key words: international business communication, communication strategy, organisational identity, non-profit organisation, organisational reputation, employee perceptions, strategic planning, Crisis Management Initiative

Työntekijöiden näkemys voittoa tavoittelemattoman organisaation identiteetistä viestintästrategian perustana – case: Crisis Management Initiative

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää voittoa tavoittelemattoman järjestön työntekijöiden näkemyksiä heidän organisaationsa identiteetistä ja ohjeistaa organisaatiota viestintästrategian kehittämisessä. Tutkimuksen kohteena oli suomalainen voittoa tavoittelematon organisaatio Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), joka toimii kansainvälisesti kriisinhallinnan, konfliktinratkaisun ja rauhanvälityksen aloilla. Tutkimus selvitti CMI:n työntekijöiden näkemyksiä tarkoituksenaan löytää vastaus kolmeen tutkimuskysymykseen: 1) mitä piirteitä CMI:n työntekijät yhdistävät CMI:n identiteettiin?, 2) millaisena työntekijät näkevät CMI:n maineen? ja 3) millaisina työntekijät näkevät CMI:n ulkoisen ja sisäisen viestinnän käytännöt ja haasteet?

Tutkimusmenetelmät ja aineisto

Tämän laadullisen case-tutkimuksen aineisto koostui 17 teemahaastattelusta, jotka suoritettiin CMI:n työntekijöiden keskuudessa Helsingissä ja Brysselissä. Haastatteluteemat nousivat teoreettisesta viitekehystä, joka korostaa, että viestintästrategian tulisi perustua työntekijöiden ymmärrykseen organisaation identiteetistä. Aineiston koonti ja analyysi rakentuivat seuraavien kolmeen teeman ympärille: CMI:n identiteetin ominaispiirteet, työntekijöiden näkemys CMI:n maineesta ja CMI:n ulkoisen sekä sisäisen viestinnän haasteet ja käytännöt.

Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Haastattelujen tuloksena nousi esille, että CMI:n identiteettiin ja maineeseen liittyy sekä positiivisia piirteitä että piirteitä, jotka aiheuttavat epävarmuutta työntekijöille. Kuvaillessaan CMI:n identiteettiä haastateltavat kertoivat, että CMI on alallaan arvostettu asiantuntija, innovatiivinen ja joustava organisaatio, jolla on uniikki keulakuva. Lisäksi CMI on tunnettu laadukkaasta työstään ja laajoista verkostoistaan. Toisaalta epävarmuutta aiheutti CMI:n visio, tulevaisuuden suunta, ydinosaaminen sekä verkostojen taso. Tämän lisäksi CMI:n kuvaileminen eksplisiittisesti ulkoisille sidosryhmille on monimutkaista. Sisäiseen viestintään on rajoitetusti aikaa, joka aiheuttaa sen, että joskus on hankala pysyä perillä sisäisistä asioista. Työntekijät näkivät, että CMI:n maine on positiivinen, mutta se vaihtelee jossain määrin eri sidosryhmien kesken. Asiantuntijapiireissä ja omalla alallaan CMI on tunnettu ja arvostettu, mutta suuri yleisö ei ehkä ymmärrä CMI:n työtä. Vaikka CMI:n maine on positiivinen, organisaation sisäiset prosessit eivät välttämättä vastaa positiivista mainetta. Koska organisaation identiteetti muodostaa viestintästrategian ytimen, identiteettiin liittyviä positiivisia piirteitä voidaan hyödyntää viestintästrategiaa kehittäessä. Kuitenkin viestintää suunniteltaessa tulee johdon kiinnittää huomiota myös piirteisiin, jotka aiheuttivat epävarmuutta. Lopuksi CMI:n johdolle annettiin suosituksia siitä, kuinka CMI voisi tulevaisuudessa alkaa rakentaa viestintästrategiaa, joka pohjautuu organisaation identiteettiin.

Avainsanat: kansainvälinen yritysviestintä, viestintästrategia, organisaation identiteetti, voittoa tavoittelematon organisaatio, organisaation maine, työntekijöiden näkemykset, strateginen suunnittelu, Crisis Management Initiative

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1 Introduction

During the 21st century, there has been a growing academic interest in the corporate identity and corporate communication and the role they have in shaping stakeholders' perceptions of a firm. It is commonly agreed that the stakeholders' perceptions of the company are formed from all the messages the organisation sends out about its identity, i.e. about its performance, abilities, future direction and ways of working. In addition, the majority of the researchers (e.g. Aula & Heinonen, 2008; Dowling, 2001; Cornelissen, 2004; Szukala, 2003) agree that in order to create a consistent reputation, the company needs to build a strong and coherent identity, which is understood and shared internally among its employees. In other words, a strong organisational identity forms the basis for all communication efforts.

Business communication literature (e.g. Markkanen, 1999; van Riel & Forbrum, 2007; Hämäläinen & Maula, 2008) considers organisational identity a significant source of competitive advantage for companies in global markets. The researchers argue that organisational identity is the factor, which matters in the competition, something that differentiates the companies from each other. For the corporations, identity refers to the characteristics through which they can be known and recognised. Ideally, all members of the organisation understand and share the reality and uniqueness, strengths, weaknesses and values of the company. These features then guide the decision making process of the internal stakeholders when dealing with the external world. Hence, a good corporate identity, according to Aula & Mantere (2008), is defined in the company's practises internally in interaction between the organisation and its members.

As many business communication researchers (e.g. Argenti & Forman, 2002; Marvick & Fill, 1997; Dowling, 2001; Åberg, 2000 and 2002) underline, all organisations consist of networks of people who communicate constantly with each other. Communication flows vertically and horizontally, internally and externally, formally and informally and it links employees to each other, to management and to external stakeholders. Typically, communication serves the purpose of creating and maintaining interactive relationships

with the stakeholders. These relationships are created through communication which serves different stakeholders simultaneously and connect the external stakeholders to the organisation. Consequently, communication is the responsibility of each member of the organisation because each contact with the external stakeholders influences the perceptions the stakeholders have of the company. Therefore, in order to utilise these “moments of truth”, the organisation and its internal members need to share a similar reality, i.e. a coherent corporate identity, of what the company and its operations are about. In other words, the challenge of communication lies in working with multiple audiences in a diverse environment where everyone has their own demands.

If each member of the organisation is responsible for communication, then the challenge to shape external perceptions of a company starts inside the organisation. Several researchers, (e.g. Pitt & Papania, 2004; Dortok, 2006; van Riel & Forbrum, 2007) point out that employees rank high as factors that impact corporate reputation and they can be considered one of the most trusted sources of information about the company. This is especially true for the service oriented expert organisations where the employees are regularly the contact point between the company and its external audiences.

Several researchers, such as Chong (2006), Hannegan (2004) and Marvick & Fill (1997), claim that employees can be a source of a valuable competitive advantage. The employees influence external stakeholders’ perceptions as they communicate organisational identity to potential customers, financiers and other stakeholders daily in different encounters. It is crucial that the employees understand and are committed to the organisation’s identity, i.e. that they trust their company, its communication systems and their own opportunities to contribute to the future direction and decisions. As a result, the companies need to include their employees in a discussion about their identity and what it means to the employees. Overall, many researchers (e.g. Hannegan, 2004; Dowling, 2001; Argenti & Foreman, 2002; and Vuokko, 2004) claim that effective communication about the elements of organisational identity and, as a result, the employees who understand and are committed to the organisation’s goals is a strategic advantage for the company.

Business communication researchers also argue that corporate identity forms the basis for all the company's communication efforts. For instance, as O'Neil (2003), Aula & Mantere (2008), Kitchen & Shultz (2003) claim, the role of communication is to clarify the company's goals internally and then transmit them to external stakeholders. Yet, to be able to reflect corporate identity to the external stakeholders, it is essential that communication is designed to support the overall strategic choices of the company.

Business communication, management and marketing researchers (e.g. Argenti & Foreman 2003; Markkanen, 1999; Vuokko, 2004; Bienvenu & Timm, 2002; Hämäläinen & Maula, 2004; Clukow, 2005) seem to agree on the connection between corporate identity and reputation. There are also a number of studies and a large amount of literature presenting communication as a tool for reputation management. Yet, many of those studies (e.g. Melewar, 2003; Illia & Lurati, 2006) do not underline the connection between corporate identity and communication planning, particularly in a concrete level. Also, several studies (e.g. Marvick & Fill, 1997; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Aula & Mantere, 2008) point out the role of communication for corporate identity and describe the role of communication in reputation management but the topics of strategic communication and organisational identity are not often discussed in the same context.

The connection between identity and communication is not crucial only for businesses but at least equally important, if not more, for third sector non-profit organisations. Recent research (e.g. Courtney, 2002; Salamon, 2004; Macedo & Pinho, 2006; Weerawardena & Mort, 2008) has highlighted the significance of the non-profit sector and how it has become a major player in the economy. The non-profit sector covers all the aspects of the society today and is far from a marginal aspect of life in most countries. The number of the non-profit organisations, often dependent on external funding, has grown over the last decade, generally far more than the number of funders of these organisations. Competition among the non-profits arises from the fact that there are simply not enough resources, particularly funding, for every organisation to do everything it would like to do in order to follow its mission.

Due to increased competition, the managers of the non-profit organisations have also had to start paying attention to the perceptions different stakeholders have about the organisation. Dennis (2001) points out that the non-profit organisations must know who they are and be able to express what they stand for to make successful strategic choices in their relationships with stakeholders (see also Phills, 2005 and Schuler, 2004). Especially, an expert organisation, which relies on service and know-how, needs to develop its identity to empower the employees to deliver what the organisation promises and to support the performance with well-targeted communication to the relevant stakeholders. Vuokko (2004) argues that as the stakeholders' perceptions are formed through all communication, the non-profit organisations need to plan their communication based on a deep understanding of the needs of the stakeholders because of the limited resources available for communication.

If there is a small number of business related studies which connect corporate identity to communication planning, the number of the studies which take these concepts into the world of a non-profit organisation is even smaller. It could be argued that due to the limited resources that the non-profits have for communication, the need to communicate about their identity effectively to well-targeted stakeholders is even greater than for the businesses. In other words, it is crucial for a non-profit to have a specific plan, a communication strategy, to communicate its goals and aims to the stakeholders.

As a result, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the organisational identity of a non-profit expert organisation in order to guide the organisation in developing a communication strategy. The leading principle of this thesis is based on an assumption that communication strategy is based on organisational identity, i.e. on the internally shared beliefs about the organisation which define what the organisation wants to communicate about itself. In addition, the employees of a non-profit expert organisation are daily in contact with external stakeholders and have a key role in communicating the organisation's identity to them. Therefore, the employees' commitment to their organisation's identity has to be the first priority when developing the communication strategy.

1.1 Crisis Management Initiative - Building Bridges to Sustainable Security

This section introduces the case organisation Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and briefly describes the overall settings for this thesis. The information presented in this section is partly based on four preliminary interviews with CMI's staff: with the Executive Director, Kalle Liesinen, on 27 May 2008 and 3 September 2008 and with the Helsinki Office Manager, Mikko Autti, on 14 June 2008 and 3 September 2008.

Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) is an independent non-profit organisation of Finnish citizens that innovatively promotes and works for sustainable security. CMI is an international player, whose work is conducted often through projects in different areas around the world. The work is built on wide stakeholder networks and the objective of the organisation is to bring together different parties and actors seeking solutions for security challenges. As Liesinen (personal communication 27 May 2008 and 3 September 2008) points out, "CMI operates as a bridge between different parties in the field". CMI works to increase the international capacity in crisis management and conflict resolution combining analysis, action and advocacy in its operation. CMI's mission statement defines the organisation's goals in the following way:

"The aim of Crisis Management Initiative is to strengthen the capacity and professionalism of international actors in conflict resolution and management and to mount private diplomacy operations" (CMI, 2009, p. 3)

The organisation was founded in 2000 by its Chairman, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate President Martti Ahtisaari. The goal was to establish an organisation which is independent from governments and which could assist the international community in crisis management activities. CMI's headquarters are located in Helsinki, with most of the administration, and it has another office in Brussels, whose task is to take care of the European relationships. In addition, President Ahtisaari's office is located in CMI's premises in Helsinki, where the Nobel Laureate is assisted by CMI's personnel in his activities. (CMI, Frequently Asked Questions, 2009). On 16th October 2008, CMI employed 17 people of whom four worked in Brussels.

Since CMI is a non-profit organisation, it does not conduct business and its operations are dependent on external funding. Most of the funding comes from the governments of the European Union member countries and government-related organisations but also from different American and European foundations, organisations and companies (for more on CMI's funding, see Kaustinen, 2008). As pointed out in CMI's 2007 Annual Report (CMI, 2009, p.25), a large part of income is composed of project related funding with some general support. Thus, the efforts to raise the level of untied funding were highlighted both in the 2007 Annual Report and by Liesinen (personal communication, 2008).

During 2008, CMI's Chairman, President Ahtisaari, received two major recognitions for his lifetime work towards peace building. First, he was awarded the UNESCO 2007 Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize "for his lifetime contribution to world peace" (UNESCO, 2008). Second, in October 2008, he was awarded again, this time with the Nobel Peace Prize for 2008 for "his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts" (Nobel Committee, 10 October 2008). In addition, CMI as an organisation was mentioned in the reasoning for both of these awards as facilitating the Laureate's work. Therefore, since fall 2008, the media, particularly in Finland, has been constantly following CMI and its work.

According to Liesinen and Autti (personal communication, 2008), CMI has had no specific strategy for communication. Particularly, communication for the general public has not been considered actively. As a result, the general public does not necessarily understand CMI's work but might associate the organisation strongly as "President Ahtisaari's office". Particularly, now after all the attention due to the Nobel Prize, there is a need to organise communication function and develop a communication strategy in order to attract and secure additional funding but also to create a clear and concrete messages of CMI and its aims.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

As stated in the first section, the main objective of this thesis is to guide CMI in a process of developing a communication strategy. This means that the aim is to develop guidelines for CMI's communication through an investigation of CMI's organisational identity based on the perceptions of CMI's employees, .i.e. its internal stakeholders. This thesis makes use of the results of Kaustinen's (2008) study, presented in section 6.1.1, which was conducted recently for the same case organisation to investigate CMI's reputation among its funders. Based on the investigation of CMI's identity, this thesis gives recommendations on how to start developing a communication strategy for the future. The following three research questions guide the research process:

1. How do CMI's employees perceive the features of CMI's organisational identity?

The aim of the first research question is to identify the leading features and uncertainties attached to CMI's organisational identity by its employees. On the one hand, the positive areas of CMI's identity could be utilised in developing the communication strategy. On the other hand, the areas of CMI's identity which are not clear for the employees should be paid attention to.

2. How do CMI's employees perceive CMI's external reputation?

The second research question focuses on the employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation among its multiple external stakeholders. The objective is to find out how the employees interpret the perceptions of CMI's external stakeholders based on their own experiences and contacts with the external stakeholders.

3. How do CMI's employees perceive the practises and challenges for CMI's internal and external communication?

The third research question focuses on the employees' perceptions of CMI's communication practises both internally and externally. The objective is to find out how communication is organised currently and what challenges the employees face in the context of communication.

The objective of this thesis is to assist CMI in developing a communication strategy by combining the answers of the above three research question about CMI's identity, reputation and communication. On the one hand, the aim is to locate the strong areas of CMI's identity, which could be fostered and highlighted in its communication. On the other hand, the aim is to find out if there are internally unclear areas of identity which could be improved through better (internal) communication or features which are considered especially challenging in the context of external communication.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into 7 chapters. The first chapter introduced the topic, case organisation, research objectives and questions. Chapter 2 reviews the literature about three topics: non-profit organisations, organisational identity and communication strategy. Section 2.1 offers a brief introduction into the world and challenges of a non-profit organisation. Section 2.2 reviews the previous literature related to organisational identity and section 2.3 summarises guidelines from the literature regarding developing a communication strategy. Chapter 3 combines the information from Chapter 2 to a theoretical framework for this thesis. Chapter 4 describes and justifies the methodology for the empirical part and Chapter 5 presents the findings from the empirical part of this thesis. Chapter 6 discusses the findings and offers recommendations for CMI's management for developing a communication strategy. Finally, Chapter 7 returns to the aims of the thesis, presents the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings, reviews some of the limitations of this thesis and suggests ideas for the future research.

2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature about three important areas of this research: non-profit organisations, organisational identity and communication strategy. The aim of this chapter is to present the theoretical background which justifies the aim of this study: to investigate employee perceptions of a non-profit's identity as a basis for developing a communication strategy. As the case organisation for this study is a non-profit organisation, section 2.1 describes the non-profits, their role in the society and the challenges in their operating environment. The objective of the section is to briefly create a view of the operating environment and the challenges also the case organisation faces. As this study describes the perceptions of case the organisation's identity, section 2.2 reviews the literature about organisational identity. The objective of that section is to show the link between organisational identity and organisational reputation but also to highlight that the employees' perceptions of their organisation impact the external stakeholders' views. Thus, it is important to explore the employees' perceptions of their organisation. This study aims at assisting the case organisation in developing a communication strategy and, therefore, section 2.3 reviews the researchers' views of developing the communication strategy. The objective of the section is to present the theoretical background for developing a communication strategy, which can then be applied in the empirical part of this study.

2.1 Non-Profit Organisations and their Challenges

This section provides a brief introduction to the world of a non-profit organisation, such as the case organisation CMI. According to Courtney (2002), the field is large and different depending on the country, continent and the nature of the non-profit's operations. Also, the organisations, their structure and ways of working diverge in a large scale depending on the cause the non-profit is working for. As a result, there is no exhaustive definition of a non-profit organisation. In addition, the boundaries between the sectors in the society, as Vernis, Iglesias & Saz-Carranza (2006) highlight, are increasingly blurring and overlapping which makes the field complex (for more on non-profits, see Kaustinen, 2008). Therefore, subsection 2.1.1 defines what is generally

meant by a non-profit organisation and discusses their role in the society. Subsection 2.1.2 presents some global challenges, which also are relevant for the case organisation.

2.1.1 The Role of Non-Profit Organisations in Society

The researchers of the non-profit organisations traditionally divide the society into three or four sectors according to different roles, activities and goals of the organisations. For instance, Vernis et al (2006) categorise the organisations into three classes: businesses, public administration and non-profit organisations. Vuokko (2004, p. 4) points out that the Finnish society, in particular, has four sectors: private, public, third and fourth sector. The private sector consists of companies which conduct business. The public sector includes state and other public organisations which are managed by the state. The third sector is formed of organisations and associations which do not conduct business and whose decision-making processes are more informal than in the public sector, organisations such as the case organisation for this study. The fourth sector includes groups, such as households, families and friends, whose ultimate aim is to satisfy some social need. Salamon (2004) explains that the third sector, variously also called as the non-profit, the civil society or the non-governmental (NGO) sector, includes a wide array of entities such as hospitals, universities, human rights organisations, homeless shelters, organisations working for security purposes and many more.

The highest goal of a non-profit organisation, a non-profit, is not to create profit for its owners but to work for some other cause. The mission is built around of “doing something good”, a service which has some societal value. As Macedo & Pinho (2006) explain, one of the distinctive features of the non-profits is that they exist primarily to share and distribute social, philosophical, moral or religious values of their founders and supporters. Katsioloudes (2006) concludes that one of the features that differentiate the non-profit organisations from businesses is that their “consumers” do not pay for the services.

2.1.2 Challenges for Non-Profit Organisations

This subsection argues that the biggest challenges of the non-profit organisations are related to the nature of their operations and the operating environment. The ever changing operating environment for the non-profit organisations is characterised by competition of scarce resources. Thus, researchers (e.g. Vernis et al, 2006; Katsioloude, 2006; Pakroo, 2007) argue that the success of a non-profit organisation mainly depends on its capacity to attract resources. As Key (2001) claims, the greatest concerns of the non-profit managers are connected to the organisations' dependency on external funding. In other words, the ability to raise and attract funding is crucial to any non-profit organisation who wishes to maintain its activities. Thornton (2006) points out that fund-raising remains the primary mechanism for competition between the non-profits. Weerawardena & Mort (2008) add that nowadays the non-profits are facing an environment that is characterised by, on the one hand, increasing needs in their target communities but, on the other hand, generally tighter funding environment.

Managing a non-profit organisation is at least as challenging a task as running a business, particularly due to the diversity of stakeholders the non-profit needs to address. According to Bryce (1987) and Pakroo (2007), the non-profit organisations have to satisfy the needs of multiple stakeholders, such as different funders, partners, trustees, staff, media and local community, whose interests are often in conflict with each other. As Oster (1995) notes, in some cases the stakeholders have their own priorities and concerns which may or may not fit with the priorities of the non-profit. The scarcity of the resources and the need to pay attention to a wide audience, according to Wirtenberg, Backer, Chang, Lannan, Applegate, Conway, Abrams and Slepian (2007), forces the non-profit to focus only on immediate matters. This may prevent the non-profit from investing in the long-term priorities, such as people and communication. In addition, Katsioloude (2006) states that competition for resources drives non-profits to seek partners and form coalitions with each other to share resources.

Non-profit leaders have recently come to believe that in order to meet today's challenges in their operating environment the organisations have to become more effective, efficient and innovative. These are features which, according to Phills (2005),

are actually generally expected from the third sector organisations. Therefore, Vernis et al. (2006) point out that the largest organisational barriers, which complicate the operations of the non-profit organisations are related to the following issues:

- Prioritising programmes which have the biggest outside impacts and neglecting initiatives which strengthen internal competencies.
- Shortage of knowledge on capacity building, for example, on fund-raising or communication.
- Operating environment which is not favourable for capacity building, for example funding, is provided only to certain projects but not to overall organisational expenses.

As a conclusion, this section introduced the somewhat vague concept of a non-profit organisation and described the two major challenges that also the case organisation of this study has to face: scarcity of resources and dependency of external funding. As one of the objectives of this study is to explore the identity of a non-profit organisation, this section provided information regarding the nature and the operating field of a non-profit organisation. The nature of the non-profits' operations causes that there are multiple stakeholders with differing interests the organisation has to address with its limited resources. This has to be kept in mind when developing a communication strategy for a non-profit.

2.2 Towards an Internally Shared Understanding of Organisational Identity

This section discusses organisational identity and shows why an organisation should aim at developing an internally shared understanding of its identity. As the objective of this study is to investigate the case organisation's identity, this section shows why it is important to explore the employees' perceptions of their organisation and how they impact the external reputation of the organisation. Subsection 2.1.1 highlights the connection between organisational identity, image and reputation. Subsection 2.1.2 discusses how the employees impact the reputation of the organisation and why it is important to build an internally coherent organisational identity. The last subsection 2.1.3 presents different approaches for managing organisational identity.

2.2.1 Identity, Image and Reputation

This subsection defines the concepts of organisational identity, image and reputation and suggests that in order to modify one of them, an organisation has to consider all of them. As this study investigates the case organisation's identity, this subsection shows what the identity consist of. The organisational identity can be defined as an internal understanding of features attached to the organisation. Image forms from the communicated identity which the stakeholders interpret in their own ways. Reputation builds up as a long-term sum of the images, the stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the organisation's performance. This subsection, first, discusses organisational identity and, second, emphasises the connection between identity, image and reputation.

Each organisation has a distinct identity which separates the organisation from the others and gives reasons for stakeholders to work with the organisation. Aula & Mantere (2008, p. 56) propose that identity is something that makes "us" precisely "us", something that distinguishes "us" from "others" and creates a feeling of continuity. Vuokko (2004, p. 190) suggests that organisational identity is a way for the organisation to reflect its reality, for instance, its visual appearance, number of employees, organisational behaviour and communication to the external stakeholders. Fox, Balmer

& Wilson (2001) note that the organisational identity is, to a great extent, a result of the behaviour and actions of management and personnel, and is influenced by corporate culture, management processes, strategies and communication. In addition, Markkanen (1999) explains that the strategic importance of the identity lies in an internal interpretation of the strategic core of the organisation. In other words, the organisation has to internally understand its strategic plans before it can communicate them successfully to the external stakeholders. Therefore, Markkanen (1999, pp. 95-125) argues that a shared understanding of the following three areas is particularly important when building the organisational identity:

- *Vision* directs the organisation and the employees to the future and builds trust towards the organisation and continuity of its operations.
- *Core competence areas* differentiate the organisation from its competitors, enable continuity of the operations and define why the organisation is valuable to its stakeholders.
- *Values* define the ways the employees act in everyday situations.

Organisational identity emerges from the several elements inside the organisation such as communication, organisational culture and the organisation's long-term goals. Aula & Mantere (2008) propose that a clear identity requires well-defined internal goals, organisational culture and tools for communication. In addition, Van den Bosch, de Jong and Elving (2006; see also Szukala, 2001 and Van Riel & Forbrum, 2007) claim that the three most significant parts of the organisational identity are organisational behaviour, communication and symbolism (visual identity, such as name, logo and slogan). These all influence the views that the stakeholders have of the organisation.

Melewar (2003, p.197) points out that the organisational identity builds up from the physical, operational and human characteristics of the organisation. He developed Organisational Identity Taxonomy (see Figure 1) to describe the multiple elements which together form the identity. As Figure 1 shows, the main determinants of the model are communication, organisational design, organisational culture, organisational

behaviour, organisational structure, strategy and industry identity. They together form the organisational identity.

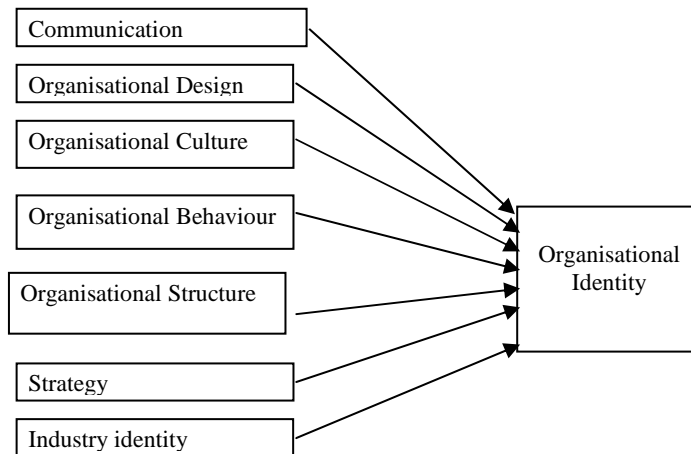


Figure 1. Organisational Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003, p. 168)

As can be seen from Figure 1, Melewar (2003) proposes that organisational identity consists of seven elements. *Communication* refers to a combination of messages from both official and informal sources through a variety of media through which the company conveys its identity to its multiple stakeholders. *Organisational design* is the graphic design at the core of the organisation's identity, such as logos and slogans which the audience can directly recognise. *Organisational culture* (i.e. history, founder, shared values, behaviour and country of origin) exists as a consequence of the organisational identity. *Organisational behaviour*, the particular way of acting, is rooted in employees' and management's ways of doing things. *Organisational structure* relates to reporting lines and communication through which the messages and information are shared within the organisation. *Strategy* includes overall objectives for the organisation to compete in chosen markets and industry. The *industry* the organisation operates in has its own specific characteristics which form certain guidelines for the organisation's identity. Melewar (2003) explains that the identity taxonomy presents different elements, which together form the organisational identity.

As already mentioned in Melewar's (2003) model, the field, industry and the organisation's home country have an effect on the organisation's identity. Van Riel & Forbrum (2007, p. 45) point out that country-of-origin effects, the characteristics

attached to the organisation's home country, are particularly important for the organisations with international operations. As Dowling (2001) explains, when people think about the organisation, they do that in a relevant context. The identity that the organisation communicates helps the stakeholders to identify the organisation as a member of certain category, for instance a country or an industry. As a result, Pitt & Papania (2007) claim that the organisation can potentially benefit from the characteristics attached to its home country or industry. Still, for an organisation to benefit from the country-of-origin effects, the stakeholders must be aware of the linkage between the organisation and the country and hold the associated characteristics favourable.

A coherent organisational identity is based on the organisation's members' shared beliefs about what differentiates the organisation from others, the strong areas of the organisational identity. In order to locate these shared beliefs, as van Riel and Forbrum (2007, p. 69) propose, the organisation should investigate the views of its employees and reflect them against the following three criteria:

- Centrality: what characteristics are widely shared throughout the organisation?
- Continuity: what characteristics of the organisation are most often said to differentiate the organisation from the other similar organisations?
- Uniqueness: what characteristics of the organisation appear most unique in terms of differentiating the organisation from other similar organisations?

In sum, organisational identity emerges from several elements of the organisation, such as communication, vision, strategy and industry identity which help stakeholders to differentiate the organisation from the others. The elements of the organisational identity define how the organisation would like itself to be perceived. Thus, the identity also identifies the main signals and messages for the organisation's communication.

Organisational image is formed in the minds of the external stakeholders from the signals and messages the organisation communicates to its external stakeholders. Kitchen and Shultz (2003) describe communication as a process which translates

organisational identity into image. According to Marvick & Fill (1997, p. 397; see also Melewar, 2003) the organisational image is a reflection of what the organisation communicates about itself. Åberg (2000, p.114) adds that organisational image can be seen as a positive or negative attitude which reflects different stakeholders' knowledge or thoughts.

Organisational image differs between the stakeholders, since it is likely that the stakeholders interpret the communicated identity in different ways. The differences can be related to the organisation itself (organisational image), to the representatives of the organisation, such as the leader (leader's image) or to products and services. Schuler (2004) notes that since the organisations have several different stakeholders with variety of backgrounds, it is not reasonable to assume that there can be a single and consistent image. Several researchers agree that the image of each individual stakeholder is influenced by:

- The organisation's identity and actions
- Stakeholders' own short-term experiences and existing information about the organisation
- Others' experiences
- Image provided by the media
- Other random variables

(Åberg, 2000, p. 114; Schuler, 2004, pp. 38-39; Markkanen, 1999, pp. 27-28)

Thus, the organisational image can be viewed as the stakeholders' interpretation of the communicated organisational identity. The images form rapidly as a result of the signals or messages the organisation sends out and are influenced by, for instance, the stakeholders' attitudes. As a result, the images of the stakeholders are formed in the relatively short-term and can be modified by adapting communication.

The third concept for this subsection, organisational reputation, builds up in the long-term as a sum of the images and the stakeholders' experiences. The organisation's values, goals, targets and ways of working form, through communication, the core of the organisational reputation. Dowling (2001) and Aula & Mantere (2008) point out that

the organisation has a good reputation in the eyes of its stakeholders if its image matches the organisation's behaviour and the stakeholders' values. Dowling (2001, p. 22) claims that the way to a good reputation goes through building a clear identity and a favourable image, which is linked to the values important to the stakeholders. Åberg (2000, p. 121) notes that reputation is influenced by everything the organisation does and all the signals it sends out. Dowling (2001, p. 213) claims that a good reputation helps the stakeholders to develop trust and confidence in the organisation. Thus, Argenti and Forman (2002, pp. 68-69) argue that three main contributors to the organisation's reputation are:

- Organisational identity
- Coherence of the images of stakeholders
- Alignment of identity to images held by stakeholders

(see also Åberg 2000, p. 121; Omar & Williams, 2006, p. 270)

As argued in the beginning of this section, organisational identity, image and reputation all affect each other and one cannot be altered without impacting the others. The link between organisational identity, image and reputation is clearly presented by Argenti & Forman (2002). As depicted in Figure 2, their model shows the connection between identity, image and reputation.

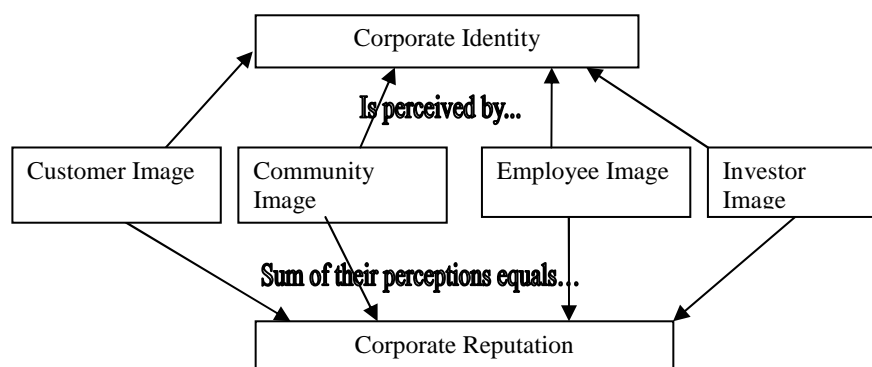


Figure 2. Link between Identity, Image and Reputation (Argenti & Forman, 2002, p. 69)

As can be seen from Figure 2, identity, image and reputation are all connected to each other. Thus, they build up from the stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation. The organisation communicates its identity to the stakeholders, who perceive the identity in

different ways. For instance, the customers' perceptions of the organisation may be different than those of investors or employees. The reputation builds up, in the long-term, as a sum of the stakeholders' perceptions.

To summarise, the subsection showed that communication links organisational identity to image and reputation and that the organisation cannot alter one without influencing the others. Organisational identity, the internal beliefs about the organisation, is communicated to the organisation's external stakeholders who form their perceptions of the organisation, i.e. organisational image. Organisational reputation, the long-term sum of the images and the stakeholders' experiences, takes time to develop. As a result, if the organisation wishes its reputation to develop to certain direction, it has to first make sure that the communicated identity is clear and coherent. For the purposes of this study, which investigates organisational identity, the subsection defined the concept of organisational identity and described what it consist of. In other words, the subsection showed which elements of the organisation need to be paid attention to when conducting an identity study. Next section will show in more detail how the organisation's internal stakeholders, employees, impact the organisational reputation.

2.2.2 Employees' Importance in Building Reputation

This subsection underlines that for an organisation, who wants a good reputation, employees are an important stakeholder group. On the one hand, the employees are a significant group among the stakeholders who influence the organisation's reputation and they play a key role in the organisation's performance. On the other hand, the employees are affected by the organisation's reputation as better reputation can lead to more motivated employees. As a result, this subsection explains that the organisation can foster its reputation by investing in the shared internal understanding of the organisational identity.

The employees can be a valuable competitive advantage for their organisation since they influence the stakeholders they work with when they communicate the organisational identity to external stakeholders. As Dortok (2006) and Chong (2007) explain, the views of the other stakeholder groups are affected by the perceptions the

employees have about their own organisation. As a result, Hannegan (2004) claims that the employees who fully absorb the organisational identity can also change the views and behaviour of the other stakeholders. The perceptions the employees have of the organisation determine how they handle their daily work. Therefore, it is crucial that the employees understand and are committed to the organisation's identity.

In a survey conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide Research, as Dortok (2006) reports, the employees were among the most influential factors that impact the organisation's reputation. The employees who identify themselves strongly within the organisation support sustaining a positive reputation by acting as ambassadors of the organisation and its values. Chong (2007) and Hannegan (2004) point out that the employees are considered to be one of the most trusted information sources about an organisation. Particularly for the service oriented organisations, the employees are regularly the contact point between the organisation and its external stakeholders. These contacts can help enhancing the organisation's reputation, if the employees behave appropriately

In order to prepare the employees to promote the organisation's reputation, Hannegan (2004) suggests two points that the organisation needs to consider. First, the organisation's identity, particularly mission, vision and values, have to be clearly communicated to the employees. This enables the employees to communicate the clear identity further to external stakeholders. Second, internal and external communication need to be aligned to create unified messages so that the employees and the other sources tell a consistent story. Chong (2007) and Van Riel & Forbrum (2007) underline that a clear organisational identity creates a unified purpose between the leaders and the employees which can be considered as a strong base for a solid reputation. In other words, the employees who are committed and engaged to their organisation and its goals can help in creating a more positive image and reputation.

It is the task of the top management to provide the employees the instructions to create an organisation, which is meaningful for its external stakeholders. In other words, as Dowling (2001) explains, the management's task is to establish a vision and strategy and make sure that also the employees find them valuable. As a result, this strong

internal foundation can be communicated to the external stakeholders. According to van Riel & Forbrum (2007), the employees of every organisation have to regularly think answers to questions such as “who are we?”, “what do we stand for?”, “what is the core purpose of our organisation?”, and “what does it mean to be involved with us?”. The answers to these questions reveal how closely involved the employees are with the organisation. Argenti & Foreman (2002) propose that ensuring that all the employees understand and are committed to the organisation’s vision helps to foster a sense of an attachment to the organisation, which also shows outside. Thus, the employees need to be able to trust their own organisation but also to have a chance to contribute to the future decisions. Therefore, Chong (2007; see also Marvick & Fill, 1997 and van Riel & Forbrum, 2007) claims that the organisation must engage its employees in a dialogue about the organisation’s identity and the strategic plans, especially about vision, mission and values, and how they are perceived by the employees.

As competition increases, the organisation’s ability to express who it is and what it stands for becomes increasingly important. Chong (2007) points out that especially an expert organisation, which relies on service and know-how, needs to develop its internal communication to empower its employees to deliver what the organisation promises. If the employees understand the organisation’s goals and their own role in reaching them, they will more likely want to support these goals in the interactions with the external stakeholders. He continues that the organisations which pay more attention to internal communication have higher levels of employee engagement, more positive image and better reputation. As a result, internal communication needs to be executed strategically in order to encourage the employees to enhance the organisation’s future goals. Dortok (2006) emphasises that internal communication should align the employees’ expectations with the organisation’s goals.

To summarise, this subsection discussed the employees’ importance in building organisational reputation. The employees can have a significant impact on the perceptions of the external stakeholders they are in contact with. Therefore, the organisation has to pay attention to communication about its goals, values and targets to the employees. Internal communication about the organisation’s strategic decisions has

to reach the internal stakeholders to build a clear and shared understanding of the organisational identity. The coherent identity helps forming a positive reputation. For the purposes of this study, the subsection showed that since the employees can influence the organisation's reputation, the organisation should make sure they understand the organisation's goals. Therefore, this study investigates the employees' perceptions to explore their understanding of and commitment to the case organisation's identity. The next subsection discusses the identity management, i.e. the ways in which the organisation can utilise its identity in order to foster its reputation.

2.2.3 Managing Organisational Identity

This subsection describes the process of managing organisational identity which aims at combining the internal strengths of an organisation and implementing them into the behaviour of employees. The objective is to create an organisation which is valuable for all its stakeholders. This subsection, first, briefly introduces identity management and its benefits for the organisation and, second, explains three different approaches for managing organisational identity.

Melevar (2003, p. 196) explains that there are four advantages for an organisation to manage its identity. First, identity can become a central force for motivating employees. If the employees understand the organisation's purpose, direction and strengths, they will be more committed to their work. Second, the organisation's external stakeholders become more aware of the organisation's possibilities, capabilities and position compared to its competitors. Third, a clear identity enables formation of a strong organisational brand which can increase stakeholders' loyalty. Fourth, through a well-managed identity, the financial community can better understand the organisation and its operations. Managing organisational identity, as Markkanen (1999) proposes, is a process of reflecting the organisation's performance to the external stakeholders to create an image that differentiates the organisation from others.

The identity management research (e.g. Markkanen, 1999; Vuokko, 2004; Marvick & Fill, 1997) shows three different approaches to organisational identity management.

According to the first approach by Markkanen (1999, p. 157), the objective of identity management is to create a clear and easily understandable view of the organisation. The organisation's identity has to be internally defined and communicated unambiguously so that it is seen in the same way in all parts of the organisation. Therefore, she presents identity management as a continuous process with four stages, as can be seen from Figure 3. The first stage, identity strategy, shows the strategic plans of the organisation that all its activities, including communication, need to support. The significance of an identity strategy lies on internal understanding of the organisation's vision and values. The second stage, internal communication, delivers and explains the strategic plans to employees. The aim is to secure the employees' understanding of the organisation's goals but also to clarify internal responsibilities and processes. Once the internal view is clear, the third stage, external communication with focused messages, can be successful. Last part of the process is the follow-up to make sure the identity stays clear.

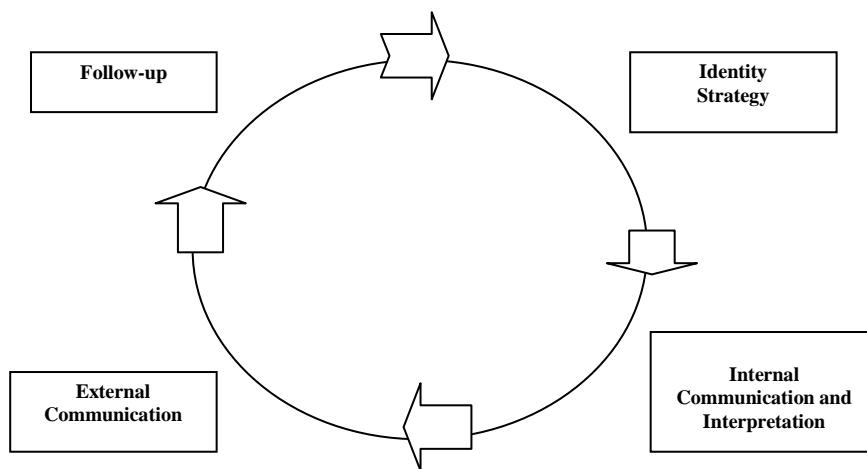


Figure 3. Identity Management Process (Markkanen, 1999, p.157)

The second approach to identity management connects building and managing organisational identity to the development of organisational image. Vuokko (2004) proposes that communication about organisational identity needs to be clear internally and then the organisation can use communication to impact its image. Vuokko (2004, pp. 205-208) introduces five steps for managing the organisational identity. First, the organisation needs to analyse and evaluate the current situation with its image. This should be done to see if the external stakeholders' views of the organisation differ from

the internal views. Second, the organisation should consider how it would like itself to be seen. Finding out the desired image is important since that way the organisation can understand which areas of the identity to be developed or highlighted in external communication. Åberg (2000, p. 127) agrees with Vuokko and suggests that, in the ideal situation, the internal and external stakeholders would answer similarly to the following three questions:

- Where is the organisation going and why (vision, mission, goals, targets)?
- Where is the organisation coming from (culture, traditions)?
- Where is the organisation now?

The third phase of Vuokko's (2004) model is to, through internal communication, engage the employees into developing the organisational image in order to reach the desired image. The fourth phase is to develop communication, identity as a starting point, to enhance desired image. Vuokko's (2004) model's fifth phase is related to assessing the results of the identity building process. As a result, her model approaches identity management through organisational image.

The third approach to identity management links identity management to image and reputation through strategic planning and communication. Marvick & Fill's (1997) model for corporate identity management process (CIMP), as depicted in Figure 4, contains five building blocks: strategic management, corporate identity, corporate image, corporate reputation and corporate personality. In the CIMP model, communication connects the building blocks together and transmits information from research to strategic management.

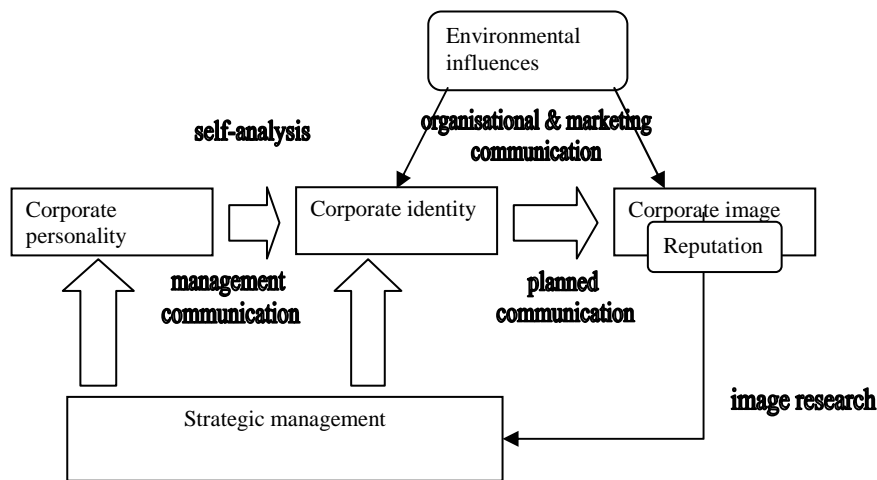


Figure 4. Corporate Identity Management Process (Marvick & Fill, 1997, p. 5)

As Figure 4 shows, all the building blocks of the CIMP model are affected by environmental influences, directly or indirectly through some other building block. Strategic management, corporate personality and corporate identity are connected by management communication and linked to corporate image and corporate reputation through planned communication.

As Figure 4 demonstrates, the CIMP model proposes that the link between the corporate personality (the sum total of the organisation's characteristics from which the identity is generated) and corporate identity can be explained by a self-analysis, i.e. the organisation's need to understand its own qualities and capabilities. Identity, image and reputation are brought together by planned communication in general and organisational and marketing communication in particular. The link between corporate identity and corporate image is externally the most visible part of the CIMP and can be seen, among other things, in visual identity programs which communicate the organisation's goals and targets. Thus, the organisation can conduct an image research and then feed the information into CIMP to reveal the need to modify, improve, strengthen or maintain the image. The understanding of the image of relevant external and internal stakeholders can be utilised in strategic management.

In sum, this subsection described three approaches to identity management through which an organisation can build and manage its identity. On the one hand, identity management was seen as a process which aims at integrating the organisation's strategic core to the work and behaviour of the employees in order to create a coherent story of the organisation. This requires effective internal communication to explain the organisation's core abilities, goals and strengths to the employees. On the other hand, identity management was connected to reputation management; by researching its reputation and image, the organisation can develop and improve parts of its identity in order to shape the reputation to desired direction. As this study investigates identity through the employee perceptions, this subsection showed that communication connects identity to reputation and strategic management. Therefore, as the identity management aims at impacting reputation through a solid internal understanding of the organisation's strategic plans, this study also emphasises the coherent internal perceptions as a basis for external communication.

As a conclusion, section 2.3 showed that the main objective for an organisation, which wishes to build a positive reputation, is to enhance a shared internal understanding of its identity. For the purposes of this study, the aim of this section was to expound that the organisational identity, the internal beliefs about the organisation, forms the basis for the organisation's communication efforts. In other words, as this study aims at developing a communication strategy for the case organisation, the employees' perceptions of their organisation are a starting point.

The section demonstrated that communication is the link between the organisational identity, image and reputation, highlighted the importance of the employees in building the organisational reputation and presented different approaches for managing the organisational identity. It was underlined that in order for an organisation to build a clear and coherent identity, the employees have to share a common view of the organisation and its strategic plans. In other words, communication about the organisation's strategic decisions has to reach the internal stakeholders in order to build a shared understanding of the organisational identity. Thus, it was suggested that to develop or improve its identity, an organisation can investigate the perceptions of its

internal and external stakeholders. The main point of this section for this study was that it is important to start developing the case organisation's communication strategy from its organisational identity, from the perceptions of the employees. Communication, both internal and external, has a key role in identity management and, therefore, the next section will discuss developing a communication strategy in more detail.

2.3 Developing a Communication Strategy

As the objective of this study was to assist the case organisation in developing a communication strategy, this section reviews what the researchers say an organisation needs to take into consideration in the process. The communication strategy, according to the researchers, can be considered as a long-term plan to communicate the organisation's strategic plans to its stakeholders. As a result, the concept of "strategic planning" needs clarification. Therefore, subsection 2.3.1 briefly introduces the general concept of strategic planning and section 2.3.2 describes the process of strategic planning for the non-profit organisations, such as the case organisation. This clarifies the basis for a communication strategy. Then, subsection 2.3.3 discusses the essence of a communication strategy and subsection 2.3.4 presents some models for developing a communication strategy.

2.3.1 Strategic Planning and Related Concepts

This subsection introduces the general concept of strategic planning and briefly defines its three key concepts: strategy, vision and mission. Overall, as explained by Koteen (1997), strategic planning can be considered as an effort to produce long-term decisions, which clarify the organisation's future direction to ensure all the members of the organisation are working for the same goals.

Several management researchers (e.g. Porter, 1991; Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Bourne, 2002) argue that the core of *strategy* is to define how an enterprise can shape the future to its advantage and capture larger economic value. Kaplan & Norton (2004) and Porter (1991) claim that strategy is a process in a continuum from the organisation's vision and mission to daily tasks performed by all the employees. They continue that strategy is a

plan to achieve the organisation's vision and mission which together set general goals and direction for the organisation.

Another key concept for strategic planning *vision*, according to several researchers (e.g. Porter, 1991; Kaplan & Norton 2004; Åberg, 2000; Cartwright, 2006), is a goal or direction where the company wants to head and how it wants to be perceived in the long-term. In addition, Bourne (2002) and Cartwright (2006) explain that vision presents possibilities and opportunities towards a future state the company wants to work for and connects the essence of mission and the organisation's values. Dowling (2001) argues that the value of vision for the organisation comes from the general direction it gives to the employees. In other words, the organisation's success requires capability to communicate a stirring vision to its stakeholders.

The third key concept for strategic planning *mission*, is widely understood (e.g. Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Cartwright 2006; Hämäläinen & Maula, 2004) to explain a company's reasons for existence towards which its activities are directed. Mission should present the basic tasks and meaning of the company's operations and communicate to the world what the firm does and why. Allison (2005) concludes that the companies need to have a succinct and well-crafted mission statement, which has both a statement of purpose and a description of what the organisation does.

One of the most important tasks of the management is to sell strategy, vision and mission to the employees. Dowling (2001) suggests that the best way to create a motivating mission and vision is to form them slowly together with as many employees as practical. As a result, the management can consciously lead the discussion about the nature of the organisation and its operations, reasons for the organisation's existence and the customers to be served.

One of the difficulties about the area of strategic planning and management is the language which is often used inconsistently. For instance, both Courtney (2002) and Jones (2008) suggest several interpretations to the word *strategy*. They suggest that strategy can be seen, for example, as a pattern of actions that have consequences, as a

position or a long-term view, as a choice for differentiation and, in some contexts, simply to equal something important. For the purposes of this study, strategy refers to a plan for something which will create long-term benefits and help the organisation to differentiate itself from the others.

To summarise, this subsection argued that strategic planning focuses on the fundamental goals and targets of the company and its aim is to set direction for the company in order to allocate the resources in an effective way. The three key concepts for strategic planning are strategy, vision and mission. Strategy is a plan to achieve vision and mission, the general goals of the company. Vision, a long-term direction for the future, presents where the organisation wants to head and how it wants to be perceived. Mission explains the reasons behind the organisation's activities. All three elements form a continuum from long-term planning by the management to daily task handled by the employees. As the non-profit organisations', such the case organisation, operations differ from the operations of businesses, the next subsection will discuss in more detail how the elements of strategic planning translate to the world of a non-profit organisation.

2.3.2 Strategic Planning for Non-Profit Organisations

Due to the nature of their operations (see section 2.1), the emphasis of the key concepts of strategic planning is slightly different for the non-profits than for the businesses. This subsection discusses what the concepts of strategy, vision and mission mean for the non-profit organisations.

Non-profit organisations, as businesses, need direction and goals, i.e. strategy, vision and mission, to guide their operations. Thus, strategic planning is as vital process for the non-profits as it is for the businesses. Around 10 years ago, Stone, Bigelow and Crittenden (1999) suggested that for a non-profit organisation the motivation to use strategic and formal planning was mainly related to the requirements from funders. Even though the organisations recognised the changing and more competitive environment, the lack of internal consensus of long-term goals and mission hindered the actual planning process. Yet, Stone et al. (1999) also argued that the more formal the

planning process of a non-profit was, the more positive impact it had in terms of funding. Nowadays, as Vuokko (2004, p. 154) argues, the non-profit's strategic planning is guided by its mission and the organisation needs to carefully consider what it actually has to offer to its stakeholders. Besides mission, an important starting point for the non-profit organisation's planning process is its resources and goals. The goals set a direction for the organisation and the resources, generally fairly limited, define the limitations and opportunities.

For the non-profits, the first concept of strategic planning, strategy, is a process linked to the performance and it defines what the organisation does and for whom. Phills (2005) explains that for a non-profit organisation strategy can be defined in terms of achieving mission but it also presents economic logic. He also argues that, even though the non-profit organisations do not conduct business as such, financial considerations are needed to secure the organisation's survival and prosperity, i.e. the availability of resources. Hence, the notion of prosperity provides a reasonable substitute for the concept of profit. According to Phills (2005, pp. 49-51), a non-profit organisation's strategy refers to:

- a way of understanding, predicting and controlling the organisation's performance in the long-term
- a coherent and actionable plan through which the organisation can perform according to the expectations

Vision, according to Allison (2005), helps the non-profit organisation, its members and key stakeholders to believe that their efforts and commitment can turn possibility into reality. In other words, vision is a state of mind which is built upon reasonable assumptions about the future and influenced by the organisation's own judgments about what is possible and worthwhile. Kilpatrick & Silverman (2005, p. 2) argue that the most effective non-profit visions comprise compelling and easily understandable description of how the non-profit would like the world to change in the next few years and what role the organisation will play in the change. In addition, both Allison (2005, p. 17) and Phills (2005, p. 46) note that for a non-profit organisation, vision answers to the following question:

- What does the world look like after the organisation has accomplished its primary goals?

Mission has a primary role in the non-profit context and it captures the essence of the organisation, defines the significance of the organisation's work and motivates the stakeholders to help the organisation to achieve its goals. Phills (2005) points out that the non-profit organisations differ from businesses in a sense that their role is to do something other than provide profits to their owners. Hence, for the non-profit organisation, mission is the central reason for existence and it determines the organisation's direction and defines what social value the organisation creates for its stakeholders. Therefore, mission is the source of passion for a non-profit organisation, the reason why people work for the organisation and why funders support it. As Drucker (1990, p. 6) emphasises:

- The non-profits exist for the sake of their mission.

To summarise, since the non-profit organisations differ from businesses because of their financial goals, this subsection explained that the concepts of strategic planning also have different focus. Strategy explains what the non-profit organisation does and how it plans to achieve its mission and vision. Vision defines the organisation's expectations about the future after it has achieved its primary goals. Mission has a primary role in the non-profit sector since it offers a reason for the stakeholders to support and cooperate with the organisation. For the purposes of this study, this subsection provided general background knowledge of the strategic planning for the case organisation, which can be utilised when developing the communication strategy. Now that the core elements of strategic planning have been discussed, the next subsection will focus on the essence of a communication strategy, which supports the elements of strategic planning.

2.3.3 Essence of a Communication Strategy

Majority of the communication researchers seem to share a similar understanding of the essence of a communication strategy as they point out that an effective communication strategy is mainly built on three basic elements: clear objectives, well analysed

stakeholders and appropriate messages. Thus, communication strategy can be considered as a long-term plan to organise and arrange communication in such a way that it supports the organisation's long-term goals. This subsection describes the different characteristics and qualities attached to the essence of a communication strategy for both businesses and non-profit organisations. The essence can be related to supporting the organisation's overall strategy, analysing the stakeholders, creating an organisational story or clarifying the strategic plans to internal stakeholders.

Different researchers explain the essence of a communication slightly differently and below are examples of the different interpretations of the essence of a communication strategy. Communication strategy, according to Åberg (2002, p. 174), means forming the basic communication policies which support the organisation's strategy. Cornelissen (2004) proposes that communication strategy is linked to the organisation's vision and objectives and is based on an analysis of stakeholder relationships. Cornelissen (2004) points out that a well-planned communication strategy can decrease the amount of misunderstandings that might complicate strategy implementation. Van Riel & Forbrum (2007) suggest that communication also has a role of stimulating employees to support the strategic choices of the organisation in their everyday work. Allison (2005) adds that the aim of a communication strategy is to build commitment among the key stakeholders to the organisation's capabilities. Vernis et al. (2006, p. 93) argue that for the non-profits, communication strategy responds to a need to communicate transparent information to the society about their operations to prove that they are accountable for the financial support they receive.

Åberg (2000) suggests that it is essential for a communication strategy that the organisation has a clear profile, a story which describes the organisation's strategic plans. Creating this story is a long-term process which links organisational roots (identity) to its future goals (vision and mission). The objective of developing the organisational story is to create core messages for all communication which highlight the organisation's goals and culture. Munter (2006) and Hämäläinen & Maula (2004) argue that a clear profile and core messages help the organisation to present a coherent identity which is easily understandable for the stakeholders.

As all the stakeholders see organisation and interpret the communicated messages from their own points of view, the organisational story needs to be adapted to the needs of the different stakeholder groups. Kline (2001) points out that while the organisation's goals and objectives are truly the essence of a communication strategy; the actual message is the key to reaching the target audience. One way to fail to reach organisational objectives is to ignore that core objective when communicating messages to different stakeholders. Argenti (2003, p. 23) notes that communication is an ongoing process, which requires interaction between the organisation, the messages it sends out and the audience who responds to the messages. Munter (2006) adds that in each communication situation the audience - its attitudes, bias and culture - has to be taken into account when planning communication. O'Neil (2003) point out that when deciding upon the communication strategy and the messages, the following questions have to be replied: "who form the audience", "what do they know beforehand", "what do they feel", and "how can we persuade them" (see also Munter, 2006). Still, according to O'Neil (2003), the focus on the audience requires that the communicators fully understand the organisation's identity and their roles and objectives within the organisation.

The essence of a communication strategy includes investigating how the stakeholders currently see the organisation. Cornelissen (2004, p. 78) suggests that investigating how the stakeholders view the organisation is essential to capture their perceptions of the organisation and its operating environment. Gibson et al. (2006, p.18) and Croft (2003, p. 50) emphasise also the importance of stakeholders' views. They argue that to understand the stakeholders' views, it is important to know who the stakeholders are, what kind of relationship they have with each other and what do they expect from the organisation.

Considering the essence of a non-profit's communication strategy, certain features need to be paid kept in mind. Gibson et al. (2006, p. 17) argue that ethical strategies and moral obligations are extremely important elements which impact the stakeholders' views, particularly for the non-profit organisations. Therefore, effective communication strategy also addresses characteristics and strong ethical values, such as honesty, loyalty

and accuracy. In addition, Vernis et al (2006, pp. 94-97) suggest that in order to be successful and attract funding, the non-profits should apply the following three principles to their operations and highlight them in communication:

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Integrity

Vernis et al. (2006) also explain that if a non-profit is seen to execute above three principles in its operations and communicate about them, it can help in building public trust. Trust is the key when building the relationships with stakeholders, and particularly when attracting funding and other resources. Vernis et al. (2006, p. 98) argue that in order to build the trust, the non-profit organisation should address the following four areas in its communication strategy:

- Financial area: the use of funds and mechanisms to fulfil the legal obligations
- Operating area: how the projects are carried out to prove efforts
- Management area: composition of government, leaders and workers
- Strategic area: the focus of the operations and relevant aspects of mission

The essence of a communication strategy for a non-profit organisation, according to Vuokko (2004), is to explain what the organisation is and what it has to offer. She emphasises the importance of internal understanding and, thus, internal communication when she points out that the external communication can not be good and effective unless internal communication is organised well. Therefore, when developing the communication strategy for the non-profit, it is crucial to start from within the organisation. Vuokko (2004) concludes that ineffective internal communication has also an effect on the organisation's external communication.

To summarise, this subsection discussed communication strategy and its essence. For the purposes of this study, which aims at developing a communication strategy, this subsection showed the essence of a communication strategy in general and pointed few specific areas for a non-profit organisation, such as the case organisation. The essence of a communication strategy includes three key elements: clear objectives, analysed

audience and appropriate messages. In addition, the essence of a communication strategy is to support the organisation's overall strategy, which needs to be clarified first internally to secure the effectiveness of communication. Once internal priorities are clear, core messages about organisation can be created based on a clear organisational story. The organisational story and the core messages form the basis for all communication but need to be modified depending on the audience and communication objectives. In order to attract resources, the non-profit's communication strategy should focus on clarifying what the organisation is and does, i.e. its mission and strategy. Particularly, the non-profit organisation's communication strategy has to address and concentrate on continuity, coherency and transparency in order to secure the access to vital resources. Now that this subsection gave a general presentation of the essence of the communication strategy, the next subsection will introduce some models which can be used to developing a communication strategy.

2.3.4 Approaches for Developing a Communication Strategy

As the objective of this study is to develop a communication strategy, this subsection describes different approaches from the researchers for the process. In particular, the subsection introduces four models from different researchers which can be utilised in the empirical part of the study. Some of the models for developing a communication strategy presented here use concrete step-by-step approach (e.g. Bienvenu & Timm, 2001), whereas some include more strategic planning and analysis in their phases (e.g. Åberg, 2002; Cornelissen 2004).

According to the first model, developing a communication strategy is an ongoing process in which all the parts interact with each other. According to Szukala (2001, pp. 33-35), the ongoing process includes seven points. First, the organisation has to have clear *objectives* for communication; messages which are conveyed by the senders in a way that they cause the receivers to behave in a desired manner. Second, *audience*, the target group for communication needs to be carefully analysed. Third, the most optimal and appropriate *channels* have to be selected considering both the content of the message and the target audience. Fourth, *format* for the message should be easily accessible for the target audience. Fifth, the organisation needs to clarify the *internal*

responsibilities of each point of the strategy already in the developing phase. Sixth, it is important to continuously ask and search for *feedback* and adjust communication accordingly. Last, *budget* and fiscal constraints should be considered already in the planning phase when it is still relatively easy. Szukala (2001) notes that the interaction between the organisation and audience enables a constant development of the communication strategy

Second, according to Bienvenu and Timm (2002), the organisation can apply similar instructions regardless if it is developing a communication strategy or delivering individual messages. As Figure 5 shows, their five-step Strategic Communication Model connects detailed steps together which form a circle for communication.

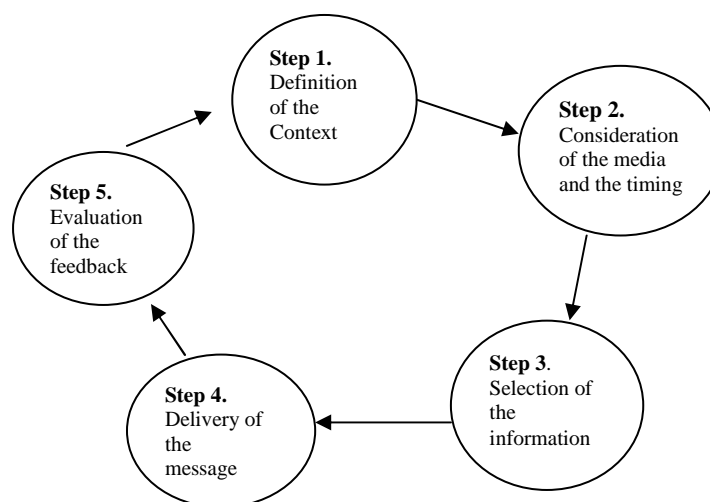


Figure 5. Strategic Communication Model (Bienvenu & Timm, 2002, p. 5)

As can be seen from Figure 5, Bienvenu & Timm’s (2002) model is based on linking five steps to each other and, thus, creating a circle for development. Step 1 *defines the context* for communication and refers to three factors which form a foundation also for a communication strategy: objectives, situation and audience. Step 2 is to *consider* appropriate *media* and the most convenient *timing* for communication. After the timing and media have been decided, Step 3 involves *selection of the information*, i.e. content, for the message. Step 4 is *delivery of the actual message* in the most appropriate form adapted particularly for the target audience. In order to improve communication, continuous feedback and learning is crucial and, therefore, Step 5 includes *evaluation of*

the feedback received. Bienvenu & Timm's (2002) model suggests that effective communication is an ongoing process which needs to be adjusted according to the feedback. Kline (2001) agrees and adds that messages must be continuously evaluated to determine which parts of communication strategy work and which ones are not effective. The messages remain relevant and effective if the feedback is searched constantly.

In the third model by Åberg (2000, pp. 225-238; 2002, p. 179), the organisation needs to find the internal and external factors which have an effect on organising the communication when developing a communication strategy. Hence, when planning communication, the first task is to review the internal processes and check they meet the requirements of the operating environment. He notes that the organisation's strategic plans and identity operate as a starting point for a communications strategy. Once they are clear, the second task is to find out the internal and external factors that support strategic goals and utilise them in building the communication strategy. As can be seen from Figure 6, Moisala and Åberg (Åberg, 2000) developed a model to analyse external and internal factors which have to be considered when developing a communication strategy.

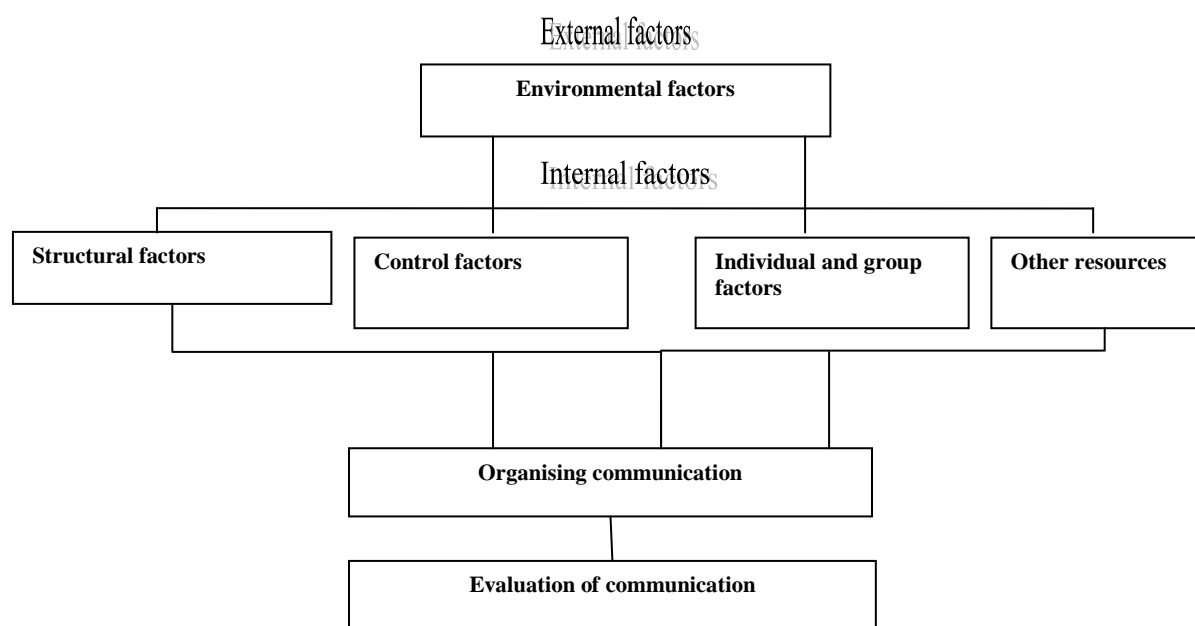


Figure 6. Framework for External and Internal Factors Affecting Communication (Åberg, 2000, p.229; 2002, p. 179)

As can be seen from Figure 6, the model is based on an analysis of internal and external factors of the organisation and the environment it operates in. *External factors* include the *environmental factors* such as the organisation's operating environment. The different parties the organisation cooperates with, such as customers, suppliers, partners and government and their attitudes and expectations impact the content of the communication strategy. The organisation can influence to some external factors, such as the customer's behaviour or selection of partners, but can not alter the others, such as the laws or the regulations.

As Figure 6 shows, the *internal factors* include four factors: structural, control, individual and group, and other resources. *Structural factors*, such as the organisational structure, number of organisational levels and geographic distribution, all influence communication, for instance, through differences in cultures, expectations and feedback channels. *Control factors*, such as the management techniques and leadership skills, are connected to communication as the effectiveness and impact of the control systems needs to be followed and reviewed constantly. *Individual and group factors* are related to individuals and their competence, experience and communication skills. All these factors affect the communication as the organisation needs to figure out how the messages are conveyed and interpreted. *Other resources*, such as financial, technical and communications competence, impact the process of developing the communication strategy. Åberg (2000) argues that in the beginning of developing a communication strategy, the organisation needs to assess its existing resources such as IT systems and channels.

After the framework analysis regarding the organisation's environmental and internal factors has been completed, organisation can move to more operational aspects regarding *organising communication*. That includes, for instance, allocating the resources for communication, such as money and technology, and to defining and analysing the stakeholders. According to Åberg (2000; 2002), based on the framework analysis, the organisation can review and *evaluate communication* practises and decide on allocation of resources for each year.

In the fourth model, Cornelissen (2004, pp. 102-103) argues that strategic communication planning means defining guidelines on how to link communication to the organisation's strategic goals. As a result, he built a model for developing a communication strategy which begins with an evaluation of the organisation and its objectives and an analysis of the organisation's strategy, positioning and operating environment. As can be seen from Figure 7, communication strategy model can be divided into four phases: strategic analysis, strategic intent, strategic action, and tracking and evaluation.

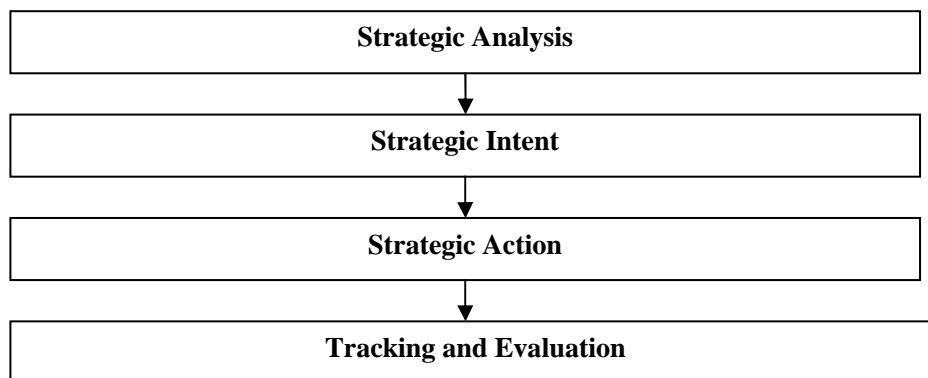


Figure 7. Communication Strategy Model (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 104)

As Figure 7 shows, the four phases of Cornelissen's (2004) model are linked to each other. He develops a communication strategy through the organisation's internal competences, abilities, challenges and limitations which connect communication to the organisation's strategic planning. According to Cornelissen (2004; see also Van Riel & Forbrum, 2007, p. 144), *strategic analysis* is concerned with understanding the organisation and its strategic position as a whole. The aim is to form a view of the key influences in the present and future well-being of the organisation, its opportunities and competencies, the operating environment, the competitive position and the relationships the organisation has with its stakeholders. From the analysis, the organisation should be able to identify the key actions which need to be taken and the role that communication has in the strategy of the organisation.

Cornelissen's (2004) second phase, *strategic intent*, sets general direction (vision) for the organisation and defines the patterns of actions that need to be taken to achieve the

objectives. The intent relates to understanding the external stakeholders' expectations and it influences on organisational identity and the organisation's position in the markets. Cornelissen's (2004) third phase, *strategic action*, translates the chosen strategy into action and focuses on steps that are important in implementing a communication strategy. Strategic action includes efforts, such as defining communication objectives and analysing the stakeholders, deciding which communications channels to use and how to structure the messages. He points out that not only the main themes of the messages have to be considered but also the tone and type of response that the message will seek to achieve. Once these have been considered, arrangements, such as budget, internal responsibilities and key tasks, can be planned. The final element in developing a communication strategy, according to Cornelissen (2004), should be effective *tracking and evaluation* of the results. He also notes that as a part of a formal evaluation of the communication strategy it is also important to consider how emergent issues or crises would be handled through communication.

To summarise, the aim of this subsection was to show that developing a communication strategy starts from the organisation and its internal processes, i.e. the organisation's strategic plans which form the basis for a communication strategy. This principle can be used when developing the communication strategy for the purpose of this study. The subsection introduced four different approaches for building a communication strategy from which some focused more on delivering the messages and some on the strategic analysis of the organisation and its environment. Overall, all the models stated that developing a communication strategy is a continuous process which evolves and changes through the feedback received. For the purposes of this study, the subsection presented models which can be utilised when developing a communication strategy for the case organisation.

As a conclusion, the goal of section 2.3 was to describe how an organisation, such as the case organisation, could start developing its communication strategy. As the objective of this study was to assist the case organisation in developing a communication strategy, the aim of this section was to review the relevant literature for the process. Section 2.3

showed that the communication strategy is a long-term plan to communicate the organisation's strategic plans to its stakeholders. Subsection 2.3.3 particularly argued that for a non-profit organisation, such as the case organisation, the main objective of a communication strategy is to explain what the organisation does and what it has to offer for its stakeholders, i.e. its strategy, vision and mission. In addition, it was explained that in order to build the stakeholders trust and to attract vital resources, the non-profit's communication strategy needs to emphasise transparency, integrity and accountability, and motivate the employees. It was highlighted throughout the section that communication needs to be organised to meet and support the strategic goals of the organisation.

Besides the strategic objectives for communication, stakeholder analysis was considered to form another crucial part of a non-profit's communication strategy. It was pointed out that the stakeholders' responses and interests require detailed investigation because each group of stakeholders has different reasons to cooperate with the organisation. It was considered particularly important that a non-profit, such as the case organisation, knows its stakeholders well in order to focus its scarce communication resources effectively. Therefore, the effectiveness of the messages, channels, media and timing for the communication depend on the each stakeholder group. As a conclusion, the goal of section 2.3 was to introduce the strategic planning a basis for a communication strategy and describe the communication researchers' views to developing a communication strategy.

To conclude, Chapter 2 reviewed literature about non-profit organisations, organisational identity and communication strategy. The objective of this chapter was to provide a comprehensive view of the major three themes. In the first section, the concept of a non-profit organisation was defined and the most common challenges they face described. This was done in order to get an idea of the operating field of the case organisation. The second section discussed organisational identity, linked it to organisational reputation, showed the employees' importance for the reputation and highlighted that managing organisational identity means creating a shared understanding of organisation's identity, which works as a basis for all external

communication. As this study investigates the case organisation's identity, section 2.3 justified that the employees' perceptions of their organisation are a basis for communication and should be explored. The last section, 2.3, highlighted that a communication strategy is a part of the organisations' strategic plans and provided instructions from the researchers on how to start developing a communication strategy. As the objective of this study is to develop a communication strategy, the final section reviewed the relevant literature which could be applied in the process of developing a communication strategy for the case organisation. The next chapter combines the information presented in this chapter to a theoretical framework.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for this study and underlines the reasons for investigating the identity of the case organisation as a basis for developing a communication strategy. The framework is built combining the information from Chapter 2 to a model, which connects developing a communication strategy to a study of the organisational identity. The coherent internal identity forms the basis for a communication strategy. Only after that has been accomplished, the organisation should consider the other parts of the communication strategy, such as the organisational story, core messages, stakeholder analysis and communication and feedback channels.

The theoretical framework for this study is modified from the model of Marvick & Fill (1997) and was influenced by the models of Cornelissen (2004) and Åberg (2000). Still, the models and theories of the other researchers presented throughout Chapter 2 are also used to illustrate the theoretical framework and support the basic ideas by Marvick and Fill (1997). Marvick & Fill (1997) connected organisational identity, reputation and strategic management together by the means of internal and external communication. They suggested in their corporate identity management process (CIMP) model, presented in subsection 2.2.3, that by researching the internal and external stakeholders' perceptions, the organisation can utilise the information in strategic planning which influenced the theoretical framework for this study. Still, CIMP model was simplified and a framework designed for the purposes of this study and this case organisation because CIMP model provides a very general approach for managing the corporate identity.

Cornelissen (2004) and Åberg (2002) influenced the theoretical framework as they provided instructions for developing a communication strategy and emphasised that it starts from an investigation of the organisation's identity. In other words, employee perceptions of the organisation's internal identity, i.e. its abilities and competence, determine what the organisation has to offer for its stakeholders. As a result, they described that a communication strategy is a plan to communicate the organisation's

strategic goals to its stakeholders in order to provide a clear plan of the organisation's actions.

The theoretical framework for this study suggests that a non-profit organisation, such as the case organisation, should develop its communication strategy based on a shared internal understanding of its organisational identity. To develop the communication strategy, the organisation should investigate the features of its identity, compare them to the external perceptions, i.e. reputation, about the organisation and adapt the communication strategy according to the results. As can be seen from Figure 8, the theoretical framework consists of five building blocks: strategic planning, communication strategy, organisational identity and organisational reputation. Internal communication connects strategic planning to the organisational identity and external communication links the identity to the reputation. Through a reputation research, the organisation can explore the perceptions of its external stakeholders.

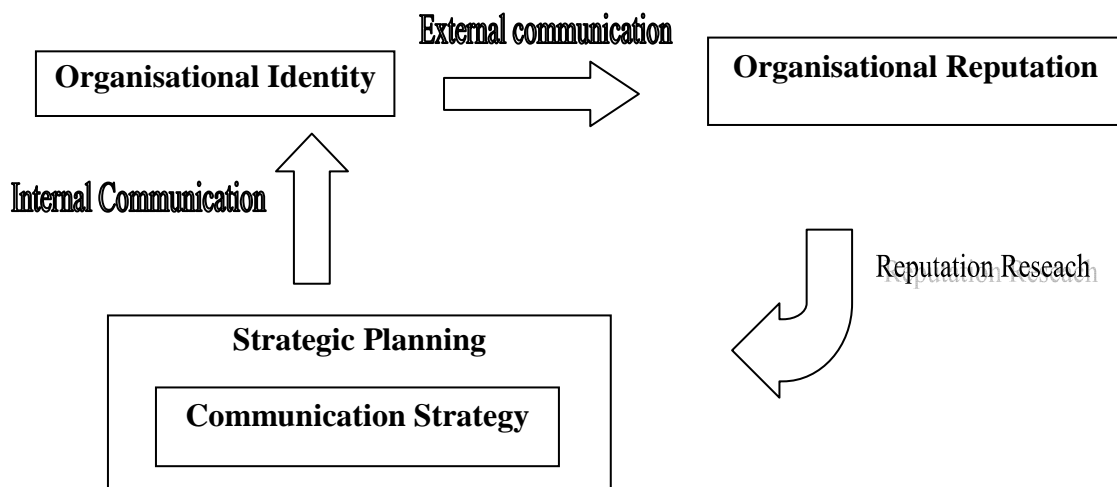


Figure 8. Shared Organisational Identity as a Basis for a Communication Strategy

Figure 8 highlights the role of communication, both internal and external, between strategic planning, organisational identity and reputation. Strategic planning relates to the organisation's long-term goals and targets, in particular, to strategy, vision and mission. A communication strategy is part of the strategic planning process: a plan to communicate and clarify the organisation's strategic plans to the stakeholders to create a

coherent view of its abilities. Internal communication connects strategic planning to the organisational identity. The organisational identity is formed of the employees' understanding of what the organisation is and does. Therefore, internal communication about the strategic plans needs to be clear in order to create a shared understanding among the employees about the organisational identity. External communication connects organisational identity to organisational reputation. The reputation builds up from the stakeholders' interpretations of the communicated identity and it is influenced by the stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the organisation's performance.

As Figure 8 demonstrates, organisational identity is transmitted to the external stakeholders through external communication. The external communication consists of both planned campaigns and the employees' daily communication with the external stakeholders. Hence, the employees who understand and are engaged to the organisation's strategic plans communicate them in the contacts with the external stakeholders. Thus, a one task of the communication strategy is to create a coherent organisational identity to ensure that all the members of the organisation tell the same story, which also is consistent with other communication efforts. In a case of a non-profit organisation, such as the case organisation, the daily communication between the employees and the external stakeholders has a large role since the resources for other communication are limited. In order to enhance the internal understanding of strategic goals, as many employees as practical could be included into a dialogue about the identity and the strategic planning process. The aim is to make sure the all the internal members of the organisation speak the same language about the organisation and its activities.

As Figure 8 shows, reputation research connects reputation to strategic planning. By researching the views of the external stakeholders, the organisation can adapt its communication strategy. The organisation can obtain the most beneficial results by combining the results of an identity study with the results of a reputation research and identify the gaps in the communication flow. For instance, if the employees' perceptions of the organisational identity are not consistent with the external stakeholders' perceptions, the link between the identity and reputation, i.e. external

communication, needs modification. Thus, the organisation can explore the communication flow between the strategic plans, the employees (organisational identity) and the external stakeholders (organisational reputation), and alter the communication strategy accordingly

Besides an internal dialogue about the organisational identity, a part of developing a communication strategy is determining what the organisation wants to communicate about its identity to the external stakeholders. In other words, the organisation needs to build an organisational story and core messages which compress the organisation's strategic plans. This story and the core messages operate as basis for communication with the external stakeholders. The organisation should also include the employees in the process of creating the organisational story to ensure the employees' engagement.

Once the internal foundation (a coherent organisational identity and an organisational story) for the communication strategy is clear, the organisation can focus on analysing the stakeholders and delivering the actual messages. Particularly, the non-profits should carefully analyse their stakeholders' needs and classify the stakeholders according to their priority for the organisation. Once the organisation knows its most important stakeholders, the messages can be targeted in order to reach the desired outcome without wasting limited resources. Hence, the communication strategy for delivering the messages depends on the knowledge and experiences of the different stakeholders. The other parts of the process of the delivering the messages - such as objectives, content of the messages, communication channels, timing, responsibilities and feedback channels - can be planned according to the stakeholder groups.

As conclusion, this chapter introduced the theoretical framework for this study. The aim was to highlight that the organisations, also the case organisation for this study, should develop their communication strategy based on a shared internal understanding of their organisational identity. Thus, the framework underlined the role of communication in forming a coherent organisational identity.

A communication strategy is a long-term plan to communicate the organisations' strategic goals to the stakeholders. As a result of a solid internal foundation, the organisation can determine which parts of its identity to emphasise in external communication. These parts of the identity can be used to create an organisational story and core messages which form the basis for the communication strategy. In addition, analysis of the external stakeholders and their needs influence the content, structure and channels of the messages.

In addition, as this study investigates the employee perceptions of the organisational identity, the chapter showed that the organisations should explore how they are perceived by the stakeholders in order to develop the communication strategy. The employees' understanding of their organisation forms the organisational identity which is transmitted to the external stakeholders through external communication. The external stakeholders form their perceptions of the organisation based on communication and the organisation's performance. As a result, the organisation should investigate the perceptions of its internal and external stakeholders, compare the results and develop the communication strategy accordingly.

4 Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology for this study, presents the research design and justifies the use of these particular research methods. Section 4.1 presents the most suitable research design for this study: a qualitative single case study. Section 4.2 introduces the primary method for data collection, semi-structured interviews, and explains the interview themes. Next, section 4.3 discusses the data collection process and section 4.4 describes how the interview data was analysed. The last section, 4.5, evaluates the trustworthiness of this study.

4.1 Qualitative Single - Case Design

A qualitative single-case study (Yin, 2003) was a natural choice for this study as it focuses on developing a communication strategy for one particular case organisation. Thus, the study aims at understanding and interpreting information from the organisation's employees' points of view.

The approach in the study is qualitative as it emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data, as described by Bryman & Bell (2003). According to Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005, p. 112), a qualitative data collection method allows the researcher to explore deeply into attitudes towards, for example, trends and behaviour. Auerbach (2003, p.126) presents three general characteristics in a qualitative research which make the approach suitable here. First, the qualitative approach focuses on the voices of the participants, i.e. the participants are the experts rather than the researcher. This makes sense here since the aim is to investigate the organisation's identity and employees can be considered experts regarding the organisation they work for. Second, as previous literature about non-profits' communication planning is limited, it can be acknowledged that the researcher may not know enough about the subject to generate a valid hypothesis before conducting the empirical part of the research. Therefore, the reason for selecting a qualitative research method was that the research process itself is hypothesis generating.

Third, Auerbach (2003, p. 126) explains that collaboration and partnership between the researcher and participants is assumed in qualitative research which makes the outcome more likely to benefit the participants. In addition, Dowling (2001, p. 217) claims that a qualitative research is the best method to uncover and understand the characteristics people use to describe organisation, its identity, reputation and communication policies. As a result, it can be stated that the qualitative research method is suitable for this study.

For the purposes of this study, the single case study design was a self-evident choice because the objective is to investigate a single organisation and to identify certain factors attached to it. In other words, a single case study as a research method offers this study a chance to investigate communication in a non-profit context, where previous research is practically lacking. The case study method is also useful because the phenomenon under investigation is difficult, if not impossible, to study outside its natural settings. Daymon (2002, p. 108) suggests that a case design is especially useful for such communication related studies where the aim is to highlight and underline communication processes. A good case research about communication is a comprehensive description about communication policies, habits and rules researched and investigated within one unit but are also reflected to a specific situation.

To summarise, the aim for this study is to explore real events in their own context for a one particular case. Hence, a qualitative case study enables the researcher to collect detailed information and identify factors governing communication in the case setting. Single-case study was a natural choice of a research design because this study focuses on a one particular organisation.

4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews and Interview Themes

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the primary data collection method for this study because they allow a certain interview structure but still emphasise a free flow of conversation between the interviewer and interviewees. According to Yin (2003, p. 89), interviews in a qualitative research are more like guided conversations than structured queries. Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 48) explain that instead of fixed interview

questions, the semi-structured interviews follow certain themes. In this context, as Gilham (2005) explains, a semi-structured interview refers to an interview which has a certain structure and themes but which also allows the researcher to ask spontaneous subquestions.

The semi-structured interviews, as Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 49) point out, at their best, are a flexible way of receiving answers to certain themes without a detailed plan of questions. Thus, the method highlights the interviewees' perspectives and pays attention to voices of different interviewees. Timm (2005, p.74) argues that a semi-structured interview as a method encourages the interviewees to express thoughts important to them about structured topics. As a result, the interview can produce new insights into the topics which were not even considered by the interviewer. Still, the structured focus of the interviews enables the researcher's analysis in terms of commonalities. As Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p.104) state, the researcher is able to detect the "wrong" reactions to the themes and direct the interview to the "right" direction with additional questions. As this study investigates the case organisation's identity and communication policies, the semi-structured interview, which allows a reasonably free flow of conversation within a certain structure, is the most suitable data collection method.

The interview themes were selected based on two of the themes presented in the literature review in Chapter 2: organisational identity and communication. As subsection 2.2.2 demonstrated, employees are one of the main stakeholders to impact organisational reputation and their perceptions need to be investigated. Also, as the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 suggested, an organisation who wants to develop an effective communication strategy needs to start by assessing the current perceptions of its most important stakeholders. In addition, if the organisation wishes to foster its reputation, the employees have an important role. Therefore, the interviews were conducted with the employees of the case organisation, CMI, and they explored the employees' perceptions of the organisation.

Besides the two major themes identity and communication, third leading theme for the interviews was the case organisation's reputation, as perceived by its employees. As

Marvick & Fill (1997) claim, an organisation will get more valuable results from a reputation study if it is conducted both internally and externally. Hence, Kaustinen's (2008) study about the case organisation's reputation (see sub section 6.1.1) and her interview themes were reviewed to in order to secure the possibility to compare her results to this one.

The selection of the interview themes was strongly influenced by the studies of O'Neil (2003) and Marvick & Fill (1997). O'Neil's (2003) study had an impact on the interview themes for this study as she pointed out that the organisations could understand and sustain their identity better if they investigate their employees' perceptions of the communication practises. She suggests that the process of investigating communication can be as simple as interviewing the employees about the organisation's practises and challenges. In addition, Marvick & Fill's (1997) research about identity management (see subsection 2.3.3) gave useful information for this study because it connected identity research to strategic communication planning. They proposed a study to find out if the organisation's identity (the employee perceptions) differs from the external reputation.

As a result of the literature review about the non-profit organisations, organisational identity, which impacts organisational reputation, and communication strategy, the framework for the interviews (see Appendix 1) was built on the following three main themes:

- 1) CMI's organisational identity as perceived by the employees (e.g. Argenti & Forman, 2002; Markkanen, 1999; Van Riel & Forbrum, 2007; Kaustinen, 2008; see section 2.2)
- 2) CMI's organisational reputation as perceived by the employees (e.g. O'Neil, 2003; Marvick & Fill, 1997; Aula & Heinonen, 2008; Kaustinen, 2008; see section 2.2)
- 3) CMI's communication practices and challenges as perceived by the employees (e.g. Pitt & Papania; Cornelissen, 2004; Chong, 2006; Argenti & Forman, 2003; see sections 2.3 and 2.3)

The first major theme, organisational identity as perceived by CMI's employees, was selected in order to investigate the features the employees connect to CMI, and to explore CMI's identity. The theme included investigating the employees' perceptions of CMI's:

- Mission and strategy: what CMI is, aims at and why
- Vision and future direction
- Core strengths and competence areas
- Opportunities and challenges in operating environment
- The Finnish origin

In other words, the objective was to find out how the employees perceive CMI's identity: its strategy, vision, mission, core competence areas and if they interpret them in the same way. CMI's operating environment, its challenges and opportunities, is also a part of strategic considerations, and therefore was touched upon in the interviews. In addition, the element of CMI's Finnish origin was brought up due to two reasons. First, the question of CMI's Finnishness was included to see if the employees felt that it could be utilised in communication in the future. Second, according to Kaustinen (2008), CMI's Nordic origin and values were seen as a strong positive attribute among its funders and, therefore, they were brought up with the employees as well.

The second major theme, organisational reputation as perceived by CMI's employees, was brought up to investigate the internal perceptions of CMI's reputation and how they compare to the external perceptions investigated by Kaustinen (2008). This theme aimed to explore:

- Different external stakeholder groups that CMI's employees are in contact with
- The employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation among those external stakeholders

On the one hand, the objective was to find out if the employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation are coherent. On the other hand, the aim was to find out how CMI's internal views about its external reputation compare to the reality of one external stakeholder

group investigated by Kaustinen (2008). In other words, the objective was to explore if there was a reputation “gap” between the internal and the external views of CMI.

The third leading theme, CMI’s communication practices and challenges as perceived by the employees, was chosen in order to investigate how communication is currently organised both internally and externally. The objective was to figure out how CMI’s employees experience:

- Practises and challenges for external communication
- Practises and challenges for internal communication
- Impact of the Nobel Peace Prize on operations and communication

The objective was to identify the areas for both internal and external communication which the employees feel are the most challenging or need to be developed. Although communication was also present during the first two themes, it was also investigated separately which allowed more issues to be brought to discussion. One significant aspect impacting both CMI’s identity and communication practises was that the Chairman of the Board President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2008. Even though it is too early to assess its long-term effects, the employees’ views of the impacts of the Nobel Prize on CMI’s future direction had to be discussed.

The researcher considered it important that the interviews included some general questions to ensure that the interviewees felt comfortable and had an opportunity to ask questions. Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 107) and Dowling (2001, p. 217) point out that a research interview typically begins with broad questions that are later on followed by more specific ones. This makes the interviewee confident that the questions can be answered based on his/her experiences, abilities and interests. Those guidelines were followed and each interview began with some general questions about CMI’s identity followed by more specific questions. In the end, each interviewee was given an opportunity to ask questions or give comments.

To summarise, this section justified the use of the semi-structured interviews as a data collection method and described the themes for the interviews. The interview

framework was built based on three major themes which arose from the literature review: CMI's identity, reputation and communication practises and challenges as perceived by the employees.

4.3 Data Collection

For the purposes of this study, the data was collected through 17 semi-structured interviews between 29th October 2008 and 22nd January 2009 among the employees of CMI. The respondent sample included all the employees of the case organisation on 16th of October 2008, including one member on a leave of absence. CMI has offices in Helsinki and Brussels and the interviews were conducted in the "home" office of each employee. Therefore, 13 interviews were done in Helsinki and 4 in Brussels. As can be seen from Table 1, which summarises the interviews settings, 11 of the interviewees were female and 6 male.

In the beginning, all interviewees were told about the study and the upcoming interviews by the Helsinki Office Manager of CMI and they were later approached by the researcher to arrange the meetings. An email was sent to all 12 employees in Helsinki between October and December 2008 and an email to the Office Manager in Brussels in November 2008. The objective was to further introduce the researcher, inform about the research objectives and inquire about a suitable time and place for the interview. In addition, one interviewee, currently on a leave of absence from CMI, was first approached by the Helsinki Office Manager and then, after the interviewee's consent was received, by the researcher in December 2008.

Based on the email to the interviewees, time and place for the interview was individually agreed with each staff member of the Helsinki office for the period of 29 October 2008 and 22 January 2009. With the Brussels office, a period of three days was agreed in the beginning of December 2008 when all the staff members were in the office and had time for an interview. A more detailed schedule was then arranged in Brussels. In addition, one interview was arranged during the interviewee's holiday trip to Helsinki in the beginning of January 2009. As a result, 12 interviews were conducted

in the CMI's premises in Helsinki, one in a Café in Helsinki and 4 in CMI's office in Brussels.

When approached via email by the researcher, the interviewees were told that the interview will take maximum of one hour and will be recorded but the results treated in such a way that no individual answers could be identified. Recording was brought up again in the beginning of each interview when the interviewees were assured anonymity. As a result, none of the interviewees considered recording an issue as long as the interviews as such would not be published. As Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 92) point out, recording enabled fluent and continuous interview and it was found especially useful for this research for two reasons. First, it allowed the researcher to focus on the interview content, to make relevant subquestions and ask for clarification instead of using the time to take notes. Second, recording increased the reliability of the interview process and decreased the possibility of misunderstandings because the researcher could go back to the results at any time.

Table 1 shows the interview settings. The majority of the interviews, 13 in total, were conducted in Finnish and the rest four in English. CMI's Helsinki Office Manager assisted the researcher in selecting the language for the interview and advised which employees could be interviewed in their mother tongue, Finnish, and which ones in English.

Table 1. The Interview Settings¹

Title	Gender	Time	Place	Language
Development Manager	Female	Oct 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Programme Assistant	Female	Nov 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Deputy Program Director	Female	Nov 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Associate Project Officer	Male	Nov 2008	Helsinki	English
Project Manager	Male	Nov 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Project Officer	Male	Nov 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Adviser	Female	Nov 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Special Assistant to President Ahtisaari	Female	Nov 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Head of Office	Female	Dec 2008	Brussels	English
Senior Adviser	Female	Dec 2008	Brussels	English
Project Assistant	Female	Dec 2008	Brussels	English
Project Assistant	Male	Dec 2008	Brussels	Finnish
Office Manager	Male	Dec 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Project Assistant	Male	Dec 2008	Helsinki	Finnish
Director of Operations (currently on a leave of absence)	Female	Jan 2009	Helsinki	Finnish
Executive Director	Male	Jan 2009	Helsinki	Finnish
Program Director	Female	Jan 2009	Helsinki	Finnish

The first interview, done in Helsinki in October 2008, was originally treated as a pilot interview, in which the interview framework was tested. It was agreed with the case organisation that this particular interview could be conducted first as it offered the researcher a chance to evaluate the appropriateness of the interview themes and test the intelligibility of the interview framework. The pilot interview offered valuable knowledge and ideas for the other interviews, helped to clarify the interview questions and, overall, proved the functionality of the interview framework.

All the interviews, except one, followed a similar pattern where the interviewee and the researcher were alone in an office or in a meeting room without any major interruptions. One interview was conducted in a Café in Helsinki in the morning by the interviewee's

¹ Table 1 presents the situation on 16 October 2008, after which the interviewees' titles and roles may have changed

request but it was still considered a suitable place for an interview. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 74) the place for the semi-structured interview should be a place where the interviewee feels comfortable and which enables a continuous flow of communication. Basically, the best place for the interview is a place which is free of interruptions and other distortions.

As the interviews went on, the researcher followed the themes discussed in section 4.2 but reflected the matters based on the respondents' experience on the field and within the organisation. This means that, for some interviews, the questions concerned the whole organisation and the discussion was on the organisational level whereas some other interviews were more about the interviewees' own work and tasks. Overall, this led to similar findings but ensured that the interviewee felt more comfortable in the situation. For instance, it was not reasonable to assume that a person who had been with the organisation for a few months would be as comfortable talking about the organisation's strategy and vision as a person who had many years of experience. Therefore, the emphasis of the interview and wording of the questions were altered according to the interviewee.

Kaustinen's (2008) study, presented in more detail in section 6.1.1, about the funders' views of the case organisation was briefly mentioned during four interviews. During the interviews with the Head of Office in Brussels, the Office Manager in Helsinki, the Executive Director and the Program Director, Kaustinen's (2008) study and her results were touched upon. Even though the interviewees told they have not had time to go through the whole study, they were somewhat familiar with her findings. The impact this had on their answers and this study will be discussed more in the limitations in section 7.2.

After the actual interview, all the results were carefully documented. This means that the interviews were transcribed by the researcher within three days of the actual interview. Therefore, the researcher was still able to recall the atmosphere and details of the interview. In the end, the researcher was left with 102 pages of transcribed interviews (font: Times New Roman, single space). In addition, those interviews

conducted in Finnish were translated into English by the researcher. As the researcher is not a translator and did not have sufficient budget to use one, the translations were made according to the researcher's best ability.

To summarise, this section describe the data collection process of 17 semi-structured interviews with CMI's employees in Helsinki and in Brussels. This section aimed to carefully describe how the interview data was collected and documented.

4.4 Data Analysis

The basis for data analysis arose from the theoretical framework which showed that: a) organisational identity is a product of internally understood principles and policies and b) the employees of an organisation have a significant impact on the external stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation. Thus, if organisational identity and the strategic plans, in particular, are clear for the employees, the employees can communicate them daily in encounters with the external stakeholders. This section describes the process for data analysis which was based on the theoretical framework and the elements of the interview themes.

Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 136) came up with the main features of a qualitative data analysis of which three are especially useful for the basis of data analysis in this study. First, the analysis of the data began already during the interview situations when the researcher made notes and then added the notes into transcribed interview documents. Second, the researcher used abductive reasoning for data analysis, where the leading hunches of the literature review, presented below, were searched for confirmation from the data. Third, help for the data analysis was searched from the previous studies, of which three briefly were mentioned in section 4.2.

The process of data analysis was the following. In the beginning, there were no ready made classes for categorising data since the aim of the interviews was to get the interviewees to describe CMI. Still, the three interview themes: the features of CMI's organisational identity, reputation and communication operated as a guide. After transcription of the data, it was read through once by the researcher and loosely

categorised based on the interview themes. Then all the transcriptions were reviewed twice. The first time was done to gain a general view of the interview content and atmosphere. The second time aimed classifying data under the elements according to the each major category, as presented in section 4.2. Based on the process, the researcher was able to identify and highlight major issues which were present in several interviews. Then, the topics which arose most often were categorised according to their relation to the interview themes, i.e. organisation's identity, reputation, and communication. For instance, topics such as difficulty of describing CMI, monthly staff meetings and internal responsibilities were classified under communication, CMI's future plans or international networks under identity and perceptions of partners under reputation.

Data analysis which is based on theory, according to Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005), allows the researcher to have prior assumptions and hunches about critical factors and relationships. As a result, the theoretical framework, presented in Chapter 3, forms the basis for data analysis for this study. Theorising the outset offered the researcher some direction on how to proceed and guide the research. Also, the themes generated for the interviews functioned as a basic guide for classification for the data.

Based on the theoretical framework, introduced in Chapter 3, some prior assumptions and hunches about the critical relationships were formed and were then paid attention to during the data analysis. These assumptions are presented below.

- Effective internal communication policies build clear organisational identity.

Ineffective internal communication about what the organisation is and does shows also in the organisation's external communication practises. Internal communication on a strategic but also on a daily operational level fosters the employees' commitment to the organisation. As a result, internal communication policies and practises, and how they are perceived by the employees, were paid attention to when analysing data.

- A clear internal identity forms a basis for an effective communication strategy.

The organisation's strategic plans need to be communicated and understood internally before they can be communicated clearly externally. The strategic plans operate as a basis for a communication strategy but are also present in everyday encounters with external stakeholders. As a result, data was analysed and categorised against the employees' perceptions of what CMI is, does and aims at and how those views compare to each other.

- A communication strategy is based on a clear idea of what the organisation wants to communicate about itself.

The main objective of a communication strategy is to support the organisation's strategic plans. In order to accomplish that, the organisation needs to figure out what it actually wants to communicate about itself to the external stakeholders, i.e. what is the story it wants to cherish. The interview data was analysed against this background for developing a communication strategy.

- Developing a communication strategy to foster the organisation's desired features starts from assessing the current situation.

An organisation needs to investigate its reputation among different stakeholders in order to develop communication practises to foster the desired features. Therefore, the interview data was analysed according to how well CMI's employees' views compared to the views of the external stakeholders.

Anonymity of the interviewees was considered carefully and, therefore, secured in the following ways. As the interview sample includes the employees of a small organisation, it can be assumed that the employees know each other reasonably well. As a result, no direct quotations from the individual interviewees' opinions were used when reporting findings. There are two specific reasons for that. First, it was not relevant to point out individuals' opinions in a small organisation such as CMI because it can be assumed that the particular respondent would be recognised from the quotation even though presented as anonymous. Second, for the purposes of this study, larger issues

which came up in several interviews were more important than an individual's opinions. Consequently, the quotations found from the findings, presented in Chapter 5, are edited and modified from what was said in the actual interview situation to secure anonymity. As Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000) point out, direct quotations can be modified as long as the original meaning remains. Also, when documenting the findings, square brackets were used within the quotations to define more closely the topic the interviewee is commenting on.

To summarise, this section described the basis for analysing the data received from the semi-structured interviews. Data analysis has many dimensions from the considerations of the organisation's understanding of its identity and strategic core to internal communication practises. Yet, the common denominator is that the analysis of the data aims at developing a communication strategy for CMI. Before presenting the actual findings of this study, the next subchapter addresses the issue of trustworthiness of this study.

4.5 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness in qualitative research means that the researcher has to document and prove *how* and *why* the decision to investigate the research objects', i.e. CMI's employees', world in this particular way was made. The results are the researcher's interpretations to which the research objects views are reflected to. As Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2003) state, the researcher inevitably impacts the research information already during the collection phase. Therefore, justification of the research method and design are a key for building trustworthiness for this study. This section discusses the concept of trustworthiness for a qualitative study and introduces and applies Marshall's (1990) criteria to evaluate the trustworthiness of this study.

In a qualitative study, as Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2003) point out, the original concepts related to the trustworthiness of the research, reliability and validity, could be rejected since they are based on an assumption of complete objectivity. For instance, it can be seen that for a research interview, which is a dynamic situation creating new meanings,

different criteria should be applied. It is not reasonable to assume that the answers given in one interview situation would repeat the results of another interview because all the interviews occur in unique circumstances.

In a qualitative research, trustworthiness is linked more to the researcher's actions than the research objectives' responses. It is significant to notice that the findings reflect the views of the respondents but are still always a result of an interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. In addition, Yin (2003) emphasises that the trustworthiness of qualitative research could be built up by carefully documenting the each phase of the research process in a way that another researcher could conduct the *same* case study and receive similar results. Therefore, according to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000), trustworthiness of the research data can be improved by developing an accurate interview framework, in this study presented in section 4.2, and transcribing the interview data as soon as possible, for this study within 3 days.

The trustworthiness of a study such as this, can be investigated with the criteria of Marshal (1990), introduced by Miles & Huberman, (1996). Miles & Huberman (1996, pp. 278-279) recommend the criteria to be utilised when considering how trustworthy a certain qualitative study is. The criteria emphasises four features:

- Objectivity: Do conclusions of the research depend on the subjects and conditions of the research subject itself or the researcher?
- Dependability: Is the research process consistent and reasonably stable in order to minimise errors and bias?
- Authenticity: Do the findings of the study make sense and are they credible for both people under study and the readers?
- Transferability: Do the conclusions of the study have any larger import and are they transferable to other contexts?

For this study, *objectivity* was acquired through a careful and detailed documentation of the research methods and procedures. As Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 289) point out, this should be done to ensure that the researcher's personal values have not diluted the

findings, i.e. the researcher has acted in good faith. Therefore, Chapter 1 introduced the case organisation and the research objectives and Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive view of the previous literature related to non-profit organisations, organisational identity and developing a communication strategy. Also, particular attention was given in order to fully describe the data collection process (see section 4.3). In addition, the final Chapter 7 also describes the limitations of this study. As a result, it can be argued that objectivity applies for this study since the conclusions are mainly dependent on the conditions of the research.

Dependability can be received, as Yin (2003, p. 38-38) and Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 289) emphasise, with a thorough documentation of all the phases in research process in order to gain consistency. For this study that was done in the following way. The data collection process followed the research objectives, given in section 1.3, to investigate CMI's employees' perceptions. The aim was to arrange a stable interview situation for all the interviewees, which for this study meant three things. First, all interviews were conducted according to the interviewees' schedules. Second, all the interviews took place after the Chairman of CMI was awarded the Nobel Prize and, therefore, that did not have an impact on the interview results. Third, the interviews took place during the office hours, mostly in the CMI's premises, which gave all respondents an equal starting point for the interview. Still, during the interview process the researcher paid special attention to the knowledge and experience of the respondents when asking the interview questions. The reason for that was to ensure the respondents' understanding of the research themes and questions and to make sure the interviewees felt comfortable talking about the themes. Therefore, it can be argued that this study has dependability.

Authenticity, for this study, means following two principles. On the one hand, the data received from the interviews was closely linked to prior theories and literature. The concepts defined during the research process were used as coherently as possible. In addition, the points of uncertainty for the concepts, see Chapter 2, but also for the research results, see section 7.3, were identified. On the other hand, authenticity means that, due to a large interview sample, different views of the employees of the case organisation were paid attention to. Since this study also suggests areas for development

for the case organisation, it means that it does not only show the bright side of the matters. As a result, this increases the authenticity of this study.

Transferability was acquired through a description of the interview sample, places, locations and timing in order to enable comparison to other samples and evaluate the transferability to other cases. As Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 289) explain, in order to increase the possible transferability of the results, qualitative researchers should produce “rich accounts of the details of the culture”. For this study this means that the research process itself was documented in such a way that the *same* case study could be repeated by another researcher. In addition, some of the results of this study can be directly compared to and developed further with the help of a previous study by Kaustinen (2008). As a result, it can be argued that transferability applies for this study.

To conclude, this chapter described and justified the methodology used for this study. The chapter introduced a single-case study as a research method, described the main method for data collection, semi-structured interviews, and the process of collecting the research data. In addition, the chapter presented the basis for analysing the interview data. Also, the last section, 4.5, justified the trustworthiness of this study. The next chapter will present what was discovered in the interviews with CMI’s employees.

5 Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the empirical part of this study, the semi-structured interviews with CMI's employees. Overall, the results are based on the issues which were mentioned most often during the interviews. The findings are classified into three sections in order to provide answers to the three research questions of this study:

1. How do CMI's employees perceive the features of CMI's organisational identity?
2. How do CMI's employees perceive CMI's external reputation?
3. How do CMI's employees perceive the practises and challenges for CMI's internal and external communication?

According to the research questions, section 5.1 describes the features of CMI's organisational identity and section 5.2 discusses the employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation. Section 5.3 presents the employees' perceptions of the challenges and practices for CMI's internal and external communication. During the interviews, the challenges for external communication were discussed a lot, whereas the practises for external communication were not touched upon that often. Therefore, section 5.3 presents only challenges for external communication but both challenges and practises for internal communication. As the objective of this study was to assist CMI in developing a communication strategy, these all three themes, CMI's identity, reputation and communication, are needed to develop a solid base for a communication strategy.

5.1 CMI's Organisational Identity

This section provides an answer to the first research question and describes the features that the employees attached to CMI's organisational identity. On the one hand, the aim was to identify the common features, i.e. the strong areas, of CMI's identity, which could be utilised when developing a communication strategy. On the other hand, the aim was to explore if there are areas of identity which are not clear for the employees. This section includes five subsections: general features attached to CMI, core competence and uniqueness, vision and future direction and operating environment.

5.1.1 General Features Attached to CMI

Seven general features were often attached to CMI during the interviews. These include a NGO or a non-profit status, the founder and Chairman President Ahtisaari, CMI's work and expertise in a large field of crisis management, conflict resolution and peace mediation, wide networks and current projects.

Typically, the interviewees described CMI as a non-governmental organisation (NGO), founded by President Ahtisaari, which works on the non-profit basis independently from the government. CMI is an expert organisation, which operates in international level building sustainable security through crisis management, conflict resolution and peace mediation. The organisation is also known for its private diplomacy operations such as the Aceh negotiations or the Iraq seminars. CMI's work is done in different projects often in cooperation with international partners. The quotations below are examples² of the features attached to CMI.

“CMI is a Finnish NGO, which carries out international projects related to crisis management and conflict resolution often with external partners.”

“CMI offers independently ideas for international community and also assists President Ahtisaari in his activities”

“CMI is a young organisation which has accomplished a lot.”

“Our comprehensive approach to crisis management means we have something to offer for all phases of conflict.”

“CMI is a policy level organisation, which operates between the actual field and the political levels”

As can be expected, CMI was strongly connected to its founder. Still, the projects are often independent of the Nobel Laureate's role, as demonstrated by the following quotations.

² All the quotations that were originally in Finnish were translated into English by the present researcher. Consequently, the researcher is responsible of any inaccuracies or mistakes presented here.

“CMI’s operations have been developed according to President Ahtisaari’s principles but today most of the projects are independent on him.”

“CMI was founded to support President Ahtisaari’s post presidential activities but it is now an independent organisation which has President Ahtisaari as the Chairman of the Board.”

The interviewees frequently pointed out that CMI has large networks and a wide group of partners. CMI’s work brings different actors from different sectors together and enhances a dialogue between parties, who would not necessarily otherwise meet. The following quotations describe these views.

“CMI brings different actors in different areas together through its comprehensive approach.”

“CMI builds bridges between different entities such as the governments, the civil society and the private sector.”

To summarise, the most typical features that the employees used to describe CMI were related to CMI’s non-profit or NGO status, founder and the Chairman of the Board President Ahtisaari, different projects and wide range of networks and partners.

5.1.2 Core Competence and Uniqueness

The perceptions of CMI’s uniqueness and core competence areas were divided into five leading categories: large networks, credibility and high quality work, innovativeness, flexibility and visible figurehead. In addition, some uncertainty and questions regarding CMI’s core competence are presented in the end of this subsection. In general, CMI has unique role in Finland as the only NGO which works in this field.

Wide Networks

One of CMI’s strengths is the ability to formulate and create strong, wide and diverse networks. Partners for projects come from different sectors of the economy which makes CMI unique. CMI’s partners include actors such as international organisations, other NGOs and companies. CMI builds bridges between different sectors, which prove

that CMI is good at coordinating matters. The organisation crosses traditional sector borders, which is a unique feature for an NGO and cannot be done by many private or public actors. The quotations below present the employees' views of CMI's networks and partners.

“CMI's role is to bring different actors together which is not that typical for an NGO.”

“CMI is a unique NGO because it has been able and willing to work with various partners from public and private sectors. “

“CMI crosses borders and enters into areas, which others do not and that creates opportunities for unique partnerships.”

While CMI interacts with its networks, it promotes an open sharing of information and ideas. That attitude does not seem common in the non-profit world, where everyone wants to be on the “good” side. CMI's ability to bring actors together is important work, which does not always receive much attention.

Credibility and High Quality Work

All the interviewees pointed out that CMI is a credible actor: it does what it promises, appreciates agreements and delivers high quality. Overall, CMI's core competence is related to high quality work with conflicts: future, ongoing or past. CMI is a credible expert in statebuilding, crisis management and peace mediation. The quotations below give examples of how the employees perceive CMI's credibility.

“We keep our deadlines and, particularly the funders appreciate that.”

“Overall, CMI does good work in its field and most importantly, it does what it promises.”

“We deliver what we promise: good results.”

“The funders are impressed that an organisation this small can achieve so much.”

Innovativeness

Most of the interviewees mentioned that CMI is an innovative pioneer in its field. This means that innovative ways of working together with open-mindedness to work with different actors bring CMI a competence, which is unique. The projects are often something that others have not thought about or are not willing to do which gives CMI an opportunity to be a pioneer in its field. In addition, CMI's work on specific issues rather than on global ones that others are working on is an advantage for CMI. The quotations below explain the interviewees' perceptions of CMI's innovativeness.

"We are innovative and ambitious, CMI is a brave organisation and therefore unique."

"CMI picks projects which have not been done before and aims at being a pioneer."

"CMI crosses borders and enters areas which others do not."

"CMI's projects are unique and respond to a niche."

Flexibility

Flexibility, particularly in structure and decision making, is one of the key strengths of CMI. The light structure and small size enable CMI to be flexible which offsets the fact that the organisation is small compared to some others in the field. Thus, CMI is able to react fast and allocate resources according to sudden needs. The quotations below present two examples of the views to CMI's flexibility.

"Due to its small size, CMI can react fast, which means that the structure is flexible."

"CMI is a small, flexible organisation without a heavy structure and decision-making chain".

Visible Figurehead

CMI's visible figurehead, the Nobel Laureate Ahtisaari, is a natural part of CMI's uniqueness. President Ahtisaari, with his contacts and reputation, opens doors for CMI and helps in creating networks and gaining access to the "right" parties. Currently,

President Ahtisaari is the factor, which differentiates CMI from its competitors. The following quotations bring out the interviewees' shared opinions of President Ahtisaari's role for CMI.

“President Ahtisaari, his reputation and strengths, make a strong part of CMI's competence.”

“President Ahtisaari opens doors around the world for CMI.”

“Because of President Ahtisaari, CMI can operate in the field but also has an access to the “right” parties and people.”

Uncertainties related to CMI's uniqueness

There was some uncertainty related to CMI's uniqueness, even though many features which make CMI unique were presented. Although President Ahtisaari's role is strong, otherwise it was not completely clear how CMI differs from its competitors.

Some interviewees suggested that maybe there is a need for internal discussion regarding CMI's strengths. President Ahtisaari's role is important and unique but the question is if the organisation has an actual strategy on how to transfer his expertise and legacy to CMI. In the Finnish context, CMI is truly unique because there are no other organisations which do similar work but internationally that is not the case. On the international level, maybe, CMI should focus on the areas where it already has credibility and competence. The quotation below demonstrates the uncertainty related to CMI's core competence.

“Maybe we need to stop and think where we are actually good at and how we could utilise that.”

In addition, some were worried if it is CMI as an organisation that has the networks and connections or if they are based on individual employees' relationships. If the relationships are on the individual rather than on the organisational level, there is a great risk of losing them if the personnel change jobs. The quotation below underlines the uncertainty attached to CMI's networks.

“I’m not sure if the networks are actually CMI’s networks or are they individual employees’ networks, which might be a bit risky.”

To sum up, CMI’s core competence and uniqueness is related to wide networks, high quality work, innovativeness, flexibility and President Ahtisaari. Still, there was some uncertainty regarding what, besides President Ahtisaari, makes CMI unique and concerns arose related to the level of CMI’s networks.

5.1.3 Vision and Future Direction

There was no one and clear view of CMI’s vision and future direction. Thus, there was uncertainty about CMI’s vision, growth plans, focus of the operations and future direction after President Ahtisaari.

CMI’s vision was a complex issue for the employees. On the one hand, it was clear that in the future, CMI will be an organisation which continues to carry out important projects independently, also after President Ahtisaari retires. In addition, CMI will strengthen its expertise and become even more recognised among the experts and decision-makers. But, on the other hand, for some, CMI’s vision was not clear. The quotations below present examples of the interviewees’ perceptions of CMI’s vision.

“CMI’s vision is to be an independent organisation, the legacy of President Ahtisaari.”

“CMI will become a household name in this field, an organisation which has contacts around the world.”

“I have to admit that I don’t know CMI’s long-term vision or who is responsible for creating one.”

“I’m not aware of CMI’s long-term vision.”

In the future, according to the interviewees, it would be important for CMI to focus its operations on certain areas and not on several different ones. Recently, CMI has been involved in many different fields, which has taken a lot of energy. The quotation below summarises the feelings of several interviewees about the focus of CMI’s operations.

“In the near future, CMI will hopefully decide where it is and where it wants to go.”

CMI's growth plans were another question mark. Overall, CMI should become more international, i.e. have operations and contacts all over the world and more international staff. Yet, CMI should not grow in a large scale but to focus on certain operations in order to remain flexible. Still, widening the networks and relationships is crucial in the future. Also, it would be natural development for CMI to have more people in different locations. But, for some of the interviewees, it is hard to see CMI as a field operator in the future.

One of the areas of uncertainty related to CMI's future direction had to do with President Ahtisaari's role and upcoming retirement. The future aim is clear: CMI's objective is to be an independent organisation also after the Chairman retires and to become a household name in generating ideas and tools for the international community. Also, CMI will continue to work with different partners from all the sectors of society. Yet, even though the matter of utilising the legacy of the Nobel Laureate had been discussed internally, it was not clear if CMI actually has a plan for it. The following quotation illustrates several views to uncertainty about CMI's future direction.

“In the future, the biggest change relates to President Ahtisaari's role and to the challenge to raise new experts from Finland, but I don't know if we have a plan for actually doing that.”

To sum up, CMI's vision and future plans seemed a somewhat controversial issue for the interviewees. Their hopes and expectations about CMI's future direction seem to be somewhat differing. For instance, on the one hand, CMI should grow and be involved in different things. But, on the other hand, CMI should remain small and flexible and become more international by expanding its networks.

5.1.4 Operating environment

CMI's operating environment, its opportunities and challenges, influence its identity and particular strategic planning. The challenges for CMI are related to constant

uncertainty and change. The opportunities are endless but they are limited by lack of resources, mainly funding. CMI's wide networks bring opportunities but also challenges.

Opportunities

The world changes constantly and there will always be conflicts and crises in the world. Thus, there are an endless amount of opportunities for an actor such as CMI. Nowadays the work and role of organisations who work for peace, such as CMI, is more recognised and appreciated which creates improved conditions for carrying out the work.

CMI's large networks, as discussed earlier, are an opportunity to create synergies and to combine competence from different sectors in order to conduct pioneering projects. As presented in subsection 5.1.1, CMI's projects are conducted very often with partners and CMI has large networks which makes it possible for a small organisation to be heard. Cooperation with different partners, who are focused on a different niche, is always an opportunity. The quotation below is a one example of the opportunities in CMI's operating environment.

“In CMI's operating environment many others are focused only on certain areas which is an opportunity for CMI because of our comprehensive approach.”

Challenges

The challenges of CMI's operating environment are related to constant change, dependency on external funding and communication with different partners. CMI's operating environment in general is quite scattered, especially when it comes for acquiring resources. The operating environment changes constantly which challenges the organisation to adapt to its environment.

The biggest challenges in CMI's operating environment are related to the nature of the operations, limitation of resources and dependency on external funding. There are endless amount of opportunities, which are mostly limited by availability of funding. Therefore, acquiring adequate funding and securing the continuity of the operations are

challenges also for CMI. Competition for funding can be fierce since the projects are handed in through an open contest and only the application process takes much energy and resources. Besides competition from funding, CMI needs to choose the “right” projects, as opposed to just taking what is offered, and select the most appropriate partners for them. Still, competition might also have a positive impact on CMI since it forces the organisation to improve its processes.

The need to operate using large networks is also a challenge for the organisation. Due to its small size, CMI cannot execute projects on its own and sometimes working with other organisations is demanding. CMI’s role as crossing borders and building bridges, ideally, reduces prejudices between the different sectors in societies but can be challenging due to cultural differences. Therefore, in order to be successful in this environment, as the employees see it, regular communication is both the key and the challenge. The quotation below presents several views for the challenges related to CMI’s large networks.

“CMI works together with many different parties which can be challenging because everyone does not see, for example, the work done with the private sector equally beneficial.”

To summarise, the first section of the findings provided an answer to the first research question since it described the employees’ perceptions of the features of CMI’s identity. The features most often attached to CMI were the non-profit status, the Chairman President Ahtisaari, different projects done in cooperation in a variety of partners and large networks. The uniqueness of CMI was linked to flexibility, innovativeness, high quality work and visible figurehead. Still, some uncertainty existed regarding CMI’s vision and future direction as well as the core competence areas.

5.2 CMI’s Reputation

This section provides an answer to the second research question and describes CMI’s reputation, as perceived by the employees. The aim is to find out how the employees perceive CMI’s reputation and how they would develop it. Based on the experiences

that the employees have with the external stakeholders, CMI's reputation is positive. CMI is well-known among the experts in its fields because of its quality work. For instance, within the European Union, CMI is known for its own work and accomplishments. Still, the reputation tends to differ between stakeholder groups. Those who know CMI's field think positively about CMI but those who are not familiar with the field might be somewhat confused. In Finland, CMI might still be connected to President Ahtisaari and to his reputation by the general public. CMI has a positive reputation but in reality that reputation may be even better than the organisation and its processes internally. Therefore, the greatest need for development is not on the attributes or dimensions of CMI's reputation but on internal processes which do not meet the external reputation.

This section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection describes the employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation among its own field and the experts: its partners and the other non-profits. The second subsection discusses CMI's reputation among the general public, who are necessarily not aware of the field of crisis management. The third subsection presents the employees' suggestions for developing CMI's reputation.

5.2.1 Reputation among the Field and the Experts

CMI's reputation among its primary stakeholders, the field and the experts is good: they see CMI as an effective and efficient expert organisation who delivers what it promises. This positive reputation might have to do with CMI's good and "right" contacts, past participation in pioneering projects and high quality work.

Compared to its small size, CMI and its employees work hard and achieve much. CMI has a reputation of being a realistic and honest organisation where quality replaces quantity. Partners appreciate CMI and its commitment but also see CMI as a competitor. Other NGO's know CMI reasonably well but sometimes consider that CMI has some special status, particularly now after President Ahtisaari's Nobel Peace Prize. The following quotations highlight the views of the interviewees about CMI's reputation among the experts and its field.

“Basically, CMI has a positive reputation as being effective.”

“Overall, I think partners are quite impressed about CMI and its commitment.”

“Some [NGO’s] know CMI and our work surprisingly well, often through personal contacts.”

“Some [other non-profits] might feel that CMI has a bit special position as an NGO, especially now due to the President Ahtisaari’s Nobel Prize.”

5.2.2 Reputation among the General Public

Among the general public, CMI’s reputation is hindered by the stakeholders’ low level of knowledge of the field of crisis management. The general public and, overall, people who know less about the field are more critical and have difficulties in understanding CMI’s operations.

CMI and its work are difficult to understand for the general public, who has little understanding of the field of crisis management. This has caused CMI a reputation of a somewhat mysterious organisation. In other words, the general public might be confused about what CMI actually does. People know President Ahtisaari and might be aware that CMI is dealing with mediation and peace building but do not understand the work on a concrete level, which is highlighted by the following quotation.

“The general public might see CMI as a mysterious organisation, which uses state money for whatever they do.”

Generally, in Finland people who are not aware of the field often see CMI through its work with President Ahtisaari and still connect CMI very strongly to its Chairman. This view is also often supported by the Finnish media.

To summarise two previous sections, among its field and the experts, CMI is known and appreciated for its work and, therefore, has a good reputation. Yet, the general public,

who is not aware of the field, may perceive CMI as a mysterious organisation, “President Ahtisaari’s Office”, and is confused of what CMI actually does.

5.2.3 Development of Reputation

Even though CMI’s reputation, particularly among its field, is relatively positive, there seem to be inconsistencies between the good external reputation and CMI’s internal processes.

There might be a gap between the external stakeholders’ expectations of CMI and what the organisation can actually accomplish. CMI does a lot of work for a small organisation and its projects are ambitious and interesting, which creates expectations of a large organisation with huge resources. People get confused and surprised when the reality does meet their expectations, for example, when they browse the Internet site. In addition, there are situations when CMI might be even too brave with projects that are ambitious and go into areas where it does not have a previous track record. In other words, there might be gap between the ideas and what the organisation can actually achieve. The quotations below demonstrate the concerns related to the possible expectations-reality gap.

“Some partners might think we have more power over the projects and their goals than we actually do.”

“CMI’s reputation is fine, maybe better than the reality. This does not mean that CMI does not do something well but that the internal processes are not sometimes up-to-date.”

“CMI is seen as very effective, which is sometimes a result of the employees’ large workloads.”

“Sometimes our ideas can be a bit too ambitious because we can not actually show we can manage such issues. “

As mentioned in section 5.1, CMI has a good reputation as a networker but the interviewees were concerned about the level of CMI’s relationships. If the networks are dependent on individual people and are not on the organisational level, it might be dangerous in the long-term. Thus, there might be a risk of expectation-reality gap also

with some of the connections and networks. The following quotation provides one example of the views related to the level of the relationships.

“It is a bit dangerous that CMI is occasionally connected only to one person. What happens to those contacts if that person leaves?”

Even though the reputation among the field and the experts is positive, the reputation among the public needs to be more based on facts about CMI’s operations. If the general public sees CMI now as a mysterious organisation, the future reputation should be based on more concrete results, as explained in the quotation below.

“We should be able to offer facts for the media and the general public so that they could base their perceptions about CMI on facts.”

To summarise, this section provided an answer to the second research question as it discussed the reputation that CMI, according to its employees’ perceptions, has among its external stakeholders. Generally, CMI has a positive reputation in its own field and among the experts, i.e. its primary stakeholders. Yet, the stakeholders who are not familiar with the field might be confused about what CMI does. Even though CMI’s reputation is good, the organisation and its internal processes might need improvement in order to live up to the external reputation.

5.3 CMI’s Practises and Challenges for Communication

This section provides an answer to the third research question and describes CMI’s practises and challenges for internal and external communication, as perceived by the employees. As explained in the beginning of this chapter, the challenges for the external communication were discussed a lot during the interviews, whereas the practises for external communication were not paid much attention to. Therefore, this section only presents the challenges for CMI’s external communication. On the one hand, the aim of this section is to find out the challenges the employees experience when communicating with external stakeholders. On the other hand, the aim is to explore the practises and challenges for internal communication. As the objective of this study was to assist CMI

in developing a communication strategy, investigation of the current communication practises is part of the process. The first subsection describes the challenges the employees experience in external communication and the second subsection presents practises and challenges for CMI's internal communication.

5.3.1 External Communication

This subsection describes CMI's challenges for external communication, particularly the challenges the interviewees face when communicating with external stakeholders. In general, CMI needs a communication strategy in order to explain its operations better to external stakeholders. The number of stakeholder groups CMI has to address is large and they all have different levels of knowledge of CMI's field, which complicates the communication planning. After President Ahtisaari's Nobel Peace Prize, it is increasingly important that CMI's communication efforts underline transparency and responsibility because of the huge media attention.

This subsection is divided into three parts. The first describes the challenges for external communication in general and describes why it is important for CMI to develop a communication strategy. The second discusses communication to a large group of different stakeholders with different knowledge of CMI. The third focuses on the challenges of communicating the role of Nobel Laureate President Ahtisaari in CMI's operations.

Communication in General

In general, CMI needs a communication strategy which supports securing the long-term continuity of the operations. The major challenges of communication with external stakeholders relate to describing CMI explicitly and providing a clear picture of the organisation.

Due to the lack of resources, CMI has not previously had a long-term communication strategy. Now the increased publicity and media attention after the President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize highlighted the need to have a strategy for handling and organising communication. A communication strategy, for the interviewees, means

the basic instructions, which clarify what to communicate, how and with whom. These instructions, then, could be applied to all external communication efforts, such as the website and the annual reports. The most urgent matter that a communication strategy needs to address is developing of a coherent and concrete picture of CMI and bringing that to all CMI's external communication efforts. The five quotations below highlight the need for a communication strategy.

“In external matters, CMI has to have a clear message that is easy to remember and understand to different stakeholders.”

“The challenge for communication for me is how to describe what CMI is, does and aims at in an understandable way.”

“In external matters, we need to clarify our message, be able to tell openly what we do and, overall, think about the content of the messages we sent out. “

“It all [communication planning] starts from the organisation's strategy: clarifying what we concretely do and then defining which parts of that we want to communicate externally.”

“Creating a communication strategy requires a lot of work from us internally and the greatest challenge is to figure out our core message and how do we want to be described externally. “

“I think one of the challenges for communication is that we do not really have the competence to approach and work with the media.”

In sum, the major challenge for CMI for developing a communication strategy relates to providing a coherent picture of CMI and its operations to external stakeholders. The communication strategy is needed to form explicit guidelines and core messages for external communication. Due to the limited resources, communication has not been separately planned previously but there is a need to coordinate it in more detail.

Communication with a Large Group of Stakeholders

CMI has to address a large and diverse group of stakeholders in its communication. The stakeholders have different interests, expectations and levels of knowledge about CMI and its field. In addition, CMI's current communication practises have been planned for

the field and the experts, who understand CMI's operations. As a result, some stakeholders, such as the general public, might be confused about CMI.

In CMI's external communication efforts, the concerns are related to communication to and with the stakeholders who are not familiar with CMI's field and struggle at understanding CMI's operations. One of the main reasons for CMI to develop a communication strategy relates to increasing awareness of CMI's work and clarifying to the different stakeholders, especially to the general public, what CMI is and does. For the future, it would be important that CMI would be able to develop and deliver messages which are consistent and clear, also for the general public. The quotations below present the views of the several interviewees of the challenges related to CMI's communication to a large group of stakeholders.

“It is important that everyone has enough understandable facts to form their own opinion.”

“As the general public seems to be very confused about CMI and what we do and it is difficult to describe CMI for those who do not work in this field, our messages should be clear and understandable.”

The Role of President Ahtisaari and the Impact of the Nobel Prize

The role and status of President Ahtisaari, particularly now after the Nobel Peace Prize, is both a great opportunity but also a challenge for CMI when it comes to communication. The general public still strongly associates CMI to its founder, even though President Ahtisaari's role in projects is reasonably small. Obviously, the Nobel Laureate is a tremendously valuable figurehead for CMI. Since President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Prize, CMI has received visibility which has created opportunities for funding. Yet, it has also increased the external expectations towards CMI. As a result, not only does CMI need to perform according to the expectations, but it needs also to pay attention to responsible and transparent communication.

After the President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Prize, CMI received visibility in the media which increased the general awareness of the organisation and raised the

expectations of its external stakeholders. The interviewees considered that CMI was not ready for all the publicity and the media attention. After the Chairman President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Prize, the attitude of media towards CMI has slightly changed and the organisation now needs to be more careful with journalists. Even though the Nobel Prize did not have a direct effect on the projects, it had a significant impact on CMI on the organisational level. For CMI, the events of fall 2008 brought a lot of opportunities for widening the funder base and, overall, a possibility to raise CMI's profile among all its stakeholders. Increased visibility and awareness can raise the expectations of the external stakeholders and, therefore, CMI must continue to act responsibly and live up to those expectations. Now there is an increasing need to communicate clearly about CMI's work and goals.

The Nobel Prize brought CMI more visibility, raised the organisation's profile and will open doors also in the future. This momentum and boost created a lot of opportunities for CMI, which have to be utilised in, for example, fundraising. Visibility can help CMI to raise its profile, get more access to high level people and promote the organisation in its competitive field. Also, increased credibility was considered as one of the advantage of the visibility boost. The quotations below present views about the opportunities brought by the Chairman's Nobel Prize.

“In the current economic situation, the visibility received due to the Nobel Prize helps us to differentiate ourselves from the others.”

“This is the moment when CMI can profile itself and accomplish matters especially related to funding.”

“There is a lot of boost internally and externally to our work.”

“The Nobel Prize lifted CMI from an organisation known by the experts to an organisation whose expertise is acknowledged all over the world.”

“This visibility and publicity has changed and modified CMI's priorities and our ways of working.”

Yet, although the increased media attention was mainly positive, it could have been utilised better with coordination of communication and incoming requests. For instance, there was a little competence to handle the sudden media attention. The quotations below present some views about huge media attention.

“I hope we have the ability to take all this in and turn to positive but it is still too early to think how this might influence our future.”

“CMI has never got that much attention and was not ready for it, our ways of communication were not clear for a large group of stakeholders.”

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that increased visibility and awareness require more accountability and responsibility for CMI's operations, performance, behaviour and communication. The quotations below reflect the views of many interviewees.

“Visibility works also the other way so we need to live up to our reputation, leave a consistent track record and make sure we deliver what we promise.”

“CMI has to continue to work in a professional way and make no mistakes since if something is not done properly, it will be looked at in a very critical way.”

“From now on, we need to be even more careful when selecting the projects and partners.”

CMI is now more closely followed by its external stakeholders, particularly by the Finnish media. This has increased the need to act professionally and plan everything carefully. The Nobel Prize might also further increase the expectations towards CMI and its work. The following quotations demonstrate how the interviewees felt about increased attention.

“There are now more responsibilities and expectations towards CMI and it has to impact the quality and content of our work.”

“The Nobel Prize can also create expectations for CMI that are not possible for us to meet, for example, peace in the Middle East or Iraq.”

In order to meet the expectations and live up to its reputation, the focus of CMI's operations should be clear and more attention must be paid to communication. The communication planning needs to include how CMI can present itself clearly and how the Nobel Prize could be exploited without drawing the attention from the fact that it was awarded to President Ahtisaari for his lifetime work. The following quotations highlight the interviewees' views related to the improvements for communication in the future.

“In the future, CMI has to be able to communicate even more clearly our messages: what we are, what is our future vision and what we want to foster in our work.”

“Now it is just necessary to start putting effort on communication.”

“A more consistent way of communicating would mean that CMI would not have to use Ahtisaari's brand so much but could rely more on CMI's own perspective.”

The Nobel Prize does not change the fact that CMI needs to raise the profile of its other projects and other experts besides President Ahtisaari. The interviewees considered important that CMI learns from the events of fall 2008 and continues to raise its own reputation together with highlighting the role of President Ahtisaari for CMI. The ongoing problem is that the other experts or projects of CMI do not easily get attention.

To summarise, the challenges regarding CMI's external communication were related to describing CMI explicitly to external stakeholders, the need to communicate with multiple different stakeholder groups and communicating the role and impact of President Ahtisaari and the Nobel Peace Prize for CMI's operations. A communication strategy should form the guidelines for creating a coherent and clear reputation for CMI in all stakeholder groups, including the general public. Until now, CMI's communication has been planned for the field and the experts. As a result, the stakeholders who do not know the field might be confused. In addition, the communication practises need careful attention now due to the increased visibility and awareness which resulted from President Ahtisaari's Nobel Prize. Increased visibility created opportunities but also raised expectations that CMI now needs to meet.

5.3.2 Internal Communication

This subsection describes the practises and challenges for CMI's internal communication. Overall, majority of the interviewees felt that internal communication is still a slightly fragmented process in CMI, even though there has been improvement. Informal communication between the colleagues works well and necessary tools and channels for communication exist. Yet, the challenges relate to resources: there might not be enough time for internal communication in general, which makes it difficult to stay aware of what happens internally with the projects and processes. In addition, the employees' responsibilities and tasks are not clear for everyone which complicates information sharing.

Practises for Internal Communication

Internal communication practises include a lot of informal communication in the form of emails, meetings and discussions between the colleagues and the offices. The atmosphere for internal information sharing is, in general, good and the tools for communication exist. The language depends on the issue and the communicator.

The majority of internal communication takes place through emails, meetings and personal face-to-face encounters depending on the people and situation. The atmosphere for communication between the colleagues is good and the tools for communication sufficient. There is a lot of unofficial but open discussion between different people in the offices. There are sufficient tools and channels for internal communication and the rules are somewhat pragmatic. Since CMI is a small organisation, it is easy to contact any other member of the staff. Also, if someone notices something interesting or useful, it can be communicated to others. The following quotations illustrate many views about internal communication practises.

“Overall, there is a lot of informal interaction between co-workers in a form of meetings, emails and telephone which work well.”

“The number CMI's employees is not too large and it is easy to be a member of staff here. If help is needed, you just go and ask someone. ”

15 of the interviewees mentioned that, previously, the most important tool for getting information of organisational matters was an internal newsletter, which had been used until summer 2008. The newsletter, published every two weeks, was a good source of information of what happened within the organisation. Still, even though the newsletter was good, it was too much work for everyone and took valuable time away from the projects and other work. The quotations below present two examples of the views of the interviewees towards the newsletter.

“The internal newsletter we had was a good way for delivering information and it helped to understand what others do.”

“The internal newsletter turned out not to be the best way to share information because people found it a burden to write the stories besides their all other tasks.”

Monthly staff meetings, as a channel for internal communication, divided opinions of the interviewees. On the one hand, the staff meetings are currently the formal channel for internal communication and help in providing information about what happens inside the organisation. Still, on the other hand, some other formal channels for communication could be tried out. The quotations below present the views to the staff meetings.

“Monthly meetings take place in a good and open atmosphere, and provide general information of what is going on.”

“A staff meeting once a month is not much and other tools for communication would be appreciated. More official ways for communication could be beneficial in the future.”

The official language for communication, also internal, within CMI is English but due to a large number of the Finnish speakers, Finnish is used a lot. The use of language depends on the person and on the issue. For instance, some would further accentuate the use of English in internal communication. The quotations below explain the different views of the interviewees to the language of internal communication.

“The language of internal communication [often Finnish] is not an issue because everyone speaks English when it is needed.”

“The language has to be English since there are people who don’t speak Finnish and that is forgotten every now and then. “

To summarise, the atmosphere for internal communication is good, open and informal. The official language is English but Finnish is used often. The main channels for internal communication - emails, meetings and informal discussions - are adequate but other formal channels for communication, besides monthly staff meetings, would be appreciated.

Challenges of Internal Communication

The challenges for internal communication relate to lack of time and coordination. Due to limited time to inform others, it is sometimes difficult to be aware of what happens internally. In addition, communication about internal responsibilities is not clear: who should be contacted in which matters? The interaction between the two offices could also be better. Overall, there is a need to be more aware of what happens inside the organisation but there is limited time to search for that information.

Internal communication and its coordination have been issues within CMI to which solutions have been searched on a multiple of occasions and which are recognised by the organisation. The practises for internal communication might not be on an ideal level and, therefore, could be developed but it is a matter of resources. In addition, people responsible for communication have changed during recent years. Currently, the aim is that everyone keeps the others informed of their projects and tasks, which takes valuable time from the projects. The quotations below are examples of the views about internal communication.

“Internal communication has not been organised in any particular way, mainly due to the lack of resources.”

“Even though there is commitment towards communication and the information is there, sometimes the communication is not.”

“Basically, the rule is that the busier we get, the less we communicate with each other and that has been noticed by the external stakeholders as well.”

“Internal communication takes resources but it is an important topic since now some employees might feel they are struggling when trying to find time for communication with others.”

Internally, everyone is not necessarily aware of what CMI actually does and why. Since CMI’s work consists of projects and people are constantly busy doing their own work, there is sometimes not enough time to inform the colleagues about the daily matters. As a result, everyone is not necessarily aware of what the others do and in what phase the projects are. There is a common desire to be more aware of what happens inside the organisation but there is also a limited time to search for that information. The following three quotations summarise three views about the matter.

“More efforts could be directed at communicating about who, in the end, makes the decisions here and what it is that we actually do.”

“I’d like to know more of what happens inside CMI as long as that is not away from the time for my own tasks.”

“There might be discrepancies between how much people would like to know and how much they are willing to spend energy searching for the information. “

One reason for the fragmentation of the internal communication practises might be that there is no one person who coordinates them. Hence, it is up to everyone to inform the others. Currently, it is not always clear who can be contacted about what and through which channels. As a result, more consistent internal communication and practical instructions regarding to what everyone does and needs to be aware of could improve the situation. The quotations below illustrate the views of many interviewees.

“It is difficult to keep up what happens here and internal communication regarding, for example, new employees has not been adequate. Also, clear instructions of who handles and what would clarify the matter. ”

“This all [need to coordinate internal communication] has to do with communicating a coherent picture of CMI to external stakeholders because internal communication is directly related to how we speak together about CMI. “

“Sometimes we have had issues related to internal communication where different employees have been talking to same external people on consecutive days without knowing of each other or that the same person in some other organisation is in contact with different people from our end without us realising it That happens in every organisation but it could be relatively easy to get rid of it internally.”

It would also be important to increase and improve the communication between CMI's two offices. Even though everyone is not daily in contact with the other office, both offices should be constantly aware of the work of the other office. Thus, the interaction between the offices is not in a sufficient level. Still, there is always a danger of “information overload” as busy people would not have the time to register a large amount of data from the other office. The quotations below illustrate the views about the communication between the two offices.

“There should be one coherent CMI and therefore it would be important to increase contact between the offices.”

“Some people might not be that informed of what happens in the other office. Still, it also has to do with the fact that people are hard to reach.”

To summarise, the interviewees felt that internal communication has improved during the past years. The informal communication between the colleagues works well and the atmosphere for internal communication is open and friendly. Still, the time for internal communication is limited, which makes it difficult to inform others and be aware of what happens internally. Also, some confusion about internal responsibilities exists regarding who needs to be contacted in which matters.

As conclusion, this chapter presented the findings of the empirical part of this study and provided an answer to each of the following research questions. The summary of the findings is provided after each research question.

1. How do CMI's employees perceive the features of CMI's organisational identity?

The features most often connected to CMI were the Chairman President Ahtisaari, different projects done in cooperation with variety of partners and large networks. CMI was considered a flexible and innovative organisation which is known for its high quality work and figurehead. Still, there was also some uncertainty about CMI's vision and future development as well as core competence areas and the level of the networks.

2. How do CMI's employees perceive CMI's external reputation?

Among its primary stakeholders, the field and the experts, CMI has a positive reputation. CMI is a credible actor, an expert with large networks. Yet, the stakeholders who are not familiar with CMI's work and the field might not understand the organisation and its operations. In order to live up to its external reputation and meet the expectations of its external stakeholders, CMI's internal processes might need development.

3. How do CMI's employees perceive the practises and challenges for CMI's internal and external communication?

The employees felt the greatest challenge for external communication is describing CMI to external stakeholders in an explicit way. Thus, some guidelines and core messages for external communication could be useful. Also, CMI's communication efforts are now planned for the stakeholders who know CMI's field, which may confuse those stakeholders who do not know CMI and its operations. In addition, the external communication practises need careful planning now due to the increased visibility and awareness, which resulted from the President Ahtisaari's Nobel Prize. Increased visibility brought opportunities but also raised the expectations of the external stakeholders that CMI needs to continue to meet. For internal communication, the challenge is limited time which makes it difficult to inform the others and stay aware of the projects and internal processes. Thus, there is a need for coordination of the internal communication regarding employees' tasks and responsibilities. In addition, the interaction with CMI's two offices should be increased. Still, internally there is a lot of

informal discussion, the atmosphere is good and the tools for internal communication are sufficient.

6 Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter combines and discusses the main findings presented in Chapter 5 and utilises them for developing CMI's communication strategy. The main findings are discussed according to the two building blocks of the theoretical framework (see Chapter 3): CMI's organisational reputation and organisational identity. Section 6.1 describes the features of CMI's reputation as experienced by the employees and compares them to the findings of Kaustinen (2008). Section 6.2 investigates the main positive features and uncertainties attached to CMI's identity. The positive features could be utilised in developing a communication strategy and the uncertainties need to be paid attention to. Finally, section 6.3 gives recommendations for CMI's management for developing a communication strategy with emphasis on a coherent organisational identity.

To recap the theoretical framework in Chapter 3; while the role of strategic planning is to create long-term plans for the organisation's operations, communication strategy is a plan to communicate those goals to internal and external stakeholders. The mechanisms of internal communication transmit the strategic plans to the internal stakeholders, employees, which forms the organisational identity. Organisational identity is communicated to the external stakeholders through planned efforts and the employees' daily contacts. Image and reputation build up from these contacts. Hence, this study about the features of the organisational identity reveals how internal communication operates as a link between the strategic management and the employees. Also, Kaustinen's (2008) study about the organisational reputation shows how the features of CMI's organisational identity have been communicated to and interpreted by its external stakeholders. As a result, comparison of the findings of the identity study and the reputation study produces information about external and internal communication practises.

6.1 The Features Attached to CMI's Reputation

This section discusses the features attached to CMI's reputation in the light of this study and that of Kaustinen (2008), which investigated CMI's reputation among its funders. Thus, the first subsection briefly summarises the main findings of Kaustinen (2008) and the second subsection compares her findings with the findings of this study.

6.1.1 Funder Perceptions of the Dimensions of CMI's Reputation

The main objective of Kaustinen's (2008) study was to identify how CMI's funders perceive CMI and its reputation. Her study consisted of 19 semi-structured interviews, which were conducted among CMI's Finnish and international funders. Kaustinen's study (2008) revealed that the funders considered CMI's reputation positive, i.e. attached positive features to CMI's reputation. She also discovered a few dimensions of CMI's reputation which seemed to cause some confusion for the funders.

Kaustinen identified eight dimensions of CMI's reputation: visible figurehead, vision, public profile, innovativeness, performance, workplace, transparency and Nordic origin. Her results showed that, among its funders, CMI is considered to be a forerunner, a professional organisation, known in its field and among the experts but rather unknown to the general public. President Ahtisaari's status was said to bring credibility into CMI's work but the need to highlight the role of CMI's other experts was recognised. In addition, CMI's Nordic origin, the values and ways of working attached to it, was considered a positive feature. However, some of the funders had paid attention to the somewhat contradictory practices in communication and project planning and also felt that they are unaware of CMI's long-term plans and vision. In addition, the funders considered that some of CMI's relationships were, at the time, on the personal rather than on the organisational level. This was considered a risk for the future, particularly due to a relatively large personnel turnover CMI has experienced during recent years.

6.1.2 Discussion of CMI's reputation

This subsection discusses CMI's reputation from the employees' and the funders' perspectives, i.e. compares the findings of this study to those of Kaustinen (2008). The

subsection shows that the findings of the two studies are consistent and describes the implications of that consistency. As presented in Chapter 5.2, the features of CMI's reputation were divided between two groups of stakeholders: the field and the experts (CMI's primary stakeholders), and the general public. Overall, among the field and the experts, CMI's reputation is positive, as suggested also by Kaustinen (2008). There is a need to develop the organisation's internal process rather than the attributes of reputation. Still, according to both the employees and the funders, the general public might be confused about CMI and its operations.

The findings of this study showed that CMI's employees seem realistic about the organisation's reputation and are aware of the perceptions of the external stakeholders they work with. The positive features that the employees attached to CMI's reputation included, for instance, expertise, large networks, innovativeness and high quality. According to Kaustinen (2008) these features were also highlighted by the funders. This may indicate that the external communication between the employees and the external stakeholders seems to be working and the employees transmit the positive features of CMI's organisational identity to the external stakeholders.

The uncertainties, such as the level of the networks, the future direction and vision, which the employees attached to CMI's identity, were clearly seen in the funders' views as well. CMI's reputation might be, in some cases, attached to individual people and the networks might be built on the individual rather than on the organisational level. This concern was also pointed out by the funders, who expressed that this might be a risk in the future, particularly due to CMI's recently relatively large staff turnover. In addition, the employees were not sure about CMI's future plans and vision. According to Kaustinen, this was addressed also by the funders. CMI's Nordic origin was seen as a benefit by the funders but the employees saw that as a more complex issue, particularly regarding to the future growth plans.

Overall, it could be argued that the uncertainties related to CMI's identity identified in this study were similar to those the funders brought up in Kaustinen's (2008) study. This could imply that if the internal stakeholders are unsure of some features of CMI's

organisational identity, possibly caused by discrepancies in internal processes, the uncertainties become visible also to the external stakeholders. Also, it seems that the employees transmit the uncertainties of the organisational identity to the external stakeholders through communication in daily contacts.

The employees pointed out that instead of developing the features of CMI's reputation, it would be important to improve CMI's internal processes in order for them to become consistent with the positive reputation. There might be a gap between what the external stakeholders expect from CMI and what the organisation can actually accomplish. Part of the development of the processes could be related to the coordination of practises of internal communication both in daily matters and in strategic matters. Also, as Kaustinen's (2008) study showed, even though the funders found CMI's reputation good, they also had noticed some discrepancies in CMI's communication policies and sometimes excessive workloads of CMI's personnel. Therefore, the internal need for improvement seems to have been noticed also by the external stakeholders, although it has not yet impacted the reputation. A part of developing the internal processes could be related to coordination of internal communication in both daily and strategic matters.

Although CMI is well-known and appreciated in its field, its work might not be clear for the general public. Kaustinen (2008) reported that the funders hoped that CMI would be more actively involved in the general discussion, for instance, in the media. Also in this study, the need for CMI to develop its communication in a way that the general public would be better able to understand its work was highlighted. Still, as CMI's primary stakeholders are the field and the experts, too much of the limited resources should not be directed at communication to the general public.

To summarise, CMI's employees seem realistic about CMI's reputation and are aware of the perceptions of the external stakeholders they work with. Overall, the findings of this study attached similar features to CMI's reputation as Kaustinen's (2008) study. Both the employees and the funders considered CMI's reputation positive. Still, the uncertainties linked to CMI's identity in this study were also mentioned by the funders. This seems to suggest that the employees communicate CMI's identity, both the

strengths and the uncertainties, to the external stakeholders they work with. On the one hand, the employees seem to communicate the coherent and clear areas of CMI's identity clearly also to the external stakeholders. This builds up the positive reputation. On the other hand, the unclear areas of CMI's identity for the employees were unclear also for the external stakeholders. The findings of this study highlighted that instead of developing the attributes of the reputation, there is a need to develop the internal processes of CMI. This could decrease the amount of uncertainty related to CMI's identity and also clarify the uncertain dimensions of the external reputation. Both the employees and the funders pointed out that the general public might not know or understand CMI's work, which could be improved by communicating more concretely about CMI. Still, as the field and the experts are CMI's primary stakeholders, too much of the limited resources should not be directed at communication to the general public.

6.2 Main Features and Uncertainties Attached to CMI's Identity

This section combines the findings, presented in section 5.1, about the main features and uncertainties that the employees attached to CMI's identity. The section shows how some of the main features could be utilised in developing CMI's communication strategy. In addition, this section highlights that the uncertainties need to be clarified internally. Overall, several positive features attached to CMI's identity, such as expertise, innovativeness, high quality and large networks show that CMI has been able to internally build a common understanding of the abilities of the organisation. These features could be utilised in developing a communication strategy. Still, some uncertainty about CMI's vision and future direction, core competence, level of networks and confusion about internal responsibilities and communication practises exist. This could indicate that internal communication may need development.

The employees attached several positive features to CMI's identity, described in more detail in section 5.1, which could be considered and utilised when developing a communication strategy for CMI. These include, for instance:

- Wide expertise in the large field
- Credibility and high quality of work

- Unique figurehead and talented employees
- Innovative and pioneering projects
- Large networks, ability and willingness to work with different actors
- Flexible structure and possibility to react fast

CMI's communication strategy could foster the above features and concretely highlight why these features make CMI unique. Especially, the messages which reach the general public are the most effective when they are as concrete as possible. For instance, it could be clearly explained which CMI's projects are pioneering and why, what it means that CMI has a comprehensive approach to crisis management and what makes CMI's large networks unique. Still, it seems that the current means of communication seem adequate for the experts and the field. Not surprisingly, most of the above features were also mentioned by the funders in Kaustinen's (2008) study. This could indicate that some of the features are already used in communication. In addition, as they were mentioned by the funders, it could imply that the features describe CMI's overall organisational performance and behaviour.

The unclear areas of CMI's identity, described in more detail in section 5.1, included the following areas. They all need to be clarified through more effective internal communication and information sharing.

- The focus of the operations
- The future direction and vision
- The core competence areas
- The level of the networks
- Internal communication about the organisation's processes and the employees' responsibilities.

There may be a need for internal discussion regarding the focus of CMI's operations, the future direction and vision, core competence areas and the level of the networks. The employees said that it is hard to describe CMI, its operations and future plans to external stakeholders. In other words, there was some uncertainty among the employees

regarding to what CMI actually does and why, what is CMI good at, and to which direction is CMI going in the future. In addition, the uncertainty was linked to CMI's networks and their level. If the wide networks are on the personal level instead of on the organisational level, there is a risk of losing them in case of staff turnover.

The last area of uncertainty mentioned above is related to challenges for internal communication about CMI's internal processes and the employees' responsibilities. The time for informing the other members of the organisation is limited. Thus, it is difficult to stay updated on what happens internally. Now after the Chairman was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the uncertainty has increased as a result of the media attention. Contacts with the media are stressful themselves but even more so because the employees felt that they were not sure they if are informed of what happens internally. Also, there might be a gap between what the external stakeholders expect from CMI and what the organisation can actually accomplish.

Since the uncertain areas of CMI's identity were concerns also for the funders, it seems to indicate that if the employees are not sure about some areas of the organisational identity, the external stakeholders cannot understand them either. In other words, when developing its communication strategy, CMI needs to explain its strategic plans to its internal stakeholders, employees, and engage them in the strategic plans. Once the internal identity is solid, it can be communicated clearly to the external stakeholders.

Above areas of uncertainty attached to CMI's identity seem mainly to be related to internal communication either on a strategic or on a daily level and could be reduced by improving internal communication. As many employees as possible could be included into considerations of CMI's strategic plans, such as vision, future direction, core competence areas and focus of the operations, in order to increase their commitment to the organisation. In addition, the employees' understanding of CMI's long-term goals should be emphasised as a part of a communication strategy. Internal communication in daily matters is an important part of communication strategy and could be enhanced, for instance, with explicit guidelines of responsibilities.

To summarise, this section discussed the findings related to main positive features and uncertainties attached to CMI's identity. First the positive features, which could be utilised when developing a communication strategy, were identified. Second, the areas of identity which need to be clarified were highlighted. Overall, several positive features attached to CMI's identity, such as expertise, innovativeness, high quality and large networks show that CMI has been able to internally build a common understanding of the abilities of the organisation. These features could be utilised in developing CMI's communication strategy. Still, some uncertainty about CMI's vision and future direction, core competence, level of the networks and confusion about internal responsibilities and communication practises exist. These could be reduced by the means of internal communication.

6.3 Recommendations for CMI's Management

This section offers some recommendations for CMI's management on how to start developing a communication strategy based on the findings of this study (see Chapter 5) and discussion in previous sections 6.1 and 6.2. The findings showed that the employees attached several features to CMI's identity, which could be utilised in developing a communication strategy. In addition, the employees' perceptions of the features attached to CMI's reputation seem consistent with the perceptions of the funders (see Kaustinen, 2008), which indicates that they have been communicated clearly to this group of external stakeholders. Still, some uncertainties related to the features of CMI's identity emerged which, in order create a coherent identity for CMI, would need attention from the management. As a result, the recommendations for CMI's management, based on the results of this study, are the following.

- Start developing the communication strategy on the basis of an internal discussion of CMI's strategic plans, such as strategy, vision and mission.
 - Make sure the employees are aware and understand CMI's strategic plans in order to communicate them in daily encounters to external stakeholders.

- Create a clear organisational story and concrete core messages about CMI to be used in external communication which support CMI's strategy, vision, mission and long-term goals.
 - Discuss internally about CMI's strategic goals: what CMI does, aims at and is good at, and talk about the time after President Ahtisaari's retirement.
 - Plan CMI's organisational story: decide what to communicate externally about CMI's identity and how, ideally, would CMI be described externally. These are the basis for a communication strategy.
 - Consider and utilise the positive features presented in this study and by Kaustinen (2008) when planning the story.
 - Implement the organisational story to all external communication efforts, such as the website and publications.

- Involve as many employees as possible in the discussions about CMI's strategic plans and organisational story to make sure the employees understand and are committed to them.

- Emphasise CMI's concrete results in everyday concrete language in external communication.
 - More concrete messages about the actual results are easier to understand, particularly for the general public.
 - Continue to tailor the messages according to the knowledge of the stakeholder group.

- Communicate and clarify individual employees' responsibilities, tasks and the situation with the projects continuously and constantly to the employees. They need to be aware of the daily matters in order to communicate a coherent story of CMI.
 - To clarify the internal responsibilities, create a list of key tasks and responsibilities of the employees.

- Support the electronic calendars with an email sent out weekly by the Office Managers which states the main points of the weekly schedules (e.g. locations and most important meetings) of the key members of the staff to make sure everyone is updated of each others' whereabouts.
- Create a comprehensive database of all the external contacts to safeguard the continuity of the relationships in case the employees change jobs.
 - This does not solve the issue of the level of relationships but would secure a possibility to try to manage the relationships.

To summarise, this section gave recommendations to CMI's management in order to start developing a communication strategy. The recommendations emphasise that developing a communication strategy should be considered as a process of integrating the organisation's strategic core to the behaviour of employees in order to create a coherent organisational identity, which could be used in communication. The recommendations highlighted the role of an internal discussion of CMI's strategic plans as a starting point for the communication strategy. Once there is an internal understanding of CMI's strategic goals, the next step is to plan the organisational story and the core messages. In other words, the management need to involve the employees in a discussion regarding how to communicate CMI's organisational identity to the external stakeholders. Once the internal foundation is solid, the organisation can move further with developing the communication strategy and consider matters such as stakeholders and messages. In addition, the communicated messages, particularly for the general public, have to be concrete and emphasise CMI's results and achievements.

As a conclusion, this chapter summarised the main findings from chapter 5 related to the features of CMI's reputation and organisational identity. The features the employees attached to CMI's reputation were compared to the findings of Kaustinen (2008), who explored CMI's reputation among its funders. It seems that CMI's employees communicate the strengths of CMI's identity well to the funders and are aware of their perceptions of the organisation. The positive features of CMI's identity, such as, expertise, credibility and high quality can be utilised when developing the

communication strategy. The uncertainty related to CMI's identity, for instance, to vision, level of the networks and core competence could be reduced by coordinating the internal communication. Recommendations for CMI's management were given on how to start developing CMI's communication strategy and they emphasise an internal discussion and understanding of the organisational identity as a starting point for a communication strategy.

7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes this thesis and sums up the research aims, methods and findings. The chapter goes over the main points of the literature review in Chapter 2, about organisational identity and developing a communication strategy and summarises what was found in the empirical part of this thesis in chapters 4, 5 and 6. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 7.1 describes the purpose, methods and theory for this thesis. Section 7.2 highlights the main findings and discusses them in relation to the previous research. Section 7.3 takes a critical approach to the research process and presents some limitations for this thesis. Finally, section 7.4 suggests approaches for further research.

7.1 Research Summary

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate a non-profit organisation's identity and assist the organisation in developing a communication strategy. The leading principle was based on an assumption that developing a communication strategy starts from the organisational identity, which defines what the organisation wants to communicate about itself to the external stakeholders. The motivation for the thesis and the development of the theoretical framework arose from a limited number of previous studies focusing on communication planning for the non-profit organisations.

The literature review for the thesis consisted of three major topics: non-profit organisations, organisational identity and development of a communication strategy. The first section of the literature review, section 2.1, introduced the concept of a non-profit organisation and discussed challenges that the international non-profit organisations, such as the case organisation Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), face in their operations. The major challenges were related to dependency on external funding and the uncertainty it brings, for instance, for the continuity of the operations. Section 2.2 showed that the objective of the identity management is to create a shared internal understanding of the organisational identity, which can be communicated to external stakeholders. In other words, the chapter emphasised the importance of exploring organisational identity, the employees' perceptions of their organisation, when

developing the organisation's internal and external communication. Section 2.3 discussed strategic planning, the essence of the communication strategy and presented four models, which could be applied when developing a communication strategy.

The theoretical framework for this thesis (see Chapter 3) emphasised the impact of the employees for the success of the non-profit's external communication. Due to the lack of the non-profits' communication resources, the daily contacts and communication between the employees and the external stakeholders were considered increasingly important. Particularly, for a service oriented expert organisation, such as the case organisation, the employees' perceptions of and commitment to the elements of their organisation's identity were argued to have a significant influence on the perceptions of the external stakeholders, i.e. on the organisation's reputation. In other words, in their contacts with the external stakeholders, the employees communicate their understanding of the organisation's identity and impact the external perceptions of the organisation.

As a result, the theoretical framework pointed out that a key to developing a functional communication strategy lies in a shared internal understanding of the organisation's identity. Thus, the employees have to be committed to the organisation's long-term strategic plans in order to tell a coherent story of the organisation and its abilities to external stakeholders. As the objective of the communication strategy is to support the organisation's strategic plans, it should be based on the employees' shared understanding of the organisation's strategic plans, particularly strategy, vision and mission. After that the organisation can start considering the stakeholders, channels and timing for the communication.

In order to evaluate how communication influences the organisational identity and reputation, the organisation should conduct a study about its identity and compare the results to those of a reputation study. That way the organisation can investigate the communication flow from the management to the internal and the external stakeholders. Thus, the gaps and similarities between the external perceptions of the organisation, i.e. its reputation, and the internal views, i.e. its identity, can be traced and used for the purposes of strategic planning. For the purposes of this thesis, Kaustinen's (2008) study

about CMI's reputation among its funders made it possible to conduct such a comparison between the internal and external views of CMI. This produced useful information for the case organisation about the flow of internal and external communication.

The research process of exploring CMI's internal identity was guided by three research questions, to which answers were searched with semi-structured interviews. The three research questions that this study set to out to answer were: 1) How do CMI's employees perceive the features of CMI's organisational identity? 2) How do CMI's employees perceive CMI's organisational reputation? and 3) How do CMI's employees perceive the practises and challenges for CMI's internal and external communication? In order to find the answers, 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted among all CMI's employees in Helsinki and in Brussels.

7.2 Main Findings

The section highlights the main findings of this thesis, presented in more detail in Chapter 5, and argues that they are consistent with previous research. Interestingly, the findings are particularly consistent with the findings of Kaustinen's (2008) study, which investigated CMI's reputation among its funders. The main findings are presented according to the themes of the research questions: the features of CMI's identity, the employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation and practises and challenges for communication.

First, the main findings showed that the employees attached several positive features to CMI's identity but there were also areas which were not clear. The positive features included, for instance, expertise, large networks, pioneering projects and unique figurehead. These features, explained in more detail in section 5.1, were shared by the employees and could be utilised when developing the communication strategy. There were also some areas of CMI's identity, which were not clear for the employees. These included, for instance, CMI's vision and future direction, the level of the networks and core competence areas. These areas, described in more detail section 5.1, could be reduced by the means of internal communication.

Second, the main findings pointed out that the employees' perceptions of CMI's reputation are positive but the organisation's internal processes might not be consistent with the reputation. CMI's reputation among its primary stakeholders, the field and the experts, is good. Yet, the stakeholders who are not familiar with CMI's work and the field might not understand the organisation and its operations. There might even exist a gap between what CMI can accomplish and what the external stakeholders expect. Thus, instead of developing the features of CMI's reputation, it would be important to develop the organisation and its internal processes. In order to live up to its reputation and meet the expectations of the external stakeholders, CMI's internal processes, also internal communication, seem to need development.

Third, the main findings also showed that for external communication, the main challenge is describing CMI explicitly to external stakeholders. Thus, the employees said it is difficult to provide a coherent view of CMI to the external stakeholders. Communication strategy should offer some guidelines and core messages for external communication. Also, CMI's external communication is now planned for the stakeholders who know CMI's field which may confuse those stakeholders who are not aware of CMI and its operations. In addition, the external communication practises need careful attention now due to the increased visibility and awareness, which resulted from the President Ahtisaari's Nobel Prize. Increased visibility brought opportunities but also raised the expectations of the external stakeholders that CMI needs to continue to meet.

For internal communication, even though the atmosphere is good and tools sufficient, the greatest challenge relates to time constraints. The limited time for internal communication makes it difficult to inform the others and stay updated and aware of the internal processes. In addition, the internal responsibilities and tasks need clarification. Still, there is a lot of informal discussion, the atmosphere is friendly and open and the tools for internal communication are sufficient.

The findings of this thesis seem to be consistent with the study conducted by Kaustinen (2008) about the perceptions of CMI's funders. The positive features that CMI's employees attached to CMI's reputation were similar those of the funders. This shows

that the employees know the external stakeholders they work with and are realistic about CMI's reputation. Thus, they also seem to communicate their understanding of CMI's identity to external stakeholders. In addition, the uncertainties that the employees attached to CMI's identity were, according to Kaustinen (2008), mentioned also by the funders. The employees' pointed out the need to develop CMI's internal processes. The funders, even though considered CMI's reputation good, expressed that they have noticed the employees' large workloads and some inconsistencies in CMI's communication policies. As a result, both the positive features and uncertainties attached to CMI in this thesis were very similar to the funders' perceptions presented in Kaustinen's (2008) study.

The findings of this thesis and their consistency with the findings of Kaustinen's (2008) support the results and theories of several business communication researchers (e.g. Marvick & Fill, 1997; O'Neil, 2003; Argenti & Forman, 2003). For instance, Marvick & Fill (1997) proposed that organisational identity is formed through internal communication and on the basis of the employees' shared understanding of the organisation. Organisational reputation builds up through the external stakeholders' interpretation of the communicated identity. Thus, for instance, if some areas of the organisation's identity are not clear for the employees, those areas cannot be clear for the external stakeholders either. As explained above, this is supported by the findings of this study since the uncertainties presented by CMI's employees were also pointed out by the funders.

In addition, Argenti & Forman (2002) argued that the employees' perceptions of their organisation are communicated to the external stakeholders in daily encounters. As a result, the positive areas of the organisation's identity become apparent for the external stakeholders, as comparison of the result of this thesis to those of Kaustinen (2008) also showed. But, if the employees' perceptions of their organisation are fragmented, it will be noticed by the external stakeholders as well, which was also visible here. Also, O'Neil (2003) argued that the role of communication is to clarify the organisation's goals first internally and then transmit them to external stakeholders. She points out that the employees' understanding of the organisational identity, particularly of the strategic

plans, need to be clear so that they can communicate the plans explicitly to external stakeholders.

Findings and recommendations of this thesis support the views of several business communication researchers (e.g. Dowling, 2001; Vuokko, 2004; Aula & Mantere, 2008; Cornelissen, 2004), who highlight the importance of shared internal understanding of the organisational identity as a starting point for a communication strategy. It is commonly agreed that the communication strategy is a plan to transmit the organisation's strategic plans to internal and external stakeholders. Thus, in order to communicate a coherent identity to the external stakeholders, the organisation has to clarify its strategic plans to the employees and engage its employees to them.

The main findings of this thesis suggest that when developing a communication strategy, an organisation should pay attention to the internal understanding of its identity and strategic plans. The most valuable contribution of this kind of a thesis to the practitioners is that it encourages the managers to initiate and create discussion within their organisation about the strategic plans, i.e. the organisation's goals, targets, strengths and abilities. As a result, the recommendations of this thesis (see section 6.3) for CMI's management emphasise that developing a communication strategy is a process of integrating the organisation's strategic core to the behaviour of employees in order to create a coherent organisational story. Once the internal foundation is clear, the organisation can move further with developing the communication strategy and consider matters such as stakeholders, messages and feedback channels.

7.3 Limitations of the Thesis

This section reviews some of the limitations of this thesis and takes a critical approach to the research process. There are four particular reasons which need to be kept in mind when looking at the implications of this thesis. First, this qualitative study was conducted for this particular case organisation, which means that the results as such apply to this study only. Still, they could be used as guidelines for the future research. Second, the method for data collection, semi-structured interviews, has certain

characteristics which need to be kept in mind when interpreting the results. Third, even though the findings of this thesis and those of Kaustinen (2008) are consistent, it does not mean that the perceptions of CMI's other stakeholder groups would be identical. Fourth, Kaustinen's study was published in December 2008 when the interview process with CMI's employees for this thesis was not finished, which might have had an influence on the interview results. These four reasons are looked in more detail below.

First of the limitations for this thesis arises from the fact that this qualitative study was conducted for one particular case organisation. The case organisation, Crisis Management Initiative, turned out to be a unique organisation, which offers expert services on a non-profit basis. In addition, the study was made right after CMI's Chairman, President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Therefore, these rather unique case settings should be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this thesis.

The second limitation arises from the data collection method semi-structured interviews. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000), the method has three characteristics which need to be acknowledged when interpreting the results. First, the method requires experience from the researcher because it produces a large amount of research data without specific instructions for analysis. In this case, the researcher did not have extensive experience of the method. Still, the researcher had an opportunity to develop her skills in a pilot interview, in which she was able to test her interview technique and framework. The semi-structured interviews made it possible for the interviewees to show their expertise, which is why the method was selected. Second, the interview themes related to internal matters of the case organisation and that might have had an impact on the interviewees' answers. The findings present the views and the perceptions of the employees' of a small organisation in a unique situation when CMI's Chairman had just been awarded the Nobel Prize. For instance, it could be assumed that some interviewees were reluctant to discuss any negative issues. This has to be remembered when evaluating the results. Third, the analysis of the interview results could be considered problematic because there were no readily made models for that. Due to this,

sections 4.2 and 4.3 offer a comprehensive background for the interview framework and explain the basis for the data analysis.

The third limitation relates to the consistency of the results of this thesis and those of Kaustinen (2008). Even though the results seem consistent, they present the views of only two groups of CMI's stakeholders. Thus, the results do not mean that the perceptions of CMI's other stakeholders would be identical.

The fourth limitation appears because Kaustinen's (2008) study was finalised and published in fall 2008 when the interview process for this thesis was still not finished. Therefore, her results might have had an impact on the views of some of the employees. As her research explored the funders perceptions of CMI's and this thesis investigated the employees' perceptions, those employees who were, at the time of the interview, familiar with her findings might have been influenced by them. This was also mentioned in section 4.3, which described the data collection process.

Despite of the limitations discussed here, it can still be argued that this thesis produced trustworthy results. As explained in section 4.5, for a qualitative study the results are the researcher's interpretations and the trustworthiness arise from thorough documentation and justification of the research methods and objectives which was followed in this study in Chapter 4. In addition, even though the research method has its limitations, for this thesis it produced findings which are consistent with each other and with the ones of Kaustinen (2008).

7.4 Suggestions for further Research

In the future, more research attention could be given to non-profit organisations, their organisational identity and communication strategy. Due to the limitations regarding their resources, businesses could maybe learn from the non-profits which have to know their stakeholders well and target their communication carefully. As highlighted in the introduction chapter of the present thesis, there is a limited amount of research which

combines organisational identity management and communication strategy and even less which brings these topics into the world of a non-profit organisation.

Based on the results of this study, four specific approaches for further research are presented and then elaborated below. First, based on the recommendations of this study, the process of developing CMI's communication strategy could be taken further. Second, a follow-up study could be completed after a certain period for CMI to see if the features and uncertainties of CMI's identity have changed. Third, a similar study could be completed to some other non-profit organisation to test the applicability of the theories presented here. Fourth, the aspects of CMI's internal and external communication could be studied separately, for instance, as a form of a communication audit. That way CMI would get more specified results and recommendations for specific areas of communication.

The first approach to the future research suggests that it would be interesting to develop CMI's communication strategy further. The next phases could be to finalise, after the internal discussion, the organisational story and core messages and analyse the stakeholders and their responses. Afterwards, targeted and effective messages, based on identity, could be created for each important stakeholder group and implemented into, for instance, the internet site, annual report and media communication. In addition, development of a continuous feedback channel would be important.

The second idea for future research is to complete a study similar to this one after a certain period of time to investigate if the features and uncertainties related to CMI's identity have changed. This thesis offered recommendations for CMI's management on how to start developing a communication strategy based on the features of the identity. Therefore, it could be useful to investigate how the features of CMI's identity are seen in the future, particularly after President Ahtisaari's retirement.

Third, a similar study to this one could be conducted for some other non-profit organisation to see how the theories presented here apply in other cases. In addition,

that would enable benchmarking of the communication practises between the non-profits and help in developing the theories for this particular field.

The fourth suggestion for further research could be to explore CMI's communication efforts in more detail. For instance, an internal and/or and external communication audit could be conducted. This thesis offered a general picture CMI's organisational identity and challenges for internal and external communication but did not make a distinction between, for instance, the employees, the offices, nationalities or the effectiveness of the tools and channels of the internal communication. For instance, for the area of external communication, a study about the language, tools and channels used for communication with CMI's external stakeholders would provide valuable information for CMI. A specified internal or external communication audit would offer CMI more specific recommendations about communication and give more concrete recommendations.

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Appendix 1. INTERVIEW THEMES FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (IN ENGLISH)

Interview framework for CMI's employees

1. Background information

- Name
- Title
- Position
- Responsibilities

2. CMI's Organisational identity: internal understanding of CMI's core

- Strategy and mission: what CMI is, does and aims at
- Strengths, core competence, uniqueness
- Finnish roots and origin
- Vision and future direction
- Operating environment, challenges and opportunities

2. Reputation: how is CMI seen by external stakeholders, as interpreted from daily encounters

- Daily tasks and contacts with internal and external stakeholders
- How is CMI seen externally and why?
- How could reputation be developed?

3. Communication: practises and challenges

- External communication in own work and for CMI in general
- Internal communication practises, tools, channels, challenges
- Impact of the Nobel Prize on own work and for CMI in general

4. Any other matters worth highlighting

Appendix 1. INTERVIEW THEMES FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (IN FINNISH)

Haastattelukehys CMI: n työntekijöille

1. Taustatiedot

- Nimi
- Titteli
- Asema
- Vastuualueet

2. CMI:n identiteetti: sisäinen ymmärrys CMI:stä

- Strategia ja missio: mikä CMI on, mitä tekee, miksi ja mihin pyrkii
- Vahvuudet ja ydinosaaminen
- Suomalaisuus, suomalaiset juuret
- Tulevaisuuden suunta ja visio
- Toimintaympäristö: haasteet ja mahdollisuudet

3. Maine: kuinka ulkopuoliset näkevät CMI:n

- Päivittäinen työ ja kontaktit sisäisten ja ulkopuolisten sidosryhmien kanssa
- Ulkoisten sidosryhmien kuva CMI:stä
- Ulkoisen kuvan kehitystarpeet

4. Viestintä: haasteet ja käytännöt

- Ulkoinen viestintä oman työn kannalta ja yleisesti CMI:n kannalta
- Sisäinen viestintä: käytännöt, kanavat, haasteet, työkalut
- Presidentti Ahtisaaren Nobel palkinto ja sen vaikutukset CMI:hin ja omaan työhön

5. Muut asiat