

The role of visual identity in a merger context - Case Aalto University

International Business Communication

Master's thesis

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The role of visual identity in a merger context - Case Aalto University

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's identity. The case organisation for this study was Aalto University, a merger of three independent universities: the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE), the Helsinki University of Technology (TKK) and the University of Art and Design (TaiK). Based on the research objective, the following research questions were formulated: 1) What is the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how does the new visual identity reflect it? 2) How do the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the new visual identity of Aalto University and how do they identify themselves with the new visual identity? 3) Can corporate communication be used to facilitate employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University?

Methodology and Data

The study was conducted with a qualitative approach. The empirical data consisted of nine semi-structured interviews of three managers of Aalto University and six employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE). The themes for the semi-structured interviews and the data analysis were based on the literature review and theories on organisational identity, corporate visual identity and organisational identification.

Findings and Conclusions

From the management's perspective, the desired organisational identity of Aalto University was described as new, fresh and something different, which the new visual identity was said to reflect well. The employees, on the other hand perceived that the new visual identity does not represent a high-class, prestigious university that Aalto University is or should be. Moreover, the employees found it hard to evaluate whether the new visual identity reflects the university's desired identity, goals and vision. This was mostly due to the fact that the organisation did not seem to have a clear organisational identity. The lack of a clear organisational identity was also the main reason why the employees were unable to identify themselves with Aalto University. This study would seem to suggest that corporate communication can be used in the facilitation process. However, special attention should be paid to ensure that the content of communication matches the actions of the organisation.

Key words: International business communication, Organizational identity, Corporate Visual Identity (CVI), University, Merger, Employee perceptions, Aalto University, Aalto University School of Economics

Visuaalisen identiteetin rooli fuusiossa – Case Aalto-yliopisto

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää visuaalisen identiteetin roolia ja merkitystä osana organisaation identiteettiä. Tämän tutkimuksen kohteena oli Aalto-yliopisto, joka on syntynyt kolmen itsenäisen yliopiston, Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun, Taideteollisen korkeakoulun ja Teknillisen korkeakoulun fuusiona. Tutkimuksen avulla pyrittiin vastaamaan seuraaviin kolmeen tutkimuskysymykseen: 1) Mikä on Aalto-yliopiston tavoiteidentiteetti ja miten uusi visuaalinen identiteetti kuvaa sitä?, 2) Miten henkilöstö näkee Aalto-yliopiston uuden visuaalisen identiteetin ja miten he identifioituvat siihen?, 3) Voiko viestinnällä edesauttaa prosessia, jossa henkilöstö hyväksyy Aalto-yliopiston uuden organisaatioidentiteetin ja visuaalisen identiteetin?

Tutkimusmenetelmät ja aineisto

Tutkimus tehtiin laadullisena tutkimuksena ja aineisto koostui yhdeksästä teemahaastattelusta. Tutkimukseen haastateltiin kolmea Aalto-yliopiston johdon edustajaa ja kuutta Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulun jäsentä. Haastatteluteemat perustuivat tutkimuksen teoreettiseen viitekehykseen ja kirjallisuuskatsaukseen organisaatioidentiteetistä, organisaation visuaalisesta ilmeestä ja organisaatioon identifioitumisesta.

Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Aalto-yliopiston johdon edustajat kuvailivat organisaation tavoiteidentiteettiä uudeksi, raikkaaksi ja erilaiseksi ja he myös katsoivat uuden visuaalisen identiteetin heijastelevan näitä ominaisuuksia hyvin. Henkilöstön mielestä uusi visuaalinen ilme ei kuitenkaan edustanut korkeatasoista, arvostettua yliopistoa, jollainen Aalto-yliopiston tulisi olla. Henkilöstö koki myös vaikeaksi arvioida heijasteleeko uusi visuaalinen identiteetti Aalto-yliopiston tavoiteidentiteettiä, sen tavoitteita ja visiota. Suurimmaksi osaksi tämä johtui siitä, että Aalto-yliopistolla ei tuntunut olevan selkeää organisaatioidentiteettiä. Tästä samaisesta syystä henkilöstön edustajat kokivat vaikeaksi identifioitua Aalto-yliopistoon. Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella voitaisiin sanoa, että viestinnällä voidaan vaikuttaa siihen prosessiin, jossa henkilöstö luopuu vanhasta identiteetistä ja omaksuu uuden. Olennaisen tärkeää on, että viestinnän sisältö on yhdenmukainen organisaation toiminnan kanssa.

Avainsanat: kansainvälinen yritysviestintä, organisaation identiteetti, organisaation visuaalinen identiteetti, yliopisto, fuusio, työntekijöiden näkemykset, Aalto-yliopisto, Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulu

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1 INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has not only affected businesses world-wide but it has also had an impact on the higher education sector. Universities are now facing the challenge of competing with other universities and institutions of higher education, not only nationally but also internationally. As the competition for the brightest students and the best academic staff has become more international and more fierce, many universities are adopting a business-style thinking in their operations: education is now seen as a service to be offered and students are more often recognised as customers (Melewar & Akel, 2005).

According to Melewar and Akel (2005), the competitive nature of the university sector has increased the need for universities to develop competitive advantage by maintaining and enhancing a set of unique characteristics that distinguish them from their competitors. In this setting, for universities the role of organisational identity has become strategically important as a powerful source of competitive advantage. A clear and distinctive corporate identity is essential in differentiating a university from other universities and institutions of higher education.

Following the footsteps of many profit organisations, the Finnish higher education sector has entered a phase of institutional mergers. At present, one of the biggest changes in the Finnish higher education system is the formation of Aalto University, which is a merger between the Helsinki School of Economics, the University of Art and Design and the Helsinki University of Technology. (Dobson, 2008.)

Mergers are often said to be one of the most common ways for organisations to increase market shares, reduce costs or create synergy. However, it is also acknowledged that mergers often have unexpected outcomes and unexpected challenges. These challenges may arise, for example, due to conflicting organisational identities or incompatible organisational cultures. (Bartels, Douwes, de Jong & Pruyn, 2006) As Dutton, Dukerich

and Harquail (1994) point out, these problems might suggest that the members of the organisation may feel threatened by the loss of their old identity, thus they are inclined to cling to the group they are already part of. As a result, employees might lose their commitment to the new organisation or to the organisation's new identity.

Organisational theorists (Knippenberg, Martin & Tyler, 2006; Chreim, 2002) have described organisational change as a process where members of the organisation have to first disidentify themselves with previous organisational attributes before they can adapt and re-identify themselves with the new identity. In a merger process, members of the organisation must often drastically change their behaviours, attitudes, goals and values to match with the new organisational identity. For management this calls for communication strategies that aim at moving the organisation and its members towards a new corporate identity (Chreim, 2002; Balle, 2008). As many researchers underline, communication is an important part of any change management process (Argenti, 2007; Vuokko, 2004; Åberg, 2000).

According to van den Bosch, de Jong and Elving (2006) and van Riel and Balmer (1997) the three most important components of organisational identity are organisational behaviour, communication and symbolism (i.e. visual identity, such as name and logo). The concept of corporate visual identity (CVI), however, is not a widely researched area in the field of business communication. According to van den Bosch et al. (2005) corporate visual identity refers to all of the symbols and graphical elements that express the core of an organisation, including an organisation's name, typeface, logo or symbol and colour scheme (see also Rosson & Brooks, 2004; Baker & Balmer 1997). These symbols and graphical elements express the characteristics, values and objectives of an organisation, thus they should be in correlation with what the organisation actually stands for. Any mismatch between an organisation's identity and its visual identity might lead to unfocused image of the organisation. It is argued that organisations should pay special attention to corporate visual identity especially during organisational change (Van den Bosch et al.,

2006). However, before organisations can express their visual identity externally it should first be understood and supported internally by the members of the organisation. This is important as it is ultimately the employees who deliver the organisation's new culture and values to the external stakeholders.

Based on the literature on corporate visual identity, van den Bosch et al. (2006) have distinguished four functions of corporate visual identity in corporate communication. Externally CVI symbolises the organisation, provides visibility and "recognisability" for the organisation, and communicates the structure of the organisation. The internal function of CVI, on the other hand, is less studied in the literature. Van den Bosch et al. (2006) argue that internally CVI *probably* plays a symbolic role in creating organisational identification among members of the organisation. There is, however, hardly any research which addresses this important function of CVI. Therefore it may be valuable to investigate more closely the role and importance of visual identity from the employee perspective.

Even though it is generally acknowledged that corporate visual identity is a core element in organisational identity, reputation and relationship management, the recent academic research has strongly focused on the strategic and design aspects of CVI. Moreover, recent studies on corporate visual identity have mostly focused on managing corporate visual identity; its consistency and the way in which visual communication can support reputation (see van den Bosch et al., 2004; 2005; and 2006).

Corporate visuals have also been studied in the university setting, yet the context has been different to this study. In their study on Strathclyde University, Baker and Balmer (1997) described the adoption of a new visual identity for a major British university and discussed the role of visual identity in this context. The results of the study suggested that visual identity is, in fact, an important strategic element in a University's identity and that the studied university's weak visual identity reflected the weaknesses in the way the University managed its corporate brand and its corporate communication. Though the study provides

valuable information on the role of visual identity in the university setting, it addresses the issue from a perspective where only few of the elements of the university's identity change. The merger of Aalto University, on the other hand, has involved fundamental changes to the organisation's functions, core values as well as behaviour and therefore is more than a visual change.

The formation of Aalto University and the launch of its new visual identity on 25th September 2009 have opened up an interesting opportunity to investigate the role of visual identity in a merger context. As a result, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity. The study will focus on the role of visual identity especially in a merger context where employees are not only giving up the old visual identity but also the old organisational identity. As the employees interact with the key stakeholder groups on a daily basis, their attitudes and behaviour can have a profound impact of the performance of the organisation. As communication is an important strategic element in a merger process, this present thesis will also discuss the role of corporate communication in the process of the visual identity shift.

1.1 Aalto University and its corporate visual identity

Aalto University was established as a merger of three universities, the Helsinki School of Economics, the Helsinki University of Technology and the University of Art and Design, and it began operating in January 2010. Even though the three universities are combined as one multidisciplinary university, the former independent universities will, however, continue to exist as sub-units or schools within the new university (Aalto University, 2009a).

Two of the most visible elements of Aalto University's visual identity are the University's name and logo. The name for the new university was chosen as a tribute to the Finnish

architect and designer Alvar Aalto, who is characterised as courageously connecting the fields of technology, economics as well as arts. From the working name of ‘Innovation University’, the Aalto University name was chosen to symbolise change and to reflect the concept, spirit, values and goals of the new university. (Aalto University, 2009a)

After holding a design contest in spring 2009, Aalto University published its new visual identity on 25th September 2009. The basic version of the Aalto University’s visual identity is the university logo **A?**, which is a simple visual message that challenges to ask “What is Aalto University?”. By modifying the symbols with A” or A!, the aim for the visual identity is to invite everyone to take part in an open discussion and dialogue. Furthermore, the visual identity is aimed to reflect a fresh start and express the idea of Aalto University being multidisciplinary and having a diversity of values. This is also reflected in the use of the three basic colours, yellow, red and blue. The main idea of the visual identity is to have as little identity-predefining symbolism as possible so that the meaning and the symbolism will be constructed hand in hand with the forming of the university. Thus, as Aalto University will develop, so will the visual identity. (Aalto University, 2009a)

1.2 Research objectives and questions

As is common in all organisational changes and mergers, Aalto University has also faced challenges during the merger process. Matti Pursula, the rector of the former Helsinki University of Technology, has argued that one of the most challenging tasks in the merger process has been motivating the employees and the students to accept the change. As Pursula points out, big changes always bring a lot of uncertainty among employees. (Helin, 2009)

Organisational change could be described as a process where members of the organisation give up the old organisational identity and re-identify themselves with the new identity (Knippenberg et al., 2006; Chreim, 2002). The objective of this thesis is to investigate the

role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity. In particular, this thesis will focus on the role of visual communication and examine the ways in which a merging organisation can affect the process where the old identity is abandoned and a new visual identity is accepted. This thesis will focus only on Aalto University and Aalto University School of Economics. Thus, the perceptions of the employees of Aalto University Art and Design and Aalto University Science and Technology are not in the scope of this study. Based on the research objective, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What is the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how does the new visual identity reflect it?

The first research question focuses on the desired identity of Aalto University and how the University wants to be perceived by the members of the organisation. Moreover, the first research question attempts to answer how the new visual identity has been created and how it has been communicated to the employees.

2. How do the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the new visual identity of Aalto University and how do they identify themselves with the new visual identity?

The aim of the second research question is to find out how the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the new visual identity of Aalto University and how easy or difficult they find the process of the visual identity shift. As the members of the organisation are those who communicate the visual identity to the external stakeholders, it is important that they identify themselves with the new visual identity.

3. Can corporate communication be used to facilitate employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University?

The third research question focuses on the role of corporate communication in the process of a visual identity shift and how it can be used to facilitate employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University. The third research question attempts to answer how Aalto University has used corporate communication in the visual identity shift and in the change process and how the employees have perceived these communication practises.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into 7 chapters. This introductory Chapter 1 introduces the topic, the case organisation Aalto University and its new visual identity, and the research objectives and questions. Chapter 2 presents the literature relevant to this study. The literature review covers the following four topics: non-profit organisations, organisational identity, image and profile; communication and visual identity, and organisational identification. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for the study combining information on the reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2. The data and methods used in this thesis are presented in Chapter 4, which also discusses the trustworthiness of the study. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the empirical part of this study and Chapter 6 discusses these findings in relation to the related literature. Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the research, presents some practical implications of the findings and discusses some of the limitations of this thesis. Chapter 7 also presents some suggestions for further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature relevant for this research. The chapter is divided into four areas of research: non-profit organisations, organisational identity, image and profile; communication and visual identity, and organisational identification. Section 2.1 gives an overview of the non-profit sector and non-profit organisations, such as the case organisation Aalto University School of Economics. This section will also discuss the recent changes affecting the higher education sector in Finland, which have been the key drivers for the formation of Aalto University. Section 2.1 discusses the concept of organisation identity, especially in the context of non-profit organisations. The purpose of the section is also to present the different elements of organisational identity and highlight the relationship between organisational identity, image and profile. Section 2.3 discusses the concepts of communication and visual identity based on the corporate identity model by Melewar and Jenkins (2002) presented in section 2.1. Finally, section 2.4 discusses the concept of organisational identification and why it is important that employees identify themselves with the organisation they work for.

2.1 Nature of non-profit organisations

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the non-profit sector and non-profit organisations, such as the case organisation Aalto University School of Economics. Moreover, this section will discuss the recent changes affecting the higher education sector in Finland, which have been the key drivers for the formation of Aalto University.

According to Vernis, Iglesias, Sanz and Saz-Carranza (2006, p. 19), organisations operating in society are generally grouped into three sectors: businesses, public administration and non-profit organisations. However, as the authors suggest, these sectors are not strictly separate but they often overlap. For example, the Finnish institutes of higher education could be classified as non-profit organisations, yet receiving a vast majority of their

operating funds from the government and public agencies. As Vuokko (2004) points out, the primary purpose of non-profit organisations is often not to make profit but to work towards the organisation's mission. This mission can be achieved with the help of several constituencies, such as employees and other members of the organisation.

The globalisation of business has also reached the higher education sector and universities are now facing the challenge of competing with other universities and institutions of higher education to attract the best students and academic staff also in an international level. For this reason universities are more often adopting business-style thinking in their operations: students are more often recognised as customers and education seen as a service to be marketed worldwide. In this increasingly competitive market, the need for universities to develop competitive advantage based on a set of unique characteristics has increased. (Melewar & Akeel 2005).

The Finnish higher education system comprises of two complementary sectors: universities and polytechnics. Whereas the main task of polytechnics is to offer work-related education to respond to the needs of the labour market, the main mission for universities has generally been to conduct scientific research and provide education based on it. (OPM, 2009) The mission for Aalto University, for example, is to conduct expert interdisciplinary research and provide high quality education (Aalto University, 2009a). The following subsection will focus on the nature of the Finnish higher education sector and the recent changes affecting it.

2.1.1 Changes in the Finnish higher education sector

As Michelsen (2004) points out, the Finnish university education has undergone significant changes and has been subject to both internal and external pressures. This subsection will discuss the recent changes in the Finnish higher education sector that have also affected the formation of Aalto University.

The Finnish university sector has faced challenges both internally as well as externally. On the one hand, external pressures, such as globalisation, internationalisation and the political integration of Europe have posed major challenges to Finnish universities. On the other hand, internally, the universities have faced strong economic, social and cultural strains. For example, the economic demands by the Ministry of Education to make the university institution more efficient have further increased the internal pressures of individual universities. (Michelsen 2004)

One of the latest changes affecting the Finnish higher education sector is the new Universities Act, which took effect on 1st August 2009. According to the Ministry of Education (OPM, 2009), the main objective of the new reform is to extend the autonomy of universities by making state universities either independent corporations under public law or foundations under private law. This way, the universities are believed to have the means to react to the changes in the operational environment, diversify their funding base, compete for international research funding as well as cooperate with foreign universities and research institutes.

The new university reform will move university governance more clearly towards managerial ideals, which are adopted from the business world. In this way the reform will also affect the universities' management and decision-making systems as the universities are able to pursue independent human resource policies. In fact, the university staff will no longer be employed by the state but the civil-service employment relationships will become contractual employment relationships (OPM, 2009).

Besides changes in the legal status and governance of the Finnish universities, the university reform also aims at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the universities by changing the network of universities (and institutions of higher education). (OPM, 2009) This has led to a phase of institutional mergers where universities and polytechnics are merging into bigger entities.

Due to the internal and external pressures, the Finnish university sector has embraced a more business-style thinking in their operations where education is seen as a service to be offered and students are more often recognised as customers. As Melewar and Akel (2005) suggest, this business-style thinking to education has led to the increased pressure for universities to distinguish themselves from their competitors in order to maintain and enhance their competitiveness. This, in turn, has increased the importance of a unique and distinct corporate identity as a powerful source of competitive advantage. The following section discusses the importance of corporate identity, profile and image and the importance of organisational identity for non-profit organisations.

2.2 Organisational identity, image and profile

According to Rekom (1997, p. 413), organisations that understand their identity, can communicate better and more credibly to their diverse stakeholders. As the objective of this thesis was to find out the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity, this section shows the different elements that together constitute an organisation's identity. Subsection 2.2.1 discusses the concept of identity especially in non-profit organisations and the components of organisational identity. The second subsection, 2.2.2 highlights the relationship between organisational identity, image and profile.

2.2.1 Identity in non-profit organisations

Just as profit organisations, also non-profit organisations, such as universities, have an identity (Alessandri, Yang & Kinsey, 2006). Moreover, as Young (2001, p. 140) argues, the concept of identity is as critical, or even more critical, for non-profit organisations as non-profit organisations are less driven by competitive market forces or political mandates than profit organisations. The flexible form of non-profit organisations requires a strong internal guidance as well as strong decisions on organisational identity. This subsection discusses

the concept of organisational identity in non-profit organisations and the different components that together form an organisation's identity.

The concept of corporate identity has been of interest both as a management issue as well as in academic literature. The lack of consensus regarding the basic conceptualisation and definition of corporate identity has, however, been one of the main challenges in the area of research. (Kiriakidou & Millward, 2000). According to Poikolainen (1994, p. 26), corporate identity equals to the personality of an organisation, in other words what the organisation is and what it does. Corporate identity emerges from several elements of the organization, such as values, vision, communication, strategy and company culture. Together these fundamental decisions and behaviour make up the identity of the organisation. Moreover, as Bromley (2001, p. 316) defines, corporate identity can be ascribed as the distinct set of attributes that distinguishes one organisation from another.

A more narrow conceptualisation of corporate identity, on the other hand, suggests that corporate identity is in fact only a visual manifestation of the organisation, which is conveyed through the organisation's name, logo, products, services, buildings and all other tangible elements created by the organization (Argenti, 2007; Dowling, 2001). However, as Alessandri (2001) points out, at the operational level, an organisational identity is, in fact, the visual presentation of itself, including its name, logo, tagline, colour palette and architecture but it should also be extended to cover other elements that influence the way people see and think about an organisation, such as an organisation's public behaviour. In other words, corporate identity is more than an appearance; it also comprises of the behaviour of the organisation.

According to Hatch and Schultz (1997), the concept of corporate identity is most often used in marketing literature whereas organisational literature is more focused on the concept of organisational identity. The authors further argue that in broad terms, organisational identity could be seen as the way in which members perceive, feel and think about their

organisations whereas corporate identity is what is central, enduring and distinctive about an organisation. Even if there seems to be variation in definition between the two concepts, as Balmer (2001) points out, corporate identity and organisational identity are, in fact, interrelated. In the present study, the concept of organisational identity is used as the case organisation is not a corporation. However, the concept of organisational identity is used in the sense that it also covers the discussion on corporate identity.

According to van den Bosch, de Jong and Elving (2006, p. 139), the three most important components of organisational identity are organisational behaviour, communication and symbolism (i.e. visual identity, such as name and logo). This is also known as the corporate identity mix, which van Riel and Balmer (1997, p. 342) define as “the way in which an organization's identity is revealed through behaviour, communications, as well as through symbolism to internal and external audiences”. All of the abovementioned components affect the way stakeholders perceive the organisation.

Melewar and Jenkins (2002, p. 81), on the other hand, have identified altogether four sub-constructs for corporate identity. The authors propose that the four main sub-constructs of corporate identity are communication and visual identity, behaviour, corporate culture, and market conditions. *Corporate communication* refers to all formal and informal messages that an organisation sends out to its multiple audiences or stakeholders. These messages communicate a corporation's identity and they are conveyed through a variety of media. *Behaviour* is the way the organisation acts as a result of either planned or spontaneous corporate attitudes whereas *corporate culture* is the shared values and beliefs of an organisation that are derived from organisational identity. Finally, *market conditions* refer to the underlying economic and technical characteristics of an industry, which influence the way an organisation can have and project its own individual identity. The corporate identity model and the sub-constructs of corporate identity are illustrated in Figure 1.

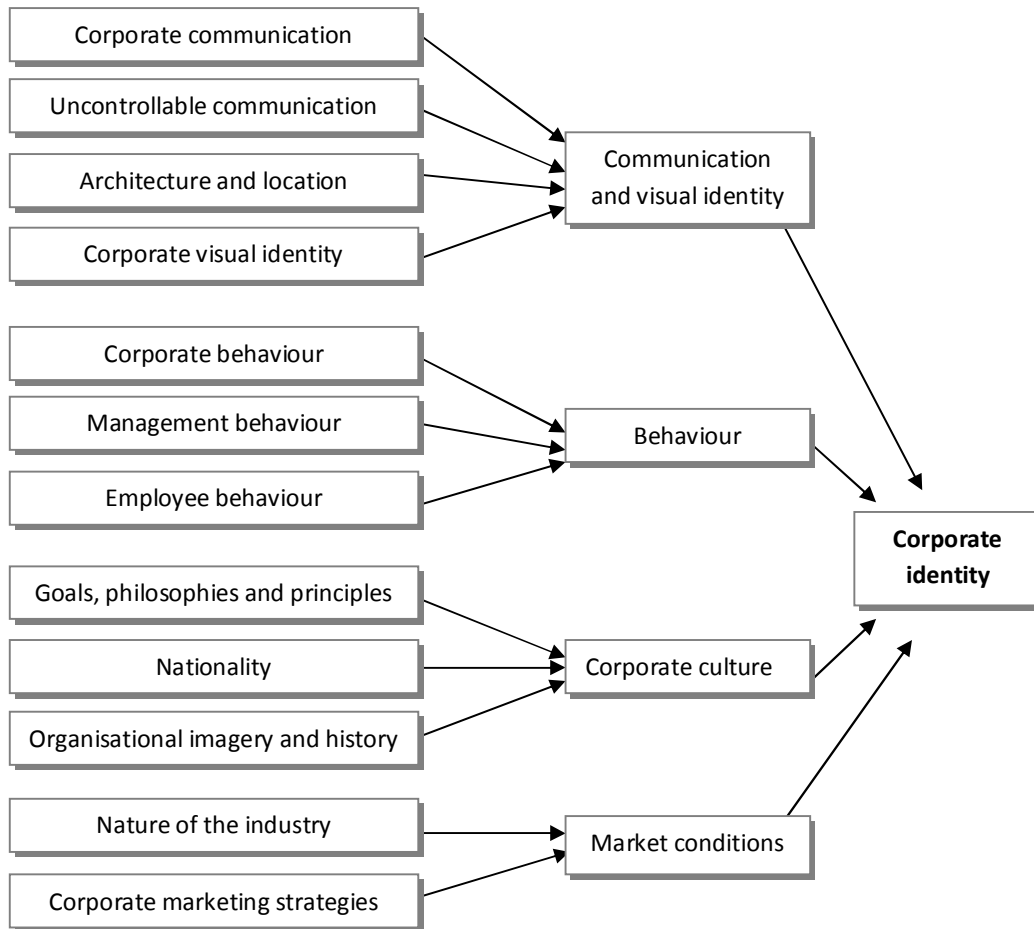


Figure 1: Corporate Identity Model (Melewar and Jenkins 2002, p. 81)

The corporate identity model is highly valid also in the university context. As Melewar and Akeel (2005) point out, the competitive nature of the university sector today has increased the need for universities to develop competitive advantage by maintaining and enhancing a set of unique characteristics that distinguish them from their competitors. In this setting, for universities the role of corporate identity has become strategically important as a powerful source of competitive advantage.

According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, 69), the way an organisation's members perceive the organisation is at the core of organisational identity. In other words, as van Riel and Balmer (1997, 340) suggest, corporate identity could be seen as the unique set of characteristics which are embedded in the behaviour of the members of the organisation. Furthermore, as van Riel *et al.* (2007, 69) argue, a consistent organisational identity is based on those shared beliefs of the members of the organisation about what differentiates the organisation from its competitors. Thus, if an organisation wishes to assess its identity, the starting point should be from the viewpoint of its own members. Based on the theory of Albert and Whetten (1985), Van Riel *et al.* (2007) suggest that the assessment should be based on the following three criteria:

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

As Melewar, Basset and Simoes (2006, 138) and Holtzhausen and Fourie (2008, 81) argue, for organisations the concept of identity should be used as a strategic tool to build understanding and commitment among the diverse stakeholders. For example, for employees a strong corporate identity can create a sense of belonging. This, in turn, leads to increased productivity and profitability as employees feel more motivated if they identify themselves with the organisations they work for. Moreover, a strong corporate identity can also be seen as a source of competitive advantage as it can differentiate an organisation from its competitors.

The role of corporate identity is also important in merger situations where identities are merged or a new one is created. According to Kleefeld (1999, as cited in Rosson et al. 2004, 184), in merger situations there are generally three approaches how the identity is chosen for the new organisation: (1) one identity dominates and others disappear, (2) forming a hybrid identity, which retains elements from all identities, or (3) creating an entirely new identity. As explained later in subsection 5.1.3, the latter option was the choice of Aalto University as the organisation chose to break from the old identities and start afresh. As Rosson et al. (2004, 184) point out, for organisations a new organisational identity, that has no features of the old identities, can be an opportunity to communicate a new beginning.

In sum, organisational identity derives from several elements within the organisation. Even though there exists differing views as to what elements actually constitute corporate identity, visual identification is still an integral part of the corporate identity mix (Baker & Balmer 1997, 369). As Pohjola (2003, 24) points out, visual signs are essential in an organisation's identity, as they reflect the desired image and profile of the organisation. The concepts of image and profile are discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.2 Image and profile

The purpose of this subsection is to provide an overview of the concepts of corporate image and profile and explain how they relate to organisational identity.

As Bernstein (1984, p. 205) defines, 'image is an impression perceived by the mind of a target respondent'. Thus, corporate image could be defined as the overall image of an organisation as perceived by the public or an individual (Argenti 2007, p. 66; Poikolainen 1994, p. 27). As Pohjola (2003, p. 22) points out, in addition to organisational factors, corporate image is also determined by the personal and environmental factors of the receiver. For this reason, an organisation can never fully control its image. It can, however,

control a large share of it by trying to bring forth some of the features in the identity in order to create a desired outcome (Poikolainen 1994, pp. 30-31). This is called profiling. The relationship between identity, profile and image is illustrated in the following figure:

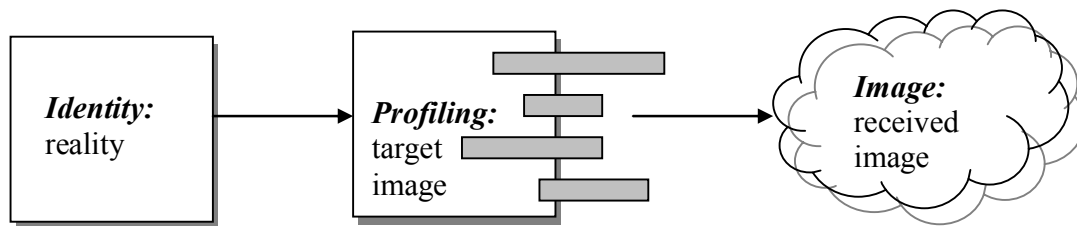


Figure 2. The formation of a corporate image (Poikolainen 1994, 27)

As Figure 2 illustrates, organisational identity encompasses what the company is and what it does. Profiling, in turn, is a conscious effort in bringing forth certain favourable elements in the identity. (Poikolainen 1994, pp. 27-28) Thus, both identity and profile are closely related to the company's own actions, whereas an image consists of the perceptions the recipients, such as employees, have of the organisation (Pohjola, 2003, p. 22). Organisations can have different images among different constituencies but as Argenti (2007, p. 67) points out, organisational identity should always be consistent.

As Holtzhausen and Fourie (2008, p. 81) highlight, organisations benefit from being perceived positively, especially by their employees. First, a positive image makes an organisation more attractive in the eyes of the employees, thus contributing to employee commitment towards the organisation. In other words, employees who have a positive image of an organisation are more likely to stay committed to the organisation in the long run. Second, a positive image also affects the way employees react, for example, during crises or change situations as employees interpret organisational messages more positively if they have a positive image of the organisation they work for (Vuokko 2002, p. 106).

As Pohjola (2003, 20) suggests, organisations can use visual identity as a tool to affect the organisation's image among its stakeholders. The following section presents one of the components of organisational identity - communication and visual identity.

2.3 Communication and visual identity

As discussed in subsection 2.2.1, there exist several definitions of the concept of corporate identity and to its different components. This section discusses the concepts of communication and visual identity based on the corporate identity model by Melewar and Jenkins (2002) (see Figure 1). As Melewar and Akel (2005, p. 43) argue, the corporate identity model adapts a multidisciplinary approach to the concept of corporate identity as it combines paradigms from the fields of psychology, graphic design, marketing as well as public relations.

In their corporate identity model Melewar et al. (2002) break down corporate identity into the following four areas: communication and visual identity, behaviour, corporate culture and market conditions. The four areas are further broken down into several components. As this thesis focuses on the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity, this chapter will focus on the first element in the model by Melewar and Jenkins (2002), i.e. communication and visual identity. According to Melewar and Jenkins (2002, p. 81) the elements of communication and visual identity consist of corporate communications, uncontrollable communication, architecture and location, and corporate visual identity. These are illustrated in Figure 3.

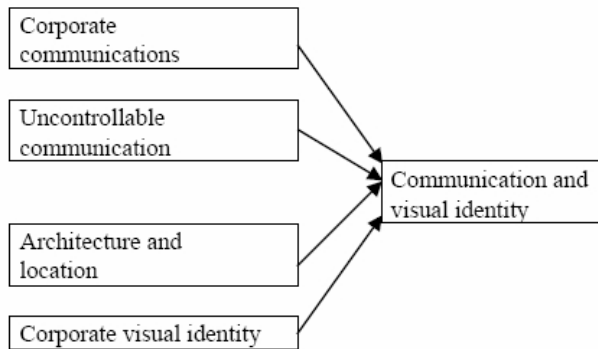


Figure 3. Elements of communication and visual identity (Melewar and Jenkins 2002, p. 81)

The main focus of this study is on the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity. In addition, the study discusses the role of corporate communication in the visual identity shift. For this reason, corporate communications, uncontrollable communication and corporate visual identity have been chosen as the most relevant elements for this study. These three concepts are discussed in more detail in the next subsections.

2.3.1 Corporate communications

Corporate communication could be viewed as the voice of a corporation and the images it projects to its various stakeholders (Argenti 2002, p. 4). This section will discuss the concept of corporate communications and its relationship with communication and visual identity.

The following definition of corporate communication has been put forward by Van Riel (1995, p. 26, as cited in Melewar et al. 2006, p. 142):

“[...] corporate communication is an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonised as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent.”

As Melewar et al. (2007) and Argenti (2002; 2007) suggest, corporate communication comprises various types of communication between an organisation and its different stakeholders. According to Melewar et al. (2006) corporate communication consists of three types of communication, i.e. management, marketing and organisational communication. Argenti (2002; 2007), on the other hand, suggests that corporate communication includes such communications functions or areas as corporate reputation, corporate advertising and advocacy, employee communications, investor relations, government relations, media management, and crisis communications.

According to Argenti (2002, p. 5), corporate communication is most visibly a *function* that is either centralised or dispersed across an organisation's units. On the other hand, corporate communication is also the *process* an organisation uses to communicate its key messages to its key stakeholders. In other words, corporate communication also refers to a combination of communication activities, such as meetings, interviews, reports, image advertising, and online communication. From the employee perspective corporate communication is ideally “*an attitude toward communication*” or “*a set of mental habits*” that employees understand and internalise. Here, efficient internal communication can play an important role.

Internal Communication generally refers to all communication, both formal and informal, between an organisation and its internal stakeholders, most often employees. However,

alternative terms are also used in the literature, including employee communication, internal relations, employee relations, internal public relations, and staff communication. (Welch & Jackson, 2007) Whereas internal communication used to be perceived as simply comprising of memos, publications and broadcasts, today internal communication is seen as a broader concept. As Argenti (2007, p. 137) points out, internal communication can be seen as a business function that contributes to an organisation's success and drives performance. Moreover, internal communication is a strategic tool that can be used to build corporate culture or drive organisational change.

According to Argenti (2007), internal communication is essential in building employee motivation and satisfaction, especially when an organisation is undergoing a merger or a change process. Moreover, only when employees understand and believe in the organisation's new culture and values can they be motivated to deliver them to the customers. As Vuokko (2004, pp. 168-169) points out, effective internal communication is the basis for all external communication.

Besides effective internal communication, employee participation also affects the way employees perceive a change process. As Argenti (2007, p. 138) argues, when employees are able to participate in the conversations that drive organisational change, they are more likely to stay motivated and positive towards the change. Moreover, when organisations engage employees - of all levels - in the organisation's vision and strategy, workforce loyalty and productivity will increase.

The important role of employees during a change is also acknowledged in marketing literature. For example, Hankinson, Lomax and Hand (2007) highlight the critical role of employees during an organisational re-branding, i.e. in the process of organisational identity change that occurs, for example, during a merger. As the authors suggests, while a re-branding process is often managed by external consultants, the responsibility for the

implementation of the brand falls for the employees of the organisation. Thus, ultimately, it is the employees who deliver the brand promise.

According to Hankinson and Lomax (2006), re-branding is often connected with changes in an organisation's visual identity, including logo, graphics or name. However, more often than not re-branding is more than the visual changes as re-branding involves fundamental evaluation and changes of the organisation's functions, core values as well as behaviour. This is also the case with Aalto University where the change covers, not only the visual signals, but also changes in the organisation's structure, mission, vision and behaviour.

In their study on the effects of re-branding on the employees of large non-profit UK charities, Hankinson et al. (2006, p. 195) measured the effectiveness of re-branding by using the following three dimensions:

1. *Staff knowledge*: has re-branding increased staff knowledge on new positioning, values etc.?
2. *Staff attitudes*: does staff feel more valued and more involved in the organisation?
3. *Staff behaviour*: has re-branding increased staff participation and co-operation with colleagues?

As Hankinson et al. (2006) suggest, employee knowledge, attitudes and behaviour can be used to some extent to measure the effectiveness of an organisation's re-branding process. However, as Hankinson et al. (2007) point out, time can be a critical factor when measuring the results. On the one hand, in organisations where re-branding is more recent, the employees can show lower levels of knowledge, show more negative attitudes and behaviours as the employees have not had the time to internalise the consequences. On the other hand, as Kaikati and Kaikati (2003, as cited by Hankinson et al. 2007) argue, employees respond more positively to internal change during the first stages of the re-

branding process. In conclusion, it has to be remembered that the stage of the change process can have an effect on the perceptions and behaviour of the employees.

Argenti argues (2007) that internal communication - and internal branding as such - is a formal way for organisations to communicate their vision and mission to the employees and create emotional ties between the organisation and its internal stakeholders. Employee perceptions are, however, influenced also by informal channels of communication, which are discussed in the next subsection.

2.3.2 Uncontrollable communication

Markwick and Fill (1997, p. 402) define uncontrollable communication as unintentional or emergent messages that are not in the direct control of the organisation. This uncontrollable communication can be both outside the organisation, such as third party reports, or inside the organisation, such as company grapevine. As the main focus of the thesis is on the role of corporate communication in the process of visual identity shift, this subsection discusses the nature and role of uncontrollable communication inside the organisation.

According to Argenti (2007, p. 151), a company grapevine is an information network within an organisation ranging from private conversations between employees to the latest discussions in the cafeteria. This form of communication, not in the direct control of the organisation, is also known as social interaction, as suggested by Åberg (2000, p. 100). This uncontrollable communication, as Åberg (*Ibid.*) points out, typically occurs in every work community and can be a powerful form of communication. Especially in situations where there is a limited amount of information available, employees have no choice than to rely on each other, as well as to external sources, and fill in the missing gaps. On the other hand, the more timely and accurate information the employees get and the more the employees feel they can trust the management, the less likely the employees are to resort to company grapevine. Argenti (2007, p. 151)

Åberg (2000, p. 170) suggests that even though organisations cannot control all internal communication, organisations should take the informal channels and employee networks, such as co-workers, family or friends, into consideration. This could be done, for example, by making sure that all employees know the organisation's history and desired identity and making sure that new employees get a reliable picture of the organisation and the work community.

2.3.3 Corporate Visual Identity (CVI)

Corporate visual identity (CVI) is a core element in organisational identity, reputation and relationship management (van den Bosch et al. 2004). This subsection will discuss corporate visual identity, its different functions as well as its role in merger situations.

According to van den Bosch et al. (2005, p. 108) corporate visual identity refers to all of the symbols and graphical elements that express the core of an organisation. These symbols and graphical elements include an organisation's name, typeface, logo or symbol, colour scheme and other additional graphical elements (Rosson & Brooks, 2004, pp. 183-184; Baker & Balmer 1997, p. 370, van den Bosch et al. 2005, p. 108). Corporate visual identity is thus the most visible part of an organisation's identity.

In general terms, CVI expresses the values and objectives of an organisation as well as its characteristics. Van den Bosch, Elving and de Jong (2006, p. 871) have distinguished four functions of corporate visual identity in corporate communication and argue that corporate visual identity:

1. provides visibility and "recognisability" for an organisation,
2. symbolises the organisation for external stakeholders, hence contributes to the image and reputation of the organisation,

3. communicates the structure of the organisation to external stakeholders by visualising its coherence and the relationships between different units in the organisation, and
4. *probably* plays a symbolic role in creating organisational identification among members of the organisation as a whole or the specific departments they work for.

As van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 871) highlight, special attention to CVI should be paid especially during organisational change, such as mergers, take-overs and acquisitions. As the authors suggest, CVI is a major factor in strategic decisions during organisational change as it is one of the few instruments that can be managed when building a new organisational identity.

In their study on Strathclyde University, Baker and Balmer (1997) examined the role of visual identity in the corporate identity mix. Based on their study, the authors suggest that visual communication has a significant role in conveying information both to the university's external and internal stakeholders. For example, to external stakeholders the university's new consistent visual identity communicated the size, strength and reputation of the institution. To the personnel it provided a focal point for organisational identification. Thus, as Baker and Balmer (1997) argue, visual identity is an important strategic element in a university's identity.

As Pohjola (2003, p. 34) points out, one of the purposes of corporate communication, and visual communication as part of it, is to create expectations and give promises. The purpose of organisational behaviour, in turn, is to fulfil these expectations and promises. As Pohjola (2003) and van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 140) suggest, visual identity should reflect and communicate the organisation's future goals and direction to the employees.

Marketing literature has also discussed the role of visuals and especially the role of corporate and brand logos. Hankinson et al. (2007) argue that corporate visuals, such as

name, logo and colours, are often the most obvious signals of an organisation's re-branding process. However, organisational change and re-branding should not be only an identity makeover but the change should also cover other aspects of organisational identity. Pohjola (2004, p. 20) and Baker et al. (1997) also point out that visual signs reflect the identity of an organisation and should thus be in correlation with what the organisation actually stands for.

According to van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 140), before organisations can express their visual identity externally it must be first understood and supported internally by the members of the organisation. As too many visual cues might give an unfocused impression, corporate visual identity must be consistent and managed consistently. Van den Bosch et al. (*ibid.*) further argue that in CVI management, the combination of knowledge, attitude and behaviour is crucial in how a CVI is perceived internally. First, members of the organisation must know the aims and rationale behind the design before they are able to understand and support it. Second, members of the organisation must learn how to use the corporate visuals through both formal and informal learning. Here, management plays an important role as they must set a good example in using the corporate visuals. As the authors conclude, it appears that CVI guidelines and management example are essential in managing a consistent corporate visual identity.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity. The internal function of CVI - organisational identification - will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.4 Organisational identification

This section discusses the concept of organisational identification and why it is important that members of an organisation identify themselves with the organisation they work for. This section will also discuss the role of organisational identification during a merger.

According to Dutton et al. (1994, p. 239), organisational identification could be defined as the cognitive connection an individual has with an organisation. As the authors argue, when people's self-concepts incorporate the same attributes as those of the perceived organisational identity, individuals identify themselves with the organisation. In other words, organisational identification refers to a particular cognitive state rather than to specific behaviour or emotion, although organisational identification can influence both behaviour and emotion (Rousseau 1998, p. 218).

Organisational identification could also be seen as the degree to which individuals define themselves as members of the organisation. According to Dutton et al. (1994, p. 239), the strength of an individual's organisational identification could be based on the following two factors. First, a person's identity as a member of the organisation is more salient than other alternative identities. Second, a person believes to have many of the same characteristics that she or he perceives to define the organisation as a social group.

Bartels et al. (2006, p. 52) argue, that organisational identification is considered important for several reasons. First, a strong organisational identification influences employees' willingness to stay with the organisation and work for the organisation's goals. Second, organisational identification affects employees' willingness to co-operate with other members of the organisations. And finally, strong organisational identification helps to spread a positive image of the organisation.

The way members of an organisations are able to identify themselves to the organisation they work for is often a challenge in a merger process. According to Bartels et al. (2006), problems involved in mergers are often ascribed to human aspects. Problems can arise, for example, when the merging organisations have conflicting corporate identities or incompatible corporate cultures. These problems suggest that members of the merging organisations may feel threatened by the loss of their old identity, thus they are inclined to cling to the group they are already part of. As a result, as Dutton et al. (1994) point out,

employees might lose their psychological commitment to the new organisation or to the organisation's new identity. Often in merger situations, the stronger the employees identify themselves with the existing organisation, the more difficulties they may have in re-identifying themselves with the new organisation (Bartels et al. 2006, p. 50).

Communication is one of the most important integration tools in mergers and post-merger integration processes (Balle 2008, p. 56; Bartels et al. 2006, p. 51). Moreover, as Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel (2001) argue, both the content of the communication as well as the communication climate play a central role in organisational identification. In fact, when measuring organizational identification of employees in three organizations, Smidts et al. (2001) came to the conclusion that an organisation's communication climate is more closely linked to organisational identification than the actual content of the communication. For example, an open communication climate and active employee participation will increase feelings of being a part of the organisation or work group. Moreover, employees feel more positive towards the organisation if they feel they are taken seriously, respected and that their superiors and colleagues listen to them. All of these factors strongly affect employee self-esteem, commitment as well as co-operative behaviour.

An organisation's visual identity is also related to employees' identification with an organisation or a specific department they work for. Van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 871) argue that corporate visual identity probably plays a symbolic role in creating organisational identification, which seems to be crucial for employees. As Rosson et al. (2004, 181) point out, one of testing times for corporate visual identity is during a merger process as corporate visuals convey information and reflect the identity of the new entity.

To conclude, this chapter reviewed literature about non-profit organisations, organisational identity, image and profile; communication and visual identity, and organisational identification. The first section gave an overview of the non-profit sector and non-profit organisations and discussed the recent changes in the Finnish higher education sector that

have been the key drivers for the formation of the case organisation, Aalto University. The second section discussed the concept of organisational identity and presented the corporate identity model and the sub-constructs of corporate identity. The third section discussed the concepts of communication and visual identity based on the corporate identity model. The last section discussed organisational identification and why it is essential that employees identify themselves with the organisation they work for. The next chapter combines the theories presented in this chapter into a theoretical framework, which has guided the research process.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Drawing on the most relevant literature presented in Chapter 2, this chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study and highlights the reasons for investigating the organisational identity and organisational visual identity of Aalto University.

The internal and external pressures of the higher education sector have been the key drivers for the formation of Aalto University. The competitive nature of the university sector has increased the need for universities to develop competitive advantage by maintaining and enhancing a set of unique characteristics that distinguish them from their competitors. In this setting, for universities the role of organisational identity has become strategically important as a powerful source of competitive advantage. (Melewar & Akel 2005)

This study uses the definition of van Riel and Balmer (1997, p. 340) where they define organisational identity as the shared beliefs of the members of the organisation about what differentiates the organisation from its competitors. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007, p. 69) argue that the way an organisation's members perceive the organisation is at the core of organisational identity. Thus, if an organisation wishes to assess its organisational identity, the starting point should be from the viewpoint of its own members, i.e. the employees.

In literature, the role of organisational identity has been acknowledged in merger situations where identities are merged and new identities are created. The theoretical framework of this study is built on the work of Melewar and Jenkins (2002) and van den Bosch et al. (2006). According to Melewar and Jenkins, (2002, p. 81) organisational identity is all-inclusive covering an organisation's communication and visual identity, behaviour, corporate culture, and market conditions (see figure 1). Van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 139) identify organisational behaviour, communication and symbolism (i.e. visual identity, such as name and logo) as the three most important components of organisational identity. For this study, communication and visual identity are chosen as the most relevant components

of organisational identity. As the main focus of this study is on the role and importance of visual identity as a part of Aalto University's organisational identity, the frameworks created by Melewar and Jenkins (2002, p. 81) and van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 139) have been chosen as the basis of the empirical part of this study.

The theoretical framework for this study is also based on the notion that corporate visual identity (CVI) is an important part of an organisation's identity (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002; and van den Bosch et al., 2006). Moreover, it is argued that before an organisation can express its visual identity externally, it must be first understood and supported by the members of the organisation. CVI is also important in the university setting (Baker & Balmer, 1997). Corporate visual identity is often the most visible part of an organisation's identity, thus it should be in correlation with what the organisation actually stands for. Moreover, as van den Bosch et al. (2006) point out a CVI should express the values and objectives of an organisation as well as its characteristics. As the case of this study is in a merger context, the theoretical framework includes the notions of Rosson et al. (2004, p. 192) who state that corporate visual identity is essential in a merger context as corporate visuals convey information and reflect the identity of the new entity.

It is generally acknowledged that mergers are not easy processes and they often have unexpected outcomes (Bartels et al., 2006). As Bartels et al. (2006) suggest, the problems in mergers are often connected to human aspects, such as conflicting organisational identities, inter-group differences or, for example, different organisational cultures. This, in turn, might result to the reluctance of employees to identify themselves with the new organisational identity of the new entity (Dutton et al., 1994). Thus, the theoretical framework of this study argues that from the employee perspective, a significant part of a merger is a process where members of the organisation give up the old organisational identity and re-identify themselves with the new identity. This study uses the definition by Dutton et al. (1994) where they define organisational identification as the degree to which individuals define themselves as members of the organisation. Organisational identification

is important, especially in a merger context, as it can influence employees' motivation and willingness to work for the organisation. Furthermore, strong organisational identification helps to spread a positive image of the organisation. (Bartels et al. 2006)

The theoretical framework of this study underlines the role of communication in the process of a merger and in organisational identification. As Balle (2008) and Bartels et al. (2006) argue, communication is one of the most important integration tools in mergers and post-merger integration processes. In organisational identification, both the content of the communication as well as the communication climate play a central role (Smidts et al., 2001).

The present study examines the role and importance of visual identity as a part of Aalto University's organisational identity. It also discusses the role of corporate communication in Aalto University's visual identity shift and how corporate communication as a function could be used to facilitate members of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University. The following chapter will set out the methodological approach to the study.

4 DATA AND METHODS

This chapter presents the data and methods used in this study. The objective of this thesis was to find out the role and importance of visual identity as a part of Aalto University's organisational identity. In particular, this thesis focused on the role of visual communication and examined the ways in which a merging organisation can affect the process of abandoning an old and accepting a new visual identity. Based on the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how does the new visual identity reflect it?
2. How do the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the new visual identity of Aalto University and how do they identify themselves with the new visual identity?
3. Can corporate communication be used to facilitate employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University?

This chapter is divided into five parts. Section 4.1 discusses the qualitative research approach used in this study. Section 4.2 presents the method of data collection and explains the interview settings. Section 4.3 introduces the interview themes with the management of Aalto University and the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics. Section 4.4 describes how the interview data was analysed. The last section, 4.5, discusses and evaluates the trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Qualitative interviews

The purpose of this study was to find out the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity. In particular, this thesis focused on the role of visual communication in a merger of Aalto University.

As the purpose of the study was to examine the role of visual communication in a merger of one particular case organisation, Aalto University, a single-case study was a suitable choice (Yin, 2009). The study was conducted with a qualitative approach in order to gain a deeper understanding on the role of visual communication in a merger situation. As Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (1997, p. 160) point out, the basis for qualitative research is to gain a holistic understanding on the phenomena examined. Moreover, according to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, p. 22), qualitative research places emphasis on the research context, interpretation and understanding of the viewpoints of the participants of the study. By using an approach that emphasises the viewpoints and the 'voice' of the research participants, a more deeper understanding can be gained on the perceptions, experiences and expertise of the employees of Aalto University and Aalto University School of Economics (former Helsinki School of Economics, HSE). In other words, the study aims at understanding and interpreting information from the viewpoint of the members of the organisation.

4.2 Data collection and interview settings

In this study, the data was gathered through qualitative semi-structured interviews both with Aalto University representatives as well as a sample of employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics who now work under Aalto University School of Economics.

As the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding on the perceptions of the members of the organisation, interviews were a natural choice for the method. According to

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, p. 35), qualitative interviews are especially suitable in situations where people and their perceptions are investigated. Qualitative interviews are also suitable when the research area is fairly unknown or when the researcher wants to place the interview results into a wider context. Interviews also facilitate interaction and the researcher is able to both clarify and deepen the received information.

A semi-structured interview approach was chosen for this study as it ensures a certain predefined interview structure, yet leaving room for a free flow of conversation and interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees. As Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 101) point out, in-depth interviews could be seen as conversations where the researcher explores general topics still leaving room for the interviewees' own structuring and framing. As several members of the organisation were interviewed for this study, the semi-structured interview approach allowed a more focused and structured analysis of the interview results.

For the purpose of this study, altogether nine interviews were conducted between 16th February 2010 and 28th April 2010. The sample of interview participants included three managers of Aalto University and Aalto University School of Economics as well as six employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE).

The managers of Aalto University and Aalto University School of Economics were interviewed in order to find out how significant a role Aalto University has placed on its visual identity and how this is communicated to the employees. The sample of interview participants consisted of managers that had been actively involved in the process of choosing and implementing the University's new visual identity. Table 1 summarises the interview settings with the managers of Aalto University and Aalto University School of Economics.

Table 1. Interviews at Aalto University

Role and involvement in the University's visual identity process	Gender	Date of the interview	Length of the interview	Reference in the text
Manager, coordinator (Aalto University)	Female	16.2.2010	30 min	A1
Professor, member of the visual identity contest jury (HSE)	Male	26.3.2010	30 min	H1
Manager, implementer of the visual identity (HSE)	Female	29.3.2010	25 min	H2

In order to get an understanding on how the employees perceive the visual identity shift and the new visual identity, six employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE) were interviewed. These interviewees were chosen from different faculties and with varying titles and job responsibilities.

The main criterion for choosing the sample of employees was their employment history at the former Helsinki School of Economics. It was important that the employees had worked for the former Helsinki School of Economics for several years, i.e. they would have a clear picture of the organisational identity of the former Helsinki School of Economics. Table 2 summarises the interview settings with the employees of Aalto University School of Economics.

Table 2. Interviews with the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics

Title	Gender	Work/study history at HSE	Date of the interview	Length of the interview	Reference in the text
Administrative Officer	Female	> 20 years	19.4.2010	40 mins.	E1
Academic Planner	Female	~ 10 years	20.4.2010	49 mins.	E2
Professor	Male	> 20 years	20.4.2010	51 mins.	E3
Academic Planner	Female	10 years	26.4.2010	37 mins.	E4
Planning Officer	Female	3 years	27.4.2010	28 mins.	E5
Post Doc Researcher	Female	~ 10 years	28.4.2010	38 mins.	E6

The interviewees were approached by email to arrange the meetings. All interviews were conducted individually and the data was collected by the researcher only. All of the interviews were held in the offices of the interviewees, which were located either in Helsinki or in Espoo. Before the interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to the interview participants. The participants were also asked for a permission to tape record the data. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, p. 92), recording an interview is important for a natural conversation flow and interaction. Moreover, tape recording ensures a more accurate interview report when the interviewee does not have to rely solely on notes or his/her own memory.

After the interviews, the recorded material was transcribed word-for-word within two days of the interviews. This was to ensure that the interview atmosphere was still in the memory of the interviewee. Moreover, the early transcribing of the interviews enabled further clarification, if needed. As all of the research participants were Finnish, the interviews were also conducted in Finnish. This was to ensure a better understanding of the research

participants. The interviews were also analysed in Finnish but the results were translated into English by the researcher.

4.3 Interview themes

This section presents the themes for the interviews with the management of Aalto University and with the employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE). The objective of the interviews with the management of Aalto University was to find out about the desired visual identity of Aalto University and how the desired visual identity has been communicated to the employees. Subsection 4.3.1 presents the interview themes to answers these questions. Subsection 4.3.2 presents the interview themes with the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics, which are based on the literature on organisational identity, corporate visual identity and organisational identification.

4.3.1 Management of Aalto University

Based on the literature review on organisational identity, corporate visual identity and organisational identification, the interviews with the representatives of Aalto University management were built on the following four main themes (See Appendix 1):

- 1) The role and significance of organizational identity and corporate visual identity for Aalto University.
- 2) The process of choosing Aalto University's visual identity.
- 3) The desired identity of Aalto University and how the chosen visual identity reflects it.
- 4) Introducing the CVI to the employees.

In other words, the objective was to find out about the desired visual identity of Aalto University and how the desired visual identity has been communicated to the employees. The first major theme was chosen in order to understand how the decision-makers in Aalto

University see the role of organisational identity in general, and how big of a role Aalto University has placed on its organisational identity and corporate visual identity in the process of the merger.

The visual identity of Aalto University was chosen as a result of an open contest to all members of the Aalto University community, including students, staff and alumni. The second theme focused on the actual process of choosing the visual identity. This theme was chosen in order to find out on what basis the new visual identity was chosen. The second theme was further divided into questions regarding the following areas:

- The process and stages of designing and choosing the visual identity
- The role of Aalto University in the designing process

The third theme covered the desired identity of Aalto University and how the chosen visual identity reflects it. This theme covered questions regarding the following themes:

- Desired identity of Aalto University
- How the chosen visual identity reflects the desired identity
- The relationship between the old and new visual identities
- Finnish and International employees as stakeholders
- The future of the visual identity

The fourth theme, introducing the CVI to the employees, examined the relationship between Aalto University's visual identity and its employees. The final theme was also divided into questions regarding the following areas:

- Actions taken to facilitate employee identification with the new visual identity
- Employee feedback

In sum, the purpose of the interviews with Aalto University representatives was to examine the visual identity from the viewpoint of the University. Moreover, the objective was to

find out what the desired identity of Aalto University is and how the chosen visual identity reflects this desired identity.

4.3.2 Employees of the former HSE

The themes for the interviews (see Appendix 2) with the employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE) were based on the reviewed literature as well as the background information gained from the interviews with the representatives of Aalto University. Based on the interviews and the literature review on organisational identity, corporate visual identity and organisational identification, the interviews with the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics were built on the following three main themes:

- 1) Organisational identity (Albert and Whetten 1985; Melewar and Jenkins 2002).
- 2) Corporate visual identity and the effectiveness of the identity change (Van den Bosch et al. 2004, 2005, 2006; see also Hankinson et al. 2006 on re-branding).
- 3) Communication climate (Smidts et al. 2001; Argenti, 2002; Argenti, 2007).

The objective of the interviews with the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics was to find out whether the visual identity change has been effective and whether the employees can identify themselves as members of Aalto University.

The first theme, organisational identity, was chosen in order to find out employee perceptions on the organisational identities of both Helsinki School of Economics and Aalto University. The first theme was further divided into questions regarding the following three areas based on the theory of Albert and Whetten (1985, see subsection 2.2.1):

- *Centrality*: what are the characteristics that are widely shared throughout the organisation?

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

The second theme, corporate visual identity and effectiveness of the identity change, examined employee perceptions on the new visual identity of Aalto University and how it has been communicated to the employees. The second theme was further divided questions regarding the following areas (see subsection 2.3.1):

- Staff knowledge:
 - How does the new visual identity communicate the desired identity of Aalto University?
- Staff attitudes:
 - Do employees identify themselves with HSE or Aalto University?
 - What are the factors that have enhanced or restricted identification with Aalto University?
- Staff behaviour:
 - Staff participation
 - Feedback
 - Adoption of visual identity in everyday work

The third theme, communication climate, examined how employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the process of the visual identity launch and the general communication climate during the merger. This theme covered issues, such as communication practices, tools and challenges.

In sum, the aim of the interviews with the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics was to examine how the employees perceive the new visual identity of Aalto

University and how it has been communicated to the employees. Moreover, the interviews attempted to answer the question whether the employees identify themselves still with Helsinki School of Economics or have they abandoned the old identity and embraced the new.

4.4 Data analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 156), data analysis in qualitative research should be based on the preliminary research questions and the related literature. In this study, the data was analysed based on the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3. These factors together with the preliminary research themes (see subsections 4.3.1 and 4.3.1) guided the data analysis.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, p. 136) have distinguished several features that are characteristic to qualitative data analysis. The following three features are especially relevant for this study. First, the data analysis started already in the interview situation where the researcher could already observe any phenomenon that came up frequently during the interviews or where the participant perceptions differed. Second, the data was analysed close to its original form, i.e. the data was transcribed and analysed in the original form and language of the interviews and then translated into English. Third, previous studies were used to guide and assist the data analysis.

The interview participants were ensured anonymity before the interviews. This was considered carefully both in the data analysis and in reporting the results. Due to the fairly small size of the sample, the managers are described based on their role and involvement in the process of choosing and introducing the new visual identity. The employees, on the other hand, are presented based on their job title and work history at the former Helsinki School of Economics to ensure that no individual employee can be recognised from the quotations.

4.5 Trustworthiness of the study

Validity and reliability are concepts often connected to the trustworthiness of a study. However, as Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, p. 189) suggest, these concepts should be abandoned in the context of qualitative research as they are strongly based on the assumption of an objective reality and objective truth. This subsection discusses the trustworthiness of the present study.

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2007), the aim of a qualitative research is to understand and interpret the research participants' perceptions of the studied phenomena and environment. As the researcher is evidently a part of the research process, data gathering and analysis, the trustworthiness of the study is closely related to the researcher's ability to document and justify the decisions in the research process. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, p. 185) highlight, the trustworthiness of the study should be kept in mind throughout the research process. At the time of the study, the researcher was herself working for the case organisation and had worked for the former Helsinki School of Economics for the past five years. In order to ensure that the researcher's personal opinions and values would not affect the research process and the results, the data collection, interviews and analysis were carefully conducted based on the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. The researcher was also careful not to present her own opinions to the research participants before and during the interviews. Moreover, the objectivity for this study was acquired through careful documentation of the research process and decisions.

To enhance the quality of the study, the frameworks and themes for the interviews were considered carefully based on the reviewed literature. Moreover, the researcher had also prepared alternative research themes and questions for the interviews to deepen the interviews, if needed. After the interviews were conducted, the recorded material was transcribed word-for-word within two days of the interviews to ensure that the interview atmosphere was still in the memory of the interviewee. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000)

suggest, early transcribing is important in improving the quality of the study. The data analysis was based on, but not limited to, previous literature and studies.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Marshall and Rossman, 2006, pp. 201-205) the trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be evaluated against the following four constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. This criterion is used here to evaluate the trustworthiness of this study.

- *Credibility* refers to the way the researcher is able to describe the research processes and interactions and convince the reader. For this study, the credibility was acquired through a careful and detailed documentation of the research process and methods.
- *Transferability* refers to the researcher's ability to discuss whether the findings can be transferable to other context or similar situations. As this study focuses on one case organisation, Aalto University, the results cannot be directly applied to other settings. However, in this thesis the research process is documented in such a way that the same study could be repeated or the same research approach could be used in other settings.
- *Dependability* relates to the researcher's attempts to account any changing conditions in the studied phenomena. This is particularly important in this case study as Aalto University is undergoing significant changes due to the merger. Therefore, in this study the process of change has been taken into account when presenting and discussing the research results.
- *Confirmability* refers to question of whether the research results could be confirmed by another. In other words, whether the researcher's inferences and interpretations are logical and make sense to the readers. The confirmability for this study is ensured by thorough and consistent documentation of the research process and decisions.

To conclude this chapter presented the data and methods used in this study. This chapter discussed the qualitative research approach used in this study and presented the method of data collection. This chapter also introduced the interview themes and described how the interview data was analysed. Finally, the last section discussed and evaluated the trustworthiness of this study.

5 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study. The objective of this thesis was to find out the role and importance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's organisational identity. In particular, this thesis focused on the role of visual communication in a merger context and examined the ways in which a merging organisation can affect the process where employees abandoning the old and accept a new visual identity. The findings of the study are presented in the order of the three research questions:

1. What is the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how does the new visual identity reflect it?
2. How do the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the new visual identity of Aalto University and how do they identify themselves with the new visual identity?
3. Can corporate communication be used to facilitate employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University?

As discussed in section 4.2, all of the interviews conducted for this study were carried out in Finnish. The quotations presented in this chapter are translated into English by the researcher who is also responsible for any inaccuracies or mistakes.

5.1 Aalto University's desired organisational identity and CVI

This section presents the findings from the interviews with the managers of Aalto University. The objective of this section is to present the answers to the first research question regarding the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how the new visual identity is perceived to reflect it. This section is divided into four parts. Subsection

5.1.1 discusses the role and significance of organisational identity and CVI for Aalto University. Subsection 5.1.2 describes the process of choosing the visual identity and 5.1.3 discusses how the visual identity is related to the desired identity of Aalto University. The last subsection, 5.1.4, presents the ways in which the CVI has been introduced to the employees.

5.1.1 Role and significance of CVI

Before discussing how the chosen visual identity reflects the desired identity of Aalto University, it was important to understand how the decision-makers in Aalto University see the role of organisational identity in general and how big of a role Aalto University has placed on its organisational identity and corporate visual identity in the process of the merger.

According to the interviewees, in general, corporate visual identity was seen as an important part of the organisation's identity. For Aalto University corporate visual identity has an important strategic role, which reflects the values and strategy of the organization.

“ [...] at its best a visual identity reflects the identity of the organization. Naturally these visual identities show the trends and everything and every visual is a product of its own time and this is why organisations renew and freshen their visual identities from time to time. But at its best it [visual identity] identifies, communicates and visualises, for example, values and strategy.” (A1)

The role of the visual identity was also seen important in Aalto University's communication as illustrated in the following citations.

“The visual identity is highly important, today's world is a visual world and everyone plays with perceptions and what something looks like. I would say extremely important” (H2).

“For Aalto University the meaning [of the visual identity] is that it tells a lot of the fact that we are doing things in a new way and differently. In a way it is doing something in a different way” (A1).

Even though corporate visuals play an important role, for example, in the marketing of the university, it was, however, also noted that in some cases the visuals have received too much attention. This view is illustrated in the following citation.

“In my opinion this visual identity is one of our least problems and perhaps it is the marketing concept that has higher priority. Of course these are related but we have other things that should be solved first, other things that come first. This is just so easy to comment on when it’s so visible.” (H1)

However, corporate visual identity seems to be an integral part of Aalto University’s identity and it seems to have an important strategic role in the organization’s communication practices.

5.1.2 Process of choosing the CVI

The visual identity of Aalto University was chosen on the basis of an open competition for students, staff and alumni. The contest was organised together with the Association of Professional Graphic Designers in Finland (Grafiä), the Finnish Association of Designers (Ornamo) and the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA). The contest took place between 2nd March and 17th April, 2009.

The purpose of the contest was to involve the community in the designing of the new visual identity so that it would portray the aims of a world-class university. The basic elements for the visual identity were chosen by a panel of judges consisting of Aalto University President Tuula Teeri, Professor Henriikki Tikkanen (HSE), Professor Jukka Vieno (TaiK), Professor Mervi Paulasto-Kröckel (TKK), Designer Bo Linnemann (Kontrapunkt¹,

¹ Brand and Design agency

Denmark), AD Leena Periaho (appointed by Grafia), and Architect and Graphic Designer Tuomas Siitonen (appointed by Ornamo and SAFA). (Aalto University, 2009b)

There were altogether 117 entries to the contest of which the panel of judges chose the winner. The winning proposal was by a Finnish graphic designer Rasmus Snabb, a former student of the University of Art and Design Helsinki. The name of the winning entry was Kutsu - Invitation, which the panel of judges described as new and bold. The original winning work is shown in figure 4.



Figure 4. Winning entry of the Aalto University visual identity contest

The following quotation illustrates a jury member's views on the winning entry.

"The winner was not a unanimous decision of the jury. [...] Actually it was a bit of a surprise that this won. I myself didn't like this at all in the beginning but then gradually I started to understand that this is quite a conceptual work. Most of the entries didn't have anything intellectual in them, anything to realize." (H2)

Involvement of the Aalto Community

The extent to which the Aalto community, including students, staff and Alumni, had taken part in choosing the new visual identity was perceived differently by the interview participants. Moreover, they also seemed to have differing perceptions regarding the role and involvement of the jury. These views are illustrated in the following quotations.

"We had the steering group for the visual identity involved and it had representatives from each of the universities and students and all. And naturally the steering group

commented on the way the winning work was to be modified to its final form. I would say our community was quite closely involved in the form of the steering group.” (A1)

“The jury didn’t take any part in this refining work from the original logo to the current logo. It actually came to me as a bit of a surprise.” (H1)

“We [HSE] didn’t have very much say in the designing of the visual identity. The new identity was accepted as the winner of the competition and it was Aalto University that was responsible for it.” (H2)

Based on the interviews, it was difficult to determine the relationship between the actual panel of judges that chose the visual identity and the steering group that were involved in the refining process. For example, one interview participant that was listed as a member of the steering group claimed not to have had anything to do with the group. These discrepancies in the responses could be explained by the complex nature of the process and perhaps even a lack of clear management. As explained by one of the interviewees:

“The trouble here is that Aalto University’s marketing people are a combination of the communication people of the old universities and they all have very different backgrounds, areas of expertise and capabilities. It’s kind of mishmash that there is no clear management now that the marketing manager has not been named.” (H2)

The final form of Aalto University’s visual identity

The final form of the new visual identity was revealed on 25th September 2009. The final form of the new logo, the main feature of the new visual identity, is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. The final logo of Aalto University

From the original winning work (see Figure 4), the final version of the logo was simplified into capital A either with a question mark, quotation mark or an exclamation mark. The interviewees presented two differing reasons as to why the logo was modified:

“A more plain and simplistic look was sought after than what the winning work was. That was probably the most explicit message for developing the logo and that is why it was simplified into the letter A. [...] the idea that a strong letter A symbolises Aalto University.” (A1)

“The explanation was that it [the logo] is so close to a German fair organiser. I don’t understand, so what? We are not that kind of fair organiser.” (H1)

The basic version of the Aalto University logo is A?, which is said to invite people to open discussion, questioning and different perspectives. By combining the letter with the different punctuation marks, the logo can also adopt a number of variations. Thus, the logo has no single static form indicating that Aalto University is not completely predefined. (Aalto University, 2009a)

“A question mark represents that [...] Aalto University is not ready and in a way it also represents that we are questioning what Aalto University should be. And sometimes of course an academic community quotes and that is where these quotation marks come from and sometimes it also accentuates where this exclamation mark comes from.” (A1)

The aim of the logo was to create a sign containing as little identity-predefining symbolism as possible. The basic font (Arial) and the basic colours - yellow, red and blue - were chosen to communicate a neutral and universal style. The colours are highly symbolic as they are the three primary colours, which can be used to produce other colours. Even though the colours can be used freely in each school, symbolically they represent the three cornerstones of Aalto University, HSE, TaiK and TKK. A further eight secondary and tertiary colours, picked evenly from the colour wheel, can be used for effect. (Aalto University 2009a)

5.1.3 Desired organisational identity and how the CVI reflects it

Before choosing the visual identity, the contest jury discussed the role of the visual identity for Aalto University. It was discussed that the aim for the visual identity was to reflect the identity of Aalto University as being new, fresh and something different. The main idea for the new visual identity was to break free from what is traditionally connected to university visual identities. It was also said that as Aalto University is no traditional university, nor should the visual identity look traditional. The following quotes illustrate the management views on the new visual identity.

“What is good about this is that it [the visual identity] doesn’t even look like a university.” (H1)

“The visual identity is kind of like our university, it doesn’t leave anyone cold. I think it’s great that we, Aalto University, want to raise discussion and do things in a new way and influence the society, that we have a visual identity that also does this.” (A1)

“We had this opportunity that we have a university that is founded in 2010 and our visual identity reflects it. We couldn’t have made a visual identity that makes us look like we’re founded in the 19th century.” (A1)

When introducing the logo, it triggered a lot of discussion both inside and outside the Aalto University community. In addition, the logo gained a lot of publicity and feedback. What was noteworthy was that two of the interviewees closely involved in the process stated that in the end it did not matter whether people liked it or hated it, as long as they felt strongly about it. The management views are illustrated in the following two quotes.

“The discussion was that we don’t want a pompous coat of arms but it should somehow be fresh, exceptional or even something that annoys people.” (H1)

“In my opinion it would’ve been horrible if our visual identity would’ve been like: ‘Oh, they published the logo, okay’, that it wouldn’t have aroused any kind of discussion” (A1)

According to the Aalto University President Tuula Teeri, the new visual identity expresses the ideas of Aalto University as a multidisciplinary university that has a diversity of values. Moreover, the new visual identity reflects the university's focus on the core activities, i.e. quality research and teaching. (Aalto University, 2009a) President Teeri was in favour of the design and she was also in the seven-member Jury that chose the design. This seemed to be important at the organisational level as illustrated in the following quotes.

“Tuula Teeri has been quite actively involved in the visual identity process from the winning entry to the actual final logo, symbols and all.” (A1)

“Funny story, at the end of the day there were two options left and I sent Tuula Teeri for a coffee and the votes for us other six went even. Well, Tuula voted for this so she was genuinely able to choose. I said that a CEO should commit to the design and visual identity of a corporation and otherwise it couldn't be adopted. And now she got to choose.” (H1)

The relationship between the old and new visual identities

The basic requirements for the visual identity of Aalto University were determined in the rules of the contest for the visual identity. In brief, the rules stated that the three merging universities, HSE, TaiK and TKK, would be sub-brands of the new university but the shape and the colour schemes of the former universities were not defining or restricting factors in the new visual identity. However, the rules stated that the visual identity of Aalto University should work parallel with the old visual identities, at least during a transitional period of a few years. (Aalto University, 2009b)

“We had this contest and in the rules of the contest we had some basic requirements for the visual identity and what we are expecting. But only when we received the entry work, were we able to tell what was coming.” (A1)

The rules of the visual identity contest stated the following:

“Aalto University’s identity forms an overlying brand for the brands of the current universities. The current universities are therefore sub-brands of the new university.” (Aalto University, 2009b)

However, the interviews suggested otherwise. In fact, the brands of the three schools had been decided to be replaced with the Aalto University brand as illustrated in the following quotes.

“The relationship between the old and new brands hasn’t really been thought about. Apart from the fact they have to be trashed as soon as possible.” (H1)

“It was a completely separate and rather surprising process that the Board, for example, trashed this HSE brand [...] as a marketing professional, I could strongly criticise this.” (H1)

As discussed in subsection 2.2.1, in merger situations there are generally three approaches how the identity is chosen for the new organisation: (1) one identity dominates and others disappear, (2) the organisation forms a hybrid identity, which retains elements from all identities, or (3) an organisation creates an entirely new identity. The latter option was the choice of Aalto University as the organisation chose to break from the old identities and start afresh. Even though the decision to trash the old brands and visual identities of the three universities raised discussion, the decision to start afresh with the new visual identity was perceived positively as illustrated in the following quotes of the managers of Aalto University.

“I think it’s a good thing that we have a visual identity, which actually looks like Aalto University, and which reflects the values like this. If we had taken bits and pieces from here and there, it wouldn’t have communicated the same things that we communicate at Aalto University” (A1)

“It was kind of a consensus that we can’t keep the old visual identities hanging there forever.” (H1)

“The fact that we can start afresh, to me, shows a lot of respect to the mother schools.” (A1)

Future of the visual identity

The interviewed managers of Aalto University stated that one of the main ideas of Aalto University’s visual identity is that it evolves in time. The university’s visual identity will be modified and changed over time and it will live together with the community:

”The point of this logo is that it lives in time. It is what it is and then we change it. Evolution is the key. The idea in the first place wasn’t to anchor it and expect it to look like that to the end of the world” (H1).

It was, however, stated that the changes are not likely to occur in the near future, though one interview participant commented:

“In my opinion, in today’s world a visual identity must live. Even five years is a long time.” (A1)

5.1.4 Introducing the CVI to the employees

According to the interviewees, different stakeholder groups, such as employees or students, were not considered separately when choosing and designing the new visual identity for the university:

“I would say the visual identity has been considered as a whole. [...] We’re doing the identity for Aalto University and as universities have so many different stakeholder groups it is very difficult to start blocking them case by case.” (A1)

It was, however mentioned that the active role of Aalto University President was evident in the visual identity as illustrated in the following quote.

“The President wants to make this university for young people and in a way this shows in the visual identity.” (A1)

The communications team of Aalto University said to have placed a lot of emphasis on the applications and guidelines on using the new visual identity as illustrated in the following quotes.

“The starting point is that the guidelines are done well. We want to provide the employees with the tools to implement the visual identity in a way that they can see from the guidelines how to use the visuals and this is something we have invested in.” (A1)

“Our President always tries to emphasize that we should rather do little and well than a lot and fast. And we have followed this line of thinking.” (A1)

In Aalto University, the communication teams of HSE, TaiK and TKK had a significant role in introducing the visual identity and guidelines to the employees of the individual schools. Aalto University’s communication department, on the other hand, had been responsible for making the visual guidelines and their applications. Furthermore, especially in the beginning, the role of Aalto University’s communication team was to communicate the idea behind the visual identity:

“It is the Aalto University’s branding people that have thought about how employees accept the visual identity and the communications department here at HSE have more of a role as an implementer.” (H2)

“The communication teams of each school have a significant role in the implementation, if we can use this term.” (A1)

“We ask feedback from the communication teams of the three schools and ask for comments for different applications and they tell us what kinds of needs they have. [...] After all, the communication teams of the three schools are closer to the communities and they are easier to approach.” (A1)

Actions taken to facilitate employee identification with the new visual identity

The new visual identity for Aalto University was launched to the employees in December 2009 by a shared information session for all employees of Aalto University. In addition,

separate information sessions and trainings were held at each university. The purpose of the training was to inform the employees on how the visual identity will change, what to expect as well as how the visual identity is used. The actual implementation of the new visual identity started from early 2010 when new business cards, letters and other applications were introduced. Early 2010 the communications teams also introduced new CVI guidelines for the employees.

Even though the communications teams made strict guidelines on how to use the visual identity, it was obvious that not all of the materials could be changed immediately. For this reason, a transition period was set. The interviewees, however, did not specify the actual length of the transition period.

“After the New Year [2010] we still allowed people to use the old visuals and you can still see them in some places. For practical reasons we couldn’t really say that you can’t use the old ones. But we do try to teach people that if they have some materials that can be used for a long time that they would be made according to the new guidelines.” (H2)

The communications team of Aalto University School of Economics also monitors closely how the employees use the new visual identity as illustrated in the following quote.

“In the early stages of the process we try to intervene and be strict if something doesn’t look according to the CVI guidelines. [...] We have to be even more careful now when, for example, there are so many versions to the logo. So in a way we have more things to look out for.” (H2)

Even though following the CVI guidelines has been one of the key issues for Aalto University School of Economics, it was perceived that the guidelines are not followed as strictly in the other schools. This was explained by the different organisational cultures of the schools and their relative sizes.

“I have a feeling that we have taken the visual identity change most seriously. TKK is so much more difficult to control just because of its size and I don’t think they take it

as seriously as us [...] And TaiK, I don't know. I think they just have this challenge of having so many experts who want to create their own visuals.” (H2)

Employee feedback regarding the visual identity

According to the interviewees, the employees have not been very active in giving feedback on the visual identity to the communications teams on the Aalto University level or to the communications team of the former Helsinki School of Economics. Moreover, the feedback that the two communications teams had received had mainly focused on the use and implementation of the visuals rather than on its design. In fact, the communications teams assumed that the employees were keen on using the new identity and they wanted to look new. The main role of the communications teams seemed to be in supporting and providing the employees with the tools for implementing and using the visual materials. The following quotations present management views on employee feedback.

“The feedback that we have received has been surprisingly little. Nothing negative or positive. Pretty calm so that we don't really know how people like this. [...] People ask for advice and we have made materials and helped them. It's gone fairly smoothly that people want to produce materials and look new.” (H2)

“We listen carefully to the feedback of the community regarding the visual identity and change the [IT] applications when needed.” (A1)

“[...] it has to be remembered that the academic community has very different needs when it comes to different applications which we have to map out and try and serve their needs the best we can. Of course, and this applies to all Aalto University preparations, the community wishes things were ready faster but this is just normal in a change process. We have a certain plan and we follow it accordingly.” (A1)

To summarise, this section provided answers to the first research question as it described the management perceptions of the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how the new visual identity reflects it. Corporate visual identity was perceived as an integral part of Aalto University's identity, which has a strategic role in the organisation's communication practices. The new visual identity of Aalto University was chosen on the basis of an open competition for students, staff and alumni. The panel of judges included

employees of all three schools and the President of Aalto University. The purpose of the contest was to involve the community in the designing of the new university. The desired organisational identity of Aalto University was described as new, fresh and something different, which the new visual identity was said to reflect well. The new visual identity for Aalto University was launched to the employees in December 2009 and information sessions and trainings were held at each university. The purpose of these sessions was to inform the employees how the visual identity will change, what to expect, and how the visual identity is used. CVI guidelines were seen important in managing the corporate visual identity consistently.

5.2 Employee perceptions of Aalto University's new visual identity

This section presents the findings from the interviews with the employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE). This section will provide answers to the second research question regarding employee perceptions of the new visual identity of Aalto University and how the employees identify themselves with the new visual identity. This section is divided into three parts. Subsection 5.2.1 will discuss the organisational identities of both Helsinki School of Economics and Aalto University as perceived by the employees. Subsection 5.2.2 presents the employee perceptions of Aalto University's new visual identity and the effectiveness of the identity change. Subsection 5.2.3 discusses the perceived communication climate of Aalto University.

5.2.1 Organisational identities of HSE and Aalto University

In order to examine how the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics perceive the University's new visual identity, it was important to find out how the organisational identities are perceived. This subsection will discuss the organisational identities of both Helsinki School of Economics and Aalto University as perceived by the employees.

Identity of the former Helsinki School of Economics

The employees of Aalto University School of Economics described the identity of the former Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) as traditional, versatile and international. On the other hand, as a government organisation HSE was perceived as stable and somewhat inflexible. Nationally the university was perceived as the biggest, best known and most diverse business school in Finland yet the ‘compact’ size of the organisation was perceived manageable and cosy. Many interview participants stated that they considered HSE as the best business school in Finland. On an international level the university was described as fairly unknown, international and versatile, yet small compared to other universities. The quotations below give examples of how the employees perceived the organisational identity of the former HSE.

“I think we can consider us [HSE] as an A-list university, this isn’t a place for losers” (E2)

“I think HSE has always placed a lot of emphasis on internationalization and high quality. [...] HSE is a first-class professional organisation.” (E4)

“Traditional and not so flexible. And I would say quite stable, both in good as in bad.” (E1)

When asked what the employees think differentiated HSE from other similar organisations, i.e. from other universities and business schools, accreditations were mentioned at the top of the list. The accreditations related also to the visual identity as they were very visible, for example, in HSE’s materials, promotion and web pages. Other elements in the organisational identity differentiating HSE from other similar organisations were the quality of education and the wide-ranging study options. The following quotations highlight the views of the interviewees about what differentiated HSE from other similar organisations.

“In the past 10 years HSE has been one of the first universities to get these accreditations and we have worked really hard for them.” (E1)

“I think in this official identity the attempt has been to create certain classification with these different accreditations and certifications. This CEMS School and AACSB certification and triple crown probably shows some international aspiration and shows that the school is outward oriented.” (E3)

“And now we have these international accreditations, which differentiate. And those schools that don’t have them are in a complete different league. Especially this AACSB accreditation is so selective that it raises the bar.” (E2)

“I think HSE stands out in a way that we have made our own decisions, we have top-quality staff and we are the most difficult to get admitted to.” (E4)

In sum, the former Helsinki School of Economics was perceived as nationally recognised, large and superior business school, yet fairly small and unknown on an international level. Accreditations were mentioned as probably the most important differentiating factors together with versatile study options.

Identity of Aalto University

None of the interviewed employees were able to define how they perceive the organisational identity of Aalto University. The employees stated that as the organisation is still so unstructured and unfocused, it does not yet have an identity. The following quotations illustrate the employee views on Aalto University’s organisational identity.

“I don’t believe Aalto University has an identity. There is a certain abstract idea but it is still in the stage of a promise” (E3).

“Aalto University is particularly unfocused, which is something that still bothers me. [...] it seems that everything is so unfinished at every level and only now the pieces are coming together [...] its like nothing has been planned beforehand.” (E1)

“I don’t think there is any kind of identity yet, I can hardly remember how the name is spelled correctly” (E2).

“In these negotiations we have been forced to fight with tooth and nail with TKK just that they wouldn’t walk all over us. And now they’re somewhere in Espoo so as of yet I don’t really have a comprehensive Aalto identity or image.” (E6)

“I think they started this process too early and too fast but I don’t know if this shows on the outside or is it just visible on the inside.” (E5)

Even though the employees stated that Aalto University does not yet have an identity, it was stated that the concept of combining three fields; business, arts and technology, was a factor that could soon differentiate Aalto University from other similar organisations. It was, however, also noted that the idea as such is not unique as there are other universities and polytechnics that are combinations of different fields and academic disciplines. In general, the employees perceived the size of the organisation and the combination of different fields as differentiating factors, yet they were somewhat suspicious on the success of the merger. The following quotations highlight the views of the interviewees about what could differentiate Aalto University from its competitors.

“This interdisciplinary, absolutely. And of course the size. It is a big university compared to others.” (E5)

“The idea as such could be good and we would have the three areas of expertise if it would also work in practise. At the moment I find it hard to believe that this good idea will succeed.” (E1)

“I still have the feeling that we are still as separate schools. Only with the years can we see if we can make this combination work. And it could well be that it will never work as it was intended.” (E2)

“Maybe because we have received more funding for this change and its implementation, the expectations are also higher. I myself at least expect us to stand out some way. Though at this point there aren’t any concrete positive expectations and I’m not sure if there ever will be.” (E4)

To sum up, the employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE) perceived Aalto University's organisational identity as ambiguous or even non-existent. This was due to the fact that many of the important decisions were still up in the air and undecided. They did feel, however, that if the concept of a multidisciplinary university would work in practise, it would differentiate the university from its competitors.

5.2.2 CVI and the effectiveness of the identity change

This subsection discusses the employee perceptions of Aalto University's new visual identity and the effectiveness of the identity change.

Employee knowledge on the new visual identity

The interviewees were asked how they perceive Aalto University's desired organisational identity, in other words, what is their perception on how the university wants to be seen. The employees perceived the desired organisational identity of Aalto University as international, high-class, versatile, modern, best and attractive. Aalto University's desired identity was also described as innovative and active as the university attempts to find new combinations and fields of study. It was also mentioned that Aalto University wants to be known for its high-quality research and teaching.

The employees were not very familiar with the new visual identity and what it represents and for this reason they found it somewhat hard to evaluate whether the new visual identity reflects the university's desired identity, goals and vision. The employees also had differing views on what the new visual identity, and logo in particular, communicates. The following quotations illustrate the differing views on the new visual identity and what it represents.

“I think it is kind of surprising that the logo is so modern, kind of like a combination of Artek and Marimekko. But I think it represents Aalto University quite well. I don't know if you can see the international aspect but you can definitely see a modern university in the logo.” (E3)

“I don’t think this new logo represents innovativeness. I think it’s only designed to draw attention. Kind of like an advert, that it would draw as much attention as possible.” (E2)

“I think the name doesn’t mean anything and it never has. I think they were after something innovativeness. [...] But if they want to be noticed, then at least it works.” (E1)

“I think it represents that Aalto University is new and young but nothing more. For example, I don’t think A and a question mark represents an innovative high-class university.” (E4)

“I think this logo would be better suited to another kind of organisation, for example a media agency.” (E6)

All in all, most of the interviewed employees perceived that the new visual identity of Aalto University did not communicate the core idea and vision of Aalto University. It was also stated that as the university sector is generally perceived as solid and prestigious, the new visual identity does not match with Aalto University as an organisation. In fact, the new visual identity was often described as simplistic and childish as illustrated in the following quotations.

“I think the logo looks like a child has put his/her hands on a computer keyboard and all the special characters have accidentally sneaked in. No self-respecting university who wants to be known for high-class research can look like that.” (E6)

“At last it is ground-breaking in a way that not many universities have a logo that looks like it was designed by a child. Any five-year old could’ve done it. And the colours look like something from a LEGO box. ” (E5)

“It looks like a colouring book.” (E1)

The final version of the logo (see figure 5) raised some discussion on the double-meanings of the design. Especially the logo version **A?** was perceived negatively as illustrated in the following quotations.

“I think this A and a question mark raises questions about what Aalto University is. They ask it from the viewers as they don’t know it themselves.” (E5)

“I think the question mark could be interpreted like we’re completely at sea, that we are a bit lost here.” (E6)

As the new logo was the basis for the corporate visual identity of Aalto University, it had naturally received a lot of attention. The interviews showed that the employees felt that they were well-informed on how to use the new logo and other visuals and they knew where the CVI guidelines and instructions could be found. However, even though in general the employees were familiar with the CVI guidelines regarding the logo and other visuals, the name of the school and the lack of an official abbreviation had become an issue. For example, the lack of an official abbreviation had led to the employees making up their own abbreviations as well as going back to using the old HSE abbreviation in their everyday work. The following quotations highlight the views of the interviewees about the problems related to the university’s name and the lack of an official abbreviation.

“I have returned to using the old HSE because that’s what the students talk about and I thought it would be best to speak the same language.” (E2)

“I’m not fully satisfied with this Aalto University School of Economics. I think the name always makes people laugh. Aalto slash University School of Economics². And what about the abbreviation? I just received an internal email where they used this ASE abbreviation, even though it is strictly forbidden.” (E3)

“I think there was a work group to define the abbreviation but I don’t think they have made any decisions yet. But because it’s taken so long people have started to use their own abbreviations.” (E1)

“It’s a big problem that they have forbidden us from using any old abbreviations but they didn’t give us the new ones.” (E4)

² In Finnish Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulu

“We still use HSE even though it’s forbidden.” (E5)

All in all, the interviews revealed that the lack of official abbreviations for the three schools affected the daily work of many of the interviewed employees and also hindered communication to the internal and external audiences. The quotation below brings together the perceptions of some of the employees.

“I think after all a name is a strong factor that affects. If every day I have to think about what to call this place I think it has an affect. (E2)

Employee attitudes

All of the six interview participants stated that they still strongly identified themselves with the former Helsinki School of Economics. Several reasons for this were mentioned. First, as many of the decisions related to the merger were still up in the air, the employees found it hard to define what Aalto University is. In other words, the employees could not identify themselves with an organisation that does not have a clear organisational identity. It was also mentioned that Aalto University’s message of communication did not match with the actions taken by the organisation leading to a blurred image of the organisation. Second, the employees believed that as of yet, Aalto University has not brought them anything new or better to replace the old HSE identity. Third, some of the employees perceived that in an organisation as big and versatile as Aalto University, it could more important to identify oneself to a smaller unit, for example to faculty or department or the ‘new’ Aalto University School of Economics. Even though the employees still identified themselves clearly with Helsinki School of Economics, some employees were noticing a slight change in their attitudes. The following quotations illustrate the level of organisational identification.

“I guess I identify myself with HSE though I think there are people in the other faculties that feel stronger about this than me. [...] I myself have more strongly identified myself with our faculty and our subject.” (E3)

“I identify myself to HSE, absolutely. I believe that in these universities with several fields you never identify yourself with the central organisation. [...] of course the common denominator is there but I think this identification will not change.” (E2)

“I would say HSE though it is slowly changing as we cannot change the situation. And every time I have to say out loud that we are Aalto University School of Economics I think it reinforces it.” (E1)

“HSE, absolutely.” (E6)

”Definitely HSE. I’ve always been proud to work here and I kind of feel that it’s my organisation or my school.” (E4)

The interviewed employees felt that they had not had the opportunity to participate in the merger process of Aalto University. In fact, the employees felt that after the merger they had less power to influence important matters related to their work. The employee perceptions related to employee involvement and participation in the merger process are illustrated in the following quotations.

“I think there has been this kind of quasi-democracy all along. They ask for opinions but in a way you should’ve been awake at night that you would’ve had the time to react. I think it has been like this for a long time.” (E1)

“I think the matters are out of our hands now. We used to have this little organisation and we could talk and it would have an impact but not all we can do is shout into the wind and hope that someone is listening.” (E2)

Employee behaviour

The communications team of Aalto University posed strict guidelines on how to use the new visual identity of Aalto University. The communications team was also monitoring the use of the visual identity (see subsection 5.1.4).

All of the interviewed employees stated that they had not been very active in using the new visual identity in their every day work. For example, both of the interview participants from

the academic staff did not use the new visual identity in their PowerPoint slides as it took too much space and seemed to draw too much attention from the actual contents of their presentations. The following quotations illustrate how employees had adopted the new visual identity in their everyday work.

“I have used this new visual identity in internal mail or emails but I haven’t really needed it much. (E1)

“I have to admit I haven’t used it much, I don’t think I’ve ever used it. But then again I didn’t use the HSE PowerPoints so I haven’t used these Aalto ones either.” (E3)

“I wasn’t so keen on using this new visual identity because the old one used to be so simple and clear and it worked. This letter combination HSE worked in the HSE logo and text and it was good.” (E2)

“I definitely won’t be using the Aalto PowerPoint when I go to a conference. But then again I never used the HSE logo either.” (E6)

I have tried to use the letters and PowerPoints the same way as I used to use the HSE logo. But sometimes it’s been a challenge and I have been forced to make my own adjustments.” (E4)

All in all, the employees did not feel strongly on the new visual identity but they were slowly starting to adopt it in their everyday work whether they liked it or not. Some practical problems, however, such as the lack of working applications, seemed to stand in the way of using the new visual identity.

Feedback

As discussed in subsection 5.1.4 the employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics had not been very active in giving feedback on the new visual identity. Moreover, most of the feedback that the two communications teams had received focused mainly on the use and implementation of the visuals rather than on its outlook. This was supported by the interviews with the employees as they stated that they had not given

feedback regarding the new visual identity. Only one of the interviewees had given feedback on the new visual identity as they were unable to use the new IT applications available in the university's intranet.

“I sent an inquiry because I was unable to use the layout. But I still don't know why it doesn't work.” (E1)

“I haven't given any feedback to the communications teams. I have just tried to ask my colleagues if they have solved any of the technical problems that were there.” (E4)

“I didn't give any feedback, I have just muttered by myself.” (E5)

5.2.3 Communication climate

This subsection discusses the communication climate of Aalto University as perceived by the employees of Aalto University School of Economics.

Generally the employees perceived the communication climate of Aalto University as closed and not very participative as the information flow was downward oriented. Many of the interviewed employees stated that a lot of information was provided and available, yet no concrete decisions were made leaving the employees confused on the effects of the change. The lack of concrete information also complicated the daily work of these interview participants. The following quotations illustrate some employee perceptions on the communication flow.

“The communication never gave us any answers to our questions. And the reason why the questions didn't get answered was that no-one actually had the answers. I do understand that but it is so frustrating when Aalto is communicating but the communication never has any content.” (E6)

“Information is not easy to find and I don’t get enough information. Maybe the biggest problem is that we are here waiting for the decisions that never reach us down here.” (E5)

The interviewed employees mentioned the University’s Intranet as the most frequently used communication channel. Even though the old HSE Intranet, Piazza, was no longer updated, the employees still frequently used it. At the time of the interviews, many of the employees were not very familiar with the University’s new Intranet, Aalto Inside. The biggest problem related to the use of the Intranets was that the employees were not sure where the most recent and most accurate information was. The employees had been told that Piazza would no longer be updated, yet Aalto Inside did not have all the contents the employees needed related to their work and employment. The new Intranet was also generally perceived as complicated and somewhat difficult to use as it contained information for all of the three schools. The employee perceptions on the electronic internal communication channels are illustrated in the following quotations.

“Electronic communication is quite popular here in Aalto, and in HSE as well, and quite many things don’t exist on paper anymore. Sometimes I think there could be more on paper.” (E3)

“I think it wasn’t a good idea to give up the old communication channel when the new one is still missing so much information and content.” (E4)

“There’s always a question what information is correct. As of now I haven’t noticed contradictory information in Piazza and Inside but I’m sure there is some already.” (E2)

Another frequently mentioned internal communication channel was *Aalto morning coffee*, a common event for the employees of Aalto University where latest news of the University was shared and discussed. The following quotations illustrate the employee views on the Aalto morning coffees.

“There have been these morning coffees and information sessions but at least a while back they never provided any valuable information.” (E6)

“I think Aalto morning coffee was an attempt to bring us closer to Aalto University but I don’t think it worked that well.” (E5)

All in all, in general the employees did not seem to perceive the communication climate very positively. Even though there seemed to be plenty of downward communication from the management of Aalto University, the communication seemed to have very little content. This led to employees being confused and uncertain of how the change would affect their work. Moreover, the lack of sufficient information hindered the daily work of many of the interviewed employees.

To sum up, this section discussed employee perceptions on Aalto University’s new visual identity and the effectiveness of the identity change. This section provided answers to the second research question regarding employee perceptions of the new visual identity of Aalto University and how the employees identify themselves with the new visual identity. Aalto University’s desired organisational identity was described, for example, as international, high-class and innovative. In general, it was perceived that the new visual identity does not represent a high-class, prestigious university that Aalto University should be. In fact, some of the interviewed employees perceived the new visual identity as child-like and unsuitable for a university. The employees also found it hard to evaluate whether the new visual identity reflects the university’s desired identity, goals and vision. This was mostly due to the fact that the organisation does not seem to have a clear organisational identity. The lack of a clear organisational identity was also the main reason for employees not being able to identify themselves with Aalto University. Based on the interviews, it seems that most of the interviewed employees knew how to use the new visuals and were willing to use it if needed, even though they did not identify themselves with it. The communication climate of Aalto University was perceived as closed and not very participative or informative. The lack of concrete information complicated the daily work of the employees.

5.3 Use of corporate communication in the visual identity shift

This section presents the answers to the third research question regarding the role of corporate communication and whether it can be used to facilitate employees of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University. This section will discuss how Aalto University has used corporate communication in the visual identity shift and in the change process and how the employees have perceived these communication practises.

Based on the management interviews, it seems that in Aalto University, the internal communication practises related to the new visual identity have been focused mostly on employee participation, information sessions and CVI guidelines. These three areas are discussed in the following three subchapters.

5.3.1 Corporate communication and employee participation

Employee participation often affects the way employees perceive a change process and how they identify themselves with the organisation they work for. Effective corporate communication can be used to facilitate this participation. As discussed in subchapter 5.1.2, Aalto University's visual identity was chosen on the basis of an open competition for the Aalto University community, including students, staff and alumni. The purpose of the open competition was to make it possible for the community to participate in the decision-making and in the building of the new university. The contest was announced on the web pages of the University where it was visible to all employees. All employees were also able to submit their contest entry. The winner was chosen by a panel of seven judges, including members of each of the three schools. From the management's perspective, the openness of the visual identity contest and the involvement of the jury were ways to involve the community in the process.

The interviewed employees, however, perceived differently their chances to take part in choosing the visual identity. None of the interviewed employees had taken part in the process, and some stated that they did not perceive it was particularly important for them to have had the opportunity to participate. The interviewed employees also felt that they lacked the skills to actually design a new visual identity for the university, which was one reason for not participating. The following quotations illustrate the employee perceptions relating the involvement on the process of choosing the visual identity.

“They published the contest and I realised that there is no point in taking part with my skills. [...] I don’t think I would perceive the visual identity any different even if I had taken part in the process. That’s probably because I was quite happy with the basic logo.” (E3)

I have been told I had the opportunity to take part though the open competition but I don’t feel I had the chance to take part. I’m not an expert on the field and I don’t have the skills to create a logo like that. But it doesn’t mean I don’t have anything to say about it.” (E4)

“I don’t know how it would’ve been possible with us being so many and what about the students? I don’t see it as being important.” (E1)

“I don’t think it would’ve been a bad thing if I had had the opportunity to participate. But I have this feeling that these participations have never resulted in anything.” (E2)

Maybe they could’ve had some employee feedback. I don’t even remember who chose the logo. They just announced the winner and the reception was quite stunned. It didn’t really help this feeling of ‘yey, Aalto is coming’.” (E6)

The employees were also able to participate in the discussion regarding the English name of the school. The discussion took place in the old Intranet, Piazza, and was open for all employees of HSE. Aalto University had presented several options for the name and people could vote and discuss what they thought was best for the school. Several interview participants were familiar with this discussion, yet they did not seem to be convinced that

Aalto University took the discussion into account in their decision-making. The employee perceptions are illustrated in the following quotations.

“I think I commented something about it in Piazza. But the comment window wasn’t open that long so I’m not sure if I actually made it or not. (E4)

“There were a few options and we could vote, at least unofficially. [...] But, when they asked employees about the name of the school, Helsinki School of Economics wasn’t there as an option anymore. Tuula Teeri had decided that this Aalto University has to be in the name somehow.” (E6)

In sum, the interviewed employees perceived that they had limited opportunities to participate in the decision-making process regarding the new visual identity of Aalto University, including name and logo. None of the interviewed employees had taken part in the process of choosing the new visual identity, and some stated that they did not perceive it was particularly important for them to have had the opportunity to participate. It seemed, however, that the corporate communications practises related to employee involvement were perceived somewhat negatively. This was because the content of communication did not match with the actual actions of the university. In other words, Aalto University seemed to promote an open and participative communication climate, yet the actions did not support this.

5.3.2 Information sessions

After the visual identity contest, information sessions were held to the employees. The purpose of the information sessions was to introduce the new visual identity to the employees and explain the rationale and reasons behind the design. The following quotation illustrates management perceptions on the purpose of the information sessions.

“We have tried to communicate and justify the new visual identity. Bring forth in a positive light the fact that our visual identity will change and our old visuals will disappear.” (H2)

The purpose of the information sessions was, thus, to create acceptance among the employees towards the new visual identity. The presenters in the information sessions included, for example, Aalto University's president Tuula Teeri and the designer of the visual identity, Rasmus Snabb.

Most of the interviewed employees stated that they had not participated in the information sessions. They were, however, somewhat familiar with what the new visual identity was said to stand for suggesting they had received this information from somewhere else. As the visual identity was published several months prior to the interviews, none of the employees were able to remember where they had received this information. This is illustrated in the following quotes.

“I think they just put an announcement that this has won and so forth. I don't even remember if they organised some event to the employees, maybe they didn't.” (E6)

“There were some explanations somewhere but I can't remember where I read them from.” (E2)

On the other hand, those employees who had taken part in the information sessions seemed to perceive them fairly positive and useful in getting to know the new design and what it stands for. Some also found it important to actually see the designer of the visual identity and hear it from him what the design stands for. This brought the design closer and seemed to help the employees to understand the design. As one employee stated:

“Though I don't really like the design I thought it was good to see this Rasmus [Snabb], otherwise the design would've remained a bit blurry. In a way the designer made it more understandable” (E2)

In sum, the perceptions regarding the information sessions seemed to vary depending on whether the interviewed employees had taken part in them or not. Those employees who had taken part in at least one of the sessions seemed to perceive the experience positively at least in providing information on the background and use of the new visual identity. Those

employees who had not taken part in any of the information sessions seemed to have received the information regarding the new visual identity through other forms of corporate communication.

5.3.3 CVI guidelines

Aalto University placed a lot of emphasis in the internal launch and implementation of the new visual identity and in the CVI guidelines. According to the communications team of Aalto University, the CVI guidelines were an important part in the process and a lot of time was invested in making the instructions thoroughly and well. The purpose of the comprehensive guidelines were to make the visual identity as consistent as possible by ensuring that all members of the community use the organisation's visual identity the same way. Moreover, the aim of the guidelines was also to facilitate the employees in communicating the new visual identity externally.

It seems that one of the biggest problems relating to the CVI guidelines and IT applications was the fact that especially in the early stages of the process, in the beginning of the year 2010, the IT applications were either not available or not working. Moreover, in April 2010 some employees were still unable to use the applications even though Aalto University had been operating for four months and the visual identity had been published in September 2009. The employee perceptions regarding the CVI guidelines are illustrated in the following quotations.

“I think I have visited the material bank but I didn't get anything out. After that I made my own version so I might have broken the rules a bit. I haven't used them that much.” (E4)

“In the beginning the backgrounds and forms were hard to use because they simply weren't there, or they didn't work. I think they are still quite hard to use.” (E2)

“There are a lot of instructions but I have to admit that I haven’t read them because there are so many of them and they are so detailed. I’ve decided to read them when I need them in something.” (E4)

As discussed in section 5.2, most of the interviewed employees seemed to know how to use the new visuals and were willing to use them if needed, even though they did not identify themselves with them. However, practical problems, such as the lack of working IT applications, seemed to stand in the way of using the new visual identity. In other words, even though employees were willing to use the new applications, this was not technically possible. On the other hand, some employees stated that they had not incorporated the new visuals into their daily work as they had not used the old HSE visuals either. This would seem to suggest that the reason why some employees did not use the new visual identity was not necessarily a result of the corporate communication practises of Aalto University but, for example, a result of the old habits and culture from HSE.

To sum up, this section discussed how Aalto University has used corporate communication in the visual identity shift and in the change process and how the employees have perceived these communication practices. This section provided answers to the third research question regarding the role of corporate communication and whether it can be used to facilitate members of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University. *Employee participation* was perceived important for Aalto University’s management in developing the university’s visual identity. Aalto University also seemed to promote an open and participative communication climate to the employees, yet the interviewed employees perceived that their opportunities to participate in the process were limited or non-existent. This might suggest that Aalto University’s actions did not match the content of the communication leaving the employees dissatisfied especially with the mismatch between the message and communication. The *information sessions* were aimed at introducing the new visual identity to the employees and explaining the reasons behind the design. Most of the interviewed employees claimed not to have participated in the information sessions but to

have received the information elsewhere. Those employees who had taken part in the information sessions, perceived the sessions positively but did not seem to be more identified with the new visual identity than those employees who had not participated the sessions. *CVI guidelines* were perceived as an important part of Aalto University's corporate communication practises. Their primary purpose was to ensure a consistent use of the new visual identity. It seems that one of the biggest problems of the guidelines was that the employees were not able to use them due to technical difficulties. Some employees, on the other hand, would not use the new visual identity even if they had worked as they were not in the habit of using the old HSE visuals either.

6 DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the main findings presented in chapter 5 and positions them with the related literature and theories. The main findings of this study are discussed according to the three main themes of the theoretical framework: organisational identity, organisational identification, and communication and visual identity.

To recap the background and significance of the study; the important role of CVI in an organisation's identity has been acknowledged by several academic researchers, yet the previous research on CVI has mainly focused on the strategic and design aspects of CVI (see van den Bosch, de Jong & Elving, 2004; 2005; and 2006). The formation of Aalto University and the launch of its new visual identity on 25th September 2009 opened up an interesting opportunity to investigate the role of visual identity in a university merger context. Even though the role and importance of visual identity have been studied before in the university setting, the context has been different to this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role and significance of corporate visual identity in a merger context where changes were not only limited to the corporate visuals, but also to other functions in the organisation, such as organisational structure, values, mission and behaviour.

6.1 Organisational identity and organisational identification

In business communication literature, the concept of organisational identity has been viewed as a strategic tool to build understanding and commitment among the diverse stakeholders of an organisation. As discussed in subsection 2.2.1, it has been argued that for employees a strong organisational identity can create a sense of belonging and enhance employee productivity and motivation. Employees tend to feel more motivated in their work if they are able to identify themselves with the organisation they work for and see the organisation as part of themselves.

The plan for the merger of Aalto University had been put forward already in 2008 and the new University started operating 1st January 2010. As discussed in subsection 5.2.1, the interviewed employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE) still identified themselves with the former HSE at the time of the interviews in April 2010. The main reason for the employees not being able to identify themselves with Aalto University was the fact that Aalto University did not seem to yet have a clear organisational identity as the University was still unstructured and unfocused. One of the biggest problems related to the organisational identity of Aalto University seemed to be the fact that the change process had significantly hindered the daily work of the employees. It became evident that many of the rules, procedures and other ways of working had been abolished but no new decisions or guidelines had been communicated to replace the old ones. This led the employees to feel frustrated towards their work and increased confusion among the employees. In general, the employees did not seem to perceive the change very positively as they felt the change had not brought them any improvements.

As literature suggests, when members of a merging organisation feel threatened by the loss of their old identity, they are often inclined to cling to the group they are already a part of (Dutton et al., 1994). The findings of this study would seem to be in line with the findings of Dutton et al. (1994): many of the interviewed employees perceived the organisational identity of HSE highly positively and HSE was perceived one of the best in its field. Aalto University's identity, on the other hand, was perceived as confusing and the future role of HSE in Aalto University was perceived unclear. Therefore, it would seem that the employees were not ready to give up their old HSE identity and identify themselves with Aalto University.

The communication literature also highlighted the important role of communication in merger situations (Smidsts et al. 2001; see subchapter 2.2.1). It was argued that both the content of the communication as well as the communication climate affect the way employees are able to identify themselves with the organisation they work for. Moreover,

Smidts et al. (2001) had come to the conclusion that an open and participative communication climate was, in fact, more closely linked to organisational identification than the actual content of the communication. This study would seem to support this view to some extent: for the employees Aalto University communicated to have an open and participative communication climate but the employees did not perceive the actual communication climate as open and participative. The employees were also dissatisfied because there seemed to be a mismatch between the content of the communication and the actual behaviour of the organisation. This study, however, does not answer the question on whether an open and participative communication climate is most significant in relation to organisational identification but it does highlight the importance of matching the message of communication to the overall communication climate and behaviour of the organisation. Any gaps between these factors might have a negative impact on the organisational identification of employees.

6.2 Communication and visual identity

As discussed in subchapter 2.2.3, marketing and communication literature suggests that an organisation's visual identity is more than just a symbol or a logo. An organisation's visual identity should reflect the characteristics, future goals and direction of the organisation as well as represent the different characteristics distinctive to the particular organisation (Van den Bosch et al., 2006). As visual signs reflect an organisation's identity they should also be in correlation with what the organisation actually stands for (Pohjola, 2004; Baker and Balmer, 1997).

The findings of this study would seem to suggest that the employees and the management of Aalto University had similar perceptions regarding the future goal of the university. However, the organisational identity of Aalto University and how the new visual identity reflects it were perceived differently. The management perceived Aalto University as innovative and wanted the new visual identity to communicate a new and fresh university

that does things differently. The interviewed employees, on the other hand, did not seem to perceive Aalto University particularly innovative as of yet and also thought that the new visual identity did not communicate the core idea and vision of Aalto University. As the university sector was generally perceived as solid and prestigious, the employees perceived the new visual identity did not match Aalto University as an organisation. The new visual identity was perceived more like an advert rather than a visual identity for a prestigious, high-class university. This, on the other hand, was one of the criteria for Aalto University when choosing the new visual identity: the main goal was to raise as much attention as possible. From the employees' perspective there seemed to be a mismatch between the organisation's identity and the visuals that should reflect it.

The employee perceptions would seem to support the notion of Melewar and Jenkins (2002) that market conditions and the nature of the industry are an important part of an organisation's identity. This study would further suggest that the nature of the industry can have a profound effect on how an organisation's visual identity is perceived. This notion poses interesting questions regarding the choice of the new visual identity for Aalto University. Should an organisation always consider the nature of the industry it is operating in while choosing its new visual identity? And what are the consequences for choosing a visual identity that does not match with the characteristics generally connected to the particular industry?

The literature in business communication has distinguished several functions for an organisation's visual identity, one of which is playing a symbolic role in creating organisational identification among members of the organisation (van den Bosch et al. 2006, see subsection 2.3.3). Even though this notion seems to be supported by other academic researchers, there has been hardly any research which addresses this internal function of CVI. The internal role of CVI posed a challenge also for this study and this question still remains unanswered. This study would, however, suggest that the role of CVI in organisational identification is secondary: a clear organisational identity is more

important for employees' organisational identification. Moreover, it could be argued that only when an organisation has a clear organisational identity to which the employees can identify themselves, can corporate visuals be used for organisation identification.

Van den Bosch et al. (2006; see subchapter 2.3.3) have argued that employees must first know the aims and rationale behind an organisation's visual identity before they can understand and support it. As van den Bosch et al. (2006) further argue, CVI guidelines are essential in managing a consistent corporate visual identity. This study would seem to suggest that even though the interviewed employees were not completely familiar with the aims and rationale behind the organisation's visual identity, some were willing to use the new visuals, provided that it was technically possible. This, as such, does not contradict the findings of van den Bosch et al. (2006), yet the findings of this study highlight the important role of easy-to-use working applications that actually enable employees to use the new visuals.

This study would also seem to suggest that the management of a consistent CVI in a merger situation requires decisions and information to be available as early as possible. As discussed in subsection 5.2.2, the lack of an official abbreviation had led the employees making up their own abbreviations as well as going back to using the old HSE abbreviation in their everyday work. It could be argued here that in the long run, this might not only result in confusion among employees but it could also have an impact on the external stakeholders. Although the names and abbreviations were not the main focus of this study, these implications should not be ignored. As already discussed in section 6.2, an organisation should be careful when abolishing old policies and procedures if they are not replaced with new ones.

In Aalto University, the employees' past behaviour and practises also affected the way in which the CVI was used. This would suggest that the way in which CVI is used in the 'old' organisation can affect the way employees tend to use the new corporate visuals. On a

practical level, this could mean that the CVI guidelines reach only those employees who are active in using them. Therefore, for management it would be important not only to teach how the new visuals are used and provide working CVI guidelines, but it would also be important to try and change the attitudes towards using the corporate visuals.

Employees have an important role in communicating an organisation's visual identity to the external stakeholders. As discussed in subsection 5.2.2, both of the interview participants from the academic staff, for example, had not incorporated the new visual identity in their work. They stated that the visual symbols took too much space in PowerPoint slides and seemed to draw too much attention from the actual contents of their presentations. These findings suggest that more emphasis should be placed on the usability of the visual identity. Thus, the actual purpose of an organisation's visual identity should not be merely on the design, but more attention should be placed on how the design can be applied in practise.

To summarise, this chapter discussed the main findings presented in chapter 5 and positioned them with the reviewed literature on organisational identity, organisational identification and corporate visual identity (CVI). The findings of this study seem to be consistent with the findings of Dutton et al. (1994), who have suggested that when employees in merging organisations feel threatened by the loss of their old identity, they tend to hold on to the group they are already a part of. The communication literature highlighted the important role of communication in merger situations. The study would seem to support the notion of Smidts et al. (2001) who argue that both the content of the communication and the organisation's communication climate are essential in organisational identification of employees. This study highlighted the importance of matching the content of communication and the overall communication climate to behaviour of the organisation. Significant gaps between these factors might have a negative impact on organisational identification of employees. This study suggests that a clear organisational identity is important in organisational identification. The study, however, could not support or contradict the symbolic role of CVI. The findings of this study also

highlighted the important role of easy-to-use working applications that enable employees to use the new visuals. Finally, the findings of this study suggested that Aalto University should place more emphasis on how the design could be applied in practise.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter of this study sums up the research and presents the research goals, methods, main findings, and conclusions. Section 7.1 summarises the research briefly and presents the main findings and conclusions. Section 7.2 presents the practical implications of this study. Section 7.3 discusses the research process from a critical perspective and presents some limitations for this thesis. Finally, section 7.4 makes suggestions for further research.

7.1 Research summary

This study set out to find the role and significance of visual identity as a part of an organisation's identity. In particular, this thesis focused on the role of visual communication in a merger context and examined the ways in which a merging organisation can affect the process where the old identity is abandoned and a new visual identity is accepted. Based on the research objective, the following research questions were formulated: 1) What is the desired organisational identity of Aalto University and how does the new visual identity reflect it? 2) How do the employees perceive the new visual identity of Aalto University and how do they identify themselves with the new visual identity? 3) Can corporate communication be used to facilitate members of the former Helsinki School of Economics to move towards accepting the new organisational and visual identity of Aalto University?

The study was based on the notion that corporate visual identity is an important part of organisational identity. However, before organisations can express their visual identity externally, it should first be understood and supported internally by the members of the organisation. The study was motivated by the recent changes in the higher education sector in Finland. The formation of Aalto University and the launch of its new visual identity on 25th September 2009 opened up an interesting opportunity to investigate the role of visual

identity in a merger context. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role and significance of corporate visual identity in a merger context as perceived by the management of Aalto University and employees of Aalto University School of Economics.

The literature review consisted of four main topics: the nature of non-profit organisations, organisational identity, communication, and visual identity and organisational identification. The first section of the literature review, 2.1, gave an overview of the non-profit sector and non-profit organisations, such as the case organisation Aalto University. The section also discussed recent changes in the higher education sector in Finland, which have been the key drivers for the formation of Aalto University. Section 2.2 discussed the concepts of identity, image and profile and showed the different elements that together constitute an organisation's identity. Section 2.3 discussed the concepts of communication and visual identity based on the corporate identity model by Melewar and Jenkins (2002). From the corporate identity model, the concepts of corporate communications, uncontrollable communication and corporate visual identity were chosen as the most relevant elements for this study and they were discussed in the subsections. Section 2.4 discussed the concept of organisational identification and justified why it is important that members of an organisation identify themselves with the organisation they work for.

The theoretical framework was based on the assumption that in the competitive environment of the higher education sector, one of the ways for organisation's to differentiate themselves from their competitors is through a strong and distinctive organisational identity. Organisational identity was defined as all-inclusive covering an organisation's communication and visual identity. The frameworks created by Melewar and Jenkins (2002, p. 81) and van den Bosch et al. (2006, p. 139) were chosen as the basis of the empirical part of the study as they have argued that organisational identity consist of organisation's communication and visual identity, organisational behaviour, corporate culture, and market conditions of which behaviour, communication and symbolism (i.e. visual identity, such as name and logo) were considered the most important. The theoretical

framework also underlined the role of communication in the process of a merger and in organisational identification.

The study was conducted with a qualitative approach. The empirical data consisted of nine semi-structured interviews of three managers of Aalto University and six employees of Aalto University School of Economics (former HSE). The themes for the semi-structured interviews and the data analysis were based on the literature review and theories on organisational identity, corporate visual identity and organisational identification.

The findings showed that from the management's perspective, Aalto University's visual identity was perceived as an integral part of Aalto University's identity and had a strategic role in the organization's communication practices. The desired organisational identity of Aalto University was described as new, fresh and something different, which the new visual identity was said to reflect well. The employees, on the other hand, perceived that the new visual identity does not represent a high-class, prestigious university that Aalto University is or should be. Moreover, the employees found it hard to evaluate whether the new visual identity reflects the university's desired identity, goals and vision. This was mostly due to the fact that the organisation did not seem to have a clear organisational identity. The lack of a clear organisational identity was also the main reason why the employees were unable to identify themselves with Aalto University. However, the employees seemed to be willing to use the new visuals, even though they did not identify themselves with them. Finally, the findings seemed to suggest that even though Aalto University seemed to promote an open and participative communication climate to the employees, the employees perceived that their opportunities to participate or be heard in the process were limited or non-existent. This suggested that Aalto University's actions did not match the content of the communication leaving the employees dissatisfied and confused.

The findings of this study seem to be consistent with the findings of Dutton et al. (1994), who have suggested that when employees in merging organisations feel threatened by the loss of their old identity, they tend to hold on to the group they are already a part of. The

study also supported the notion of Smidts et al. (2001) who have argued that communication climate and content of the communication both play an important role in organisational identification. This study highlighted the importance of matching the content of communication and the overall communication climate to behaviour of the organisation. Significant gaps between these factors might have a negative impact on organisational identification of employees. Finally, this study suggests that a clear organisational identity is important in organisational identification, yet the researcher was not able to find evidence to support or contradict the symbolic role of CVI in organisational identification.

The recommendations and practical implications of this thesis are presented in the following subchapter.

7.2 Practical implications

This subsection discusses the practical implications drawn from the results of the study. The findings of this study suggest that more attention should be paid to the gap between Aalto University's corporate communication and the organisation's behaviour. In other words, information sessions should provide employees useful information instead of being events held just for the purpose of being communicative. Also the actions of the management should match the organisational goals, principles and values communicated to the employees. For example, if employees are given the message that they can participate in something, they should truly be able to do that.

The study seems to indicate that many practical problems arose from the fact that the employees were not able to use the old guidelines, procedures and channels, such as the old Intranet, PowerPoints, documents, envelopes or something as fundamental as the name of the organisation, yet Aalto University did not provide anything to replace these, especially in the beginning. Besides hindering the daily work of the employees, it created a lot of negative attitude towards the new organisation and stood in the way of organisational

identification. This could have been avoided by making sure that the employees were able to continue working as normally as possible during the merger. In the future, as the merger continues and the organisation evolves, these problems could be avoided by making sure that the employees can move smoothly from old ways of doing things to new ways of doing things.

This study showed clearly the importance of functioning and easy-to-use working applications and guidelines in CVI management. Two suggestions could be made regarding the CVI applications and guidelines. First, more emphasis should be placed on the accessibility of the new visuals. In practise this means that the applications should be carefully tested and made sure that they work before launching. Second, the design of the corporate visuals should not prevent employees from using them as they were meant to be used. For example, PowerPoint slides should not include so many visuals that there is too little room for the actual content. The communications team of Aalto University could use the expertise of the employees and develop the visuals further to meet the needs of the different employees.

The change process of Aalto University is an ongoing process. And as the management has stated, the underlying idea of the visual identity is that it will keep evolving in the future. For this reason, there will most likely be many opportunities to utilise the above-mentioned suggestions.

7.3 Limitations of the study

This section presents some of the limitations of this thesis that are important to keep in mind when evaluating the implications. First, the study is limited to one particular merger process in university context. For this reason, care should be taken in generalising the results. However, the results of this study can be used as a reference point to similar studies. Second, the merger of Aalto University was still an ongoing progress at the time of

the interviews. Therefore, it is important to remember that the results of this study reflect a one particular place in time in a one phase of a merger process. Third, the sample of research participants is not a representation of all the employee groups of Aalto University School of Economics. Since the data for the study was relatively small, the implications made should be considered as suggestive only.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

This subchapter presents some suggestions for further research. As the merger of Aalto University was in the early stages when this study was conducted, it would be interesting to repeat a similar study later and to compare the results. There are also several other merging universities in Finland where a similar study could be conducted and the results could be compared to the findings of this study.

This study could not answer all of the questions formulated in the beginning of this research process. Therefore a quantitative study on the same subject could provide more information which together with the results of this study could provide more insight into role and importance of visual identity in a merger context. The results of a quantitative study could be more easily generalised.

The name and the abbreviations of the University and its schools were not the main focus of the study. However, in the course of making this study it became evident that they play an important role in corporate visual identity. Possible further studies could concentrate on the process of creating a new name, for example in a university setting. Another interesting question, which arose in the course of making this study, was the relationship between a new CVI and the industry in which the organisation is operating. In other words, what are the consequences for choosing a visual identity that does not match with the characteristics generally connected to the particular industry?

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APPENDIX 1

Interview themes with the management of Aalto University (in English)

1. Background information

- Name, education, title and job responsibilities

2. Organizational identity and CVI

- The role and significance of organizational identity and CVI for Aalto University
- Organisational identity of Aalto University

3. Process of choosing Aalto University's visual identity

- The process and stages of designing and choosing the visual identity
- The role of Aalto University in the designing process

4. Desired identity of Aalto University and how the CVI reflects it

- Desired identity of Aalto University
- How does the chosen visual identity reflect the desired identity
- The relationship between the old and new visual identities
- Finnish and International employees as stakeholders
- The future of the visual identity

5. Introducing the CVI to the employees

- Actions taken to facilitate employee identification with the new visual identity
- Employee feedback

APPENDIX 1

Interview themes with the management of Aalto University (in Finnish)

1. Haastattelijan taustatietoa:

- Nimi, koulutus, asema ja työtehtävät

2. Organisaatioidentiteetti ja visuaalinen identiteetti (CVI)

- Organisaatioidentiteetin ja visuaalisen identiteetti merkityd Aalto-yliopistolle
- Aalto-yliopiston organisaatioidentiteetti

3. Visuaalisen ilmeen valintaprosessi

- Valinta- ja suunnitteluprosessien vaiheet
- Aalto-yliopiston rooli prosessissa

4. Aalto-yliopiston tavoiteidentiteetti ja kuinka CVI heijastaa sitä

- Aalto-yliopiston tavoiteidentiteetti
- Kuinka CVI heijastaa tavoiteidentiteettiä
- Uusien ja vanhojen visuaalisten ilmeiden suhde
- Eri henkilöstöryhmien huomioonotto CVI prosessissa (suomalaiset ja ulkomaalaiset työntekijät)
- Visuaalisen identiteetin tulevaisuus

5. Henkilöstön suhde visuaaliseen ilmeeseen:

- Mitä on tehty, jotta henkilöstö omaksuisi visuaalisen ilmeen ja mitä tehdään jatkossa
- Henkilöstön palaute

APPENDIX 2

Interview themes with employees of the former HSE (in English)

1. Background information

- Name, education, title and job responsibilities

2. Organisational identity

- Organisational identity of HSE, differentiating factors
- Organisational identity of Aalto University, differentiating factors
- Desired identity of Aalto University

3. Corporate visual identity and the effectiveness of the identity change

- First reaction
- Knowledge:
 - *How does the new visual identity communicate the desired identity of Aalto University?*
- Staff attitudes:
 - *Do employees identify themselves with HSE or Aalto University?*
 - *What are the factors that have restricted or enhanced identification with Aalto University?*
- Staff behaviour:
 - *Staff participation*
 - *Feedback*
 - *Adoption of visual identity in everyday work*
- Perceptions of the overall process

4. Communication climate

- Communication practices
- Tools
- Challenges

APPENDIX 2

Interview themes with employees of the former HSE (in Finnish)

1. Haastattelijan taustatietoa:

- Nimi, koulutus, asema ja työtehtävät

2. Organisaatioidentiteetti

- HSE:n organisaatioidentiteetti ja miten se erottuu kilpailijoista
- Aalto-yliopiston organisaatioidentiteetti ja miten se erottuu kilpailijoista
- Aalto-yliopiston tavoiteidentiteetti

3. CVI ja identiteettimuutoksen onnistuneisuus

- Ensireaktio visuaalisesta ilmeestä
- Tietämys
 - *Miten visuaalinen ilme kuvaa tavoiteidentiteettiä*
- Asenne
 - *Identifioituminen Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun vai Aalto-yliopistoon*
 - *Mitkä tekijät haitaavat tai edesauttavat identifioitumista Aalto-yliopistoon*
- Käyttäytyminen
 - *Henkilöstön osallistuminen*
 - *Palaute*
 - *Visuaalisen ilmeen käyttö jokapäiväisessä työssä*
- Mielikuvat prosessista

3. Viestintäympäristö

- Viestintätavat
- Työkalut
- Haasteet