

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORPORATE IDENTITY, PLACE  
ARCHITECTURE, AND IDENTIFICATION: AN EXPLORATORY CASE  
STUDY**

**Mohammad Mahdi Foroudi**

Foroudi Consultancy, UK  
Mohammad@foroudi.com

**John M.T. Balmer**

Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, UK  
John.balmer@brunel.ac.uk

**Weifeng Chen**

Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, UK  
Weifeng.chen@brunel.ac.uk

**Pantea Foroudi**

Middlesex Business School, Middlesex University, UK  
P.foorudi@mdx.ac.uk

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# **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORPORATE IDENTITY, PLACE ARCHITECTURE, AND IDENTIFICATION: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – How organizations view, value, and manage their place architecture in relation to identification and corporate identity has received little research attention. The main goal of this paper is to provide an integrative understanding of the relationships between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification from a multi-disciplinary approach. It is assumed that characteristics of the organization and of the way a corporate identity and place architecture are managed will affect employees' and consumers' identification.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper uses a theory-building case study within the phenomenological/qualitative research tradition. The data were gathered through 15 in-depth interviews with top management who were working at a London-Based Business School. In addition, six focus groups were conducted with a total of 36 academics, and new empirical insights are offered. NVivo software was used to gain insight into the various influences and relationships.

**Findings** – Drawing on one case study, our findings confirm that firms are utilizing the conceptualizations of corporate identity and place architecture, including the leveraging of tangible and intangible forms of consumers'/employees' identification, towards a university business school.

**Originality/value** – The relationships between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification have received little research attention and have hardly been studied at all from the perspective of this paper. This paper has value to researchers in the fields of marketing, corporate identity, place architecture, design, as well as professionals involved in managing a company's architecture. Drawing on the marketing/management theory of identity and architecture alignment, managers and policy advisors should devote attention to each element of the corporate identity and place architecture and ensure that they are in meaningful as well as in dynamic alignment.

**Keywords:** Corporate identity; place architecture; identification; physical structure and functionality/spatial layout; symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts; physical stimuli/ambient conditions of an environment

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the creation of place architecture has become an arduous task for companies. Research in the place architecture and corporate identity areas demonstrated that developing a favorable place architecture can help customers to focus on the corporation, what it stands for, what it communicates, delivers; it allows the organization to send a more reliable message, which can be transmitted to stakeholders and improve the identification towards organizations. Architecture lies at the heart of corporate identity (Balmer, 2005). Place architecture is an art and it is a significant piece of symbolism that operates in a competitive environment (Balmer, 2005). Modern architecture is an integration of industry, art and new social needs (Vischer, 2007).

(i) What is the relationship between corporate identity and architecture? (ii) What is the relationship between corporate identity and identification? and (iii) What is the relationship between architecture and identification? A large body of research, in domains including management and design (Kirby and Kent, 2010), social identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004; Knight and Haslam, 2010), environmental psychology (Sundstrom and Sundstrom, 1986), social psychology (Oldham and Brass, 1979; Proshansky et al., 1983; Sommer, 1969) have discussed this issue. However, a comprehensive view has not been provided which delineates the types of communication which may have an influence on corporate image and identification. The marketing literature has no systematic study on the relationship between corporate identity, architecture and identification. In addition, the assumption of Elsbach (2003) and Rooney et al. (2010) that there is a relationship between corporate identity and architecture has not yet been tested and validated. Also, there is little research into the different levels of importance among the components of the physical environment in predicting outcome variables (Han and Ryu, 2009).

Knight and Haslam (2010) assert that it is significant for decision-makers to understand the workspace and the benefit to both employers and employees in order to gain competitive advantage. Place architecture design is defined as the preparation of instructions for the

manufacturer of artefacts to create an image of corporate identity (Alessandri, 2001). Academic studies have focused on the design aspect of architecture and neglected the strategic aspects. Architecture design helps transcend barriers due its visual character. Organizations spend substantial amounts of money on the construction of an effective building (Ellis and Duffy, 1980). Effective modern architecture is an integration of industry, art and new social needs that is designed to portray an idea or an emotion about a company's purpose, its position in time, and its creators (Trueman and Cornelius, 2006; Vischer, 2007). The concept of architecture is not only related to the physical, but also to the social and cultural aspects of buildings (Saleh, 1998). In addition, place architecture is technical and sociological; thus, the atmosphere of an office is a key expression (Alessandri, 2001). Theorists agree that well-designed architecture should be recognized and have a positive effect.

Due to intensive marketplace competition, everything an organization does should confirm the company's corporate identity (e.g. Olins, 1995). Moreover, corporate identity is the expression as manifest in communication of the organization (Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000). Furthermore, corporate visual identity is arguably the most tangible facet of corporate identity, which reflects the company culture and values and that create physical recognition for the organization (Cornelissen and Elving, 2003; Dowling, 2001; Olins, 1991; Pilditch, 1971).

Corporate identity requires visibility, tangibility, and consistency with other aspects of corporate identity (Balmer and Gray, 1999) that can be dictated by their aesthetic attractiveness. However, the aesthetic aspect of architecture is essential for organizations, since there is an increase in desire among corporate managers to promote the physical expression of the building as a means of building corporate image and identification (Becker and Steele, 1995). Structure and design of a place influence the image of the organization and create a feeling of recognition to build an image (Gray and Balmer, 1998).

The article opens with a brief overview of the growing consensus gentium among many management/scholars with regard to the importance of the corporate identity, place architecture, and identification concepts from a multi-disciplinary approach. Then, the purpose of this article is to take a step toward integrating theories and empirical findings from diverse disciplines and

to describe how to build an architecture which influences both consumers and employees in service organizations. A typology of service organizations is presented that illuminates significant variations in form and usage of the servicescape. Next follows an examination of three dimensions (themes) of corporate identity and three dimensions of place architecture in the current study. By conducting a qualitative study, the researcher begins with a grounded theory in mind to test the data in relationships between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification enactment, and progresses to verification in the workplace and raises questions yet to be answered by current research. In focusing on finding the relationships, it is hoped that design, marketing, policy makers and management scholars will concentrate on the opportunities associated with the research concepts. What is clear is that the corporate identity, architecture and identification are particularly significant for a host of management disciplines and provide a new, supplemental lens by which an organization's quintessential attributes may be revealed, nurtured, managed, influenced and altered.

## **COMPANY IDENTITY AND ITS CONSTITUENTS**

The notion of identity can be linked to organizations. Every organization has an identity. Corporate identity is “articulation of what an organization is, what it stands for, what it does and the way it goes about its business especially the way it relates to its stakeholders and the environment” (Balmer, 2008, p.899). It is essential to address the term identity, when approaching ideas relating to corporate identity studies. Identity has been referred to in various contexts. The most essential of all identity types and the earliest definitions of identity related to individual identity (along with gender), which can shape corporate identities (Balmer, 2008). Individual identity is determined by corporate identity, which is particularly related to the fields of sociology and ideology (role theory) (Balmer, 2008) and psychoanalysis (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997). A significant part of identity in psychology is gender identity, which is a degree of how an individual views him/herself as a unique person and in relation to other people (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997). The earliest psychologist who was explicitly interested in identity was Erikson (1960). In cognitive psychology, identity is defined as a capacity for self-reflection and the awareness of self (Leary and Tangney, 2003, p.3). Erikson (1956) states that identity is “a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (p.102).

Analysis of this definition emphasizes that the subject of identity is individual rather than the organization (He and Balmer, 2007) and acknowledges the idiosyncratic things that make a person unique.

Corporate identity is about the articulation of tangible elements that establish and convey corporate image and reputation. Organizations increasingly share knowledge among managerial areas (Hatch and Schultz 1997), their management is a multifaceted phenomenon (Balmer, 1995, 1998). There is a large and distinctive body of knowledge on corporate identity which is one of an organization's most important assets and therefore is worthy of constant management likely to benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach (Balmer, 2001, 2008; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Brown et al., 2006; Cornelissen et al., 2007, He and Balmer, 2006; Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). Corporate identity pertains to the definition and acknowledgment of all forms of communication that convey an image and seek an integrated approach to articulate identity in coherent and harmonized messages through stakeholder forms of communication. Everything in and about a company is communication and has a wide spectrum of influence. The definition of corporate identity management captures and serves as a vehicle for expression of the company's philosophy (Abratt, 1989; Balmer, 1994; Bernstein, 1986; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Melewar, 2003), values, beliefs, and mission (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Balmer 1996; Gray and Balmer, 1997; Simoes et al., 2005). Finally, corporate visual identity (CVI) is arguably the most tangible facet of corporate identity, which reflects the company culture and values and creates physical recognition for the organization (Carter, 1982; Cornelissen and Elving, 2003; Olins, 1991; Pilditch, 1971). At an operational level, our definition recommends that corporate identity is reflected in the three intertwined dimensions: philosophy, mission, and values, communications; and visual identity which influence consumers' and employees' identification (Balmer and Greyer, 2002).

***Philosophy, mission, and value*** - The term corporate philosophy has become popular since the 1980's (Ledford et al., 1995) and is critical for coordinating the company's activities. The creation of a "corporate identity often begins with the articulation of a business philosophy" (Simoes et al., 2005, p.158). Many publications described the concept of management philosophy with reference to company culture (Athos and Pascale, 1981; Ouchi, 1981; Wright,

1984). According to Abratt (1989), corporate philosophy is an element of corporate culture and embodies the core values and assumptions of an organization (Kono, 1990; Melewar, 2003). Philosophy is defined as the core values and assumptions that constitute the corporate culture, business mission and values espoused by the management board or founder of the company (Abratt, 1989; Collins and Porras, 1991; Ledford et al., 1995; Wright, 1984). The philosophy establishes the context of day-to-day operating decisions and guides the organization in making trade-offs among competing performances for short-term and long-term goals (Ledford et al., 1995; Wright, 1984), and the performance and all activities of the organization tend to be linked directly to the philosophy (Wright, 1984). The company's philosophy "directs decisions, policies, and actions and entails core motivating assumptions, principles, values, and tenets" (Simoes et al., 2005, p.158). Corporate philosophy can be expressed in the corporation mission statement (Collins and Porras, 1991; Simoes et al., 2005).

A corporate mission is the company purpose, the reason for which a company exists or its objectives (De Wit and Meyer, 1998; Melewar, 2003) and is the most important part of the corporate philosophy (Abratt, 1989; De Wit and Meyer, 1998; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). According to Swales and Rogers (1995), a mission statement emerges and collaborates in response to crises. Most are designed as displayable single page documents, which deal with abstractions, possessing a strategic level of generality and ambiguity (Fairhurst, 1993). Mission statements are very different and tend to stress value, positive behavior and guiding principles within the company's belief and ideology, in order to promote corporate culture and philosophy. Corporate missions are engendered by senior management or the CEO (Swales and Rogers, 1995). Every organization has a mission and vision, which is formalized in a document, and contains the company's values.

A company's values are the dominant system of beliefs and moral principles that lie within the organization that comprise everyday language, ideologies, rituals and beliefs of personnel (Balmer, 1995; Campbell and Yeung, 1991; Melewar, 2003). Corporate value plays a significant role in the formation of its corporate identity (Melewar, 2003), and contains the beliefs and ethical principles that lie behind the company's culture, and is a major system of beliefs within a company that include daily language and ideologies (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). According to

Ledford et al. (1995), organizational values are fundamental to organizational culture, and values need to be understood and are necessarily actively shaped. According to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), there is an emphasis on ethical and cultural values, and organizational history and philosophy. A corporate mission, corporate philosophy, and value are articulated through corporate visual identity and communication cues to the company's audiences and employees (Alessandri, 2001; Baker and Balmer, 1997; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Gorman, 1994; Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Melewar et al., 2005; Melewar and Jenkins, 2002; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Van Riel et al., 2001).

**Communication** - Communication is the aggregate of messages from both official and informal sources, through a variety of media, by which a company conveys its identity to its multiple audiences or stakeholders (Gray and Balmer, 1998; Melewar, 2003).

Corporate identity is the expression as manifest in communication of the organization" (Balmer, 1995, 1998; Balmer and Soenen, 1999; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; Markwick and Fill, 1997). Communication is the touchstone for presenting an image and therefore is recognized in the image formation process (Balmer, 1996; Cornelissen, 2000; Van Riel, 1995). Everything in and about a company is communication and has a wide spectrum of influence. Research on consumer behavior has widely accepted that communication from annual reports to advertising and internal communications impacts individuals' behaviors and attitudes (Christiansen and Tax, 2000; Lau and Ng, 2001). According to Fombrun and Rindova (2000) a clear communication can impact on trust and enhance the commitment of stakeholders towards an organization. Communication has a wide impact on how a company presents the company's image visually as well as verbally. The main dimensions of how communications are managed in a company are: marketing communications (e.g. advertising, sponsorship, public relations activities, corporate advertising), corporate communications (e.g. annual report, internal publications) (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Van Riel, 1995; Alessandri, 2001), and the intended consistency among all communication vehicles and messages.

**Corporate visual identity** - Corporate visual identity is an assembly of visual cues that form an expression of the organization (Cornelissen and Elving, 2003) by which an audience can



recognize the company and distinguish it from others in serving to emphasize the real corporate purpose (Abratt, 1989, Melewar, 2003). Corporate visual identity has received the attention of marketing researchers (Henderson et al., 2004; Tavassoli, 2001; Childers and Jass, 2002; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Veryzer and Hutchinson, 1998) who feel that it needs to be supported by clear corporate visual identity guidelines and consistent marketing communications. A corporate visual identity consists of an architecture, corporate name, corporate symbol/logo, typeface, color, building, interior design, symbolism understanding, and staff appearance which express organizational characteristics (Carter, 1982; Dowling, 1994; Melewar and Saunders, 1999; 2000; Schultz et al., 2000; Van Riel et al., 2001) as well as providing recognizability (Balmer and Gray, 2000). According to Melewar and Saunders (2000), corporate visual identity is essential for the well-being and communications mix (Melewar, 2001) to make an expression of the organization (Cornelissen and Elving, 2003) in serving to express the corporate real purpose (Abratt, 1989).

The intangibility of services exacerbates the need for management of visual components. The visibility and consistency should emphasize the physical dimensions of service delivery (Bharadwaj et al., 1993), which impact on the corporate identity. For instance, staff appearance, color, architecture are essential to the brand awareness and transmitted image in the service context (Berry, 2000). Furthermore, physical evidence such as environmental design, architecture, interior design, decor, signage, stationery, convey tangible hints that impact on employee and customer behavior (Bitner, 1990). The visual identity management has imperative business implications (Schmitt et al., 1995). According to Bitner (1990) in a service encounter context, the physical environment can influence how consumers perceive service failure. Conceptualizing management of philosophy, mission, values, communications, and visual identity in terms of specific dimensions are essential as they involve generating and implementing guidelines for the use of symbolism within the company. A company's corporate identity is transmitted through architecture and physical environment (Olins, 1995; Melewar et al., 2006) which can be instrumental in affecting decision-making processes (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007).

## **PLACE ARCHITECTURE AND ITS CONSTITUENTS**

Research in the place architecture areas demonstrated that architecture is an art and a significant piece of symbolism which lies at the heart of corporate identity (Balmer, 2005) and influences how the corporate identity is perceived (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). A favorable architecture has a desirable outcome such as identification (Knight and Haslam, 2010). Identification can be defined as the degree to which employees/consumers define him/herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization (Dutton et al., 1994, p.239; Knight and Haslam, 2010; Rooney et al., 2010). Office spaces can influence the formal communication and other elements of the organizational structure (Moleski and Lang, 1982). According to previous authors, place architecture can be defined as a visual presentation of a company (Jun and Lee, 2007) that encapsulates a company's purpose and identity (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007; Trueman and Cornelius, 2006); it is a set of elements (*spatial layout/physical structure and functionality, physical stimuli/ambient conditions of an environment, and symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts*) (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007; Han and Ryu, 2009; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011; McElroy and Morrow, 2010), which influence consumers' and employees' attitude, and behavior (Bitner, 1992; Brennan et al., 2002; Han and Ryu, 2009; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2006; Rooney et al., 2010). It can be decisive in facilitating employee- and consumer-company identification (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Knight and Haslam, 2010; Rooney et al., 2010).

*Spatial layout/physical structure and functionality* - is expected by managers to impact on how people behave and interact (Davis, 1984, p. 272). The physical structure of a place is an essential in service settings, as it is the purposeful environment that exists and must aid the accomplishment of employees' and customers' specific needs and wants, and which affects the comfort of the customers and employees (Bitner, 1992; Han and Ryu, 2009; Nguyen, 2006). The exciting place architectural expression, inspiring internal spaces and good functionality are essential parts of a work-place. Office design needs careful consideration of functionality because it has many consequences through a variety of functions (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007, p.96). The functional features of an organization are mainly based on the work place (Danielsson and Bodin, 2008, p.641). Designers expose the functionality of the object (Fayard and Weeks, 2007, p.610). Modern design of a place is primarily based on the functionality of ergonomic

design elements and employees are moved from private, enclosed offices to cubicle workspaces (McElroy and Morrow, 2010, p.612).

Spatial layout of a place influences or regulates social interaction (Davis, 1984, p.272), is intended to affect perceptions of culture (McElroy and Morrow, 2010, p.614), and influence customer satisfaction (Brennan et al., 2002, p.288; Han and Ryu, 2009, p.505; Fischer et al., 2004, p.132; Oldham and Brass, 1979, p.282), productivity (Ayoko and Hartel, 2003, p.386; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011, p.265) and motivation (Oldham and Brass, 1979, p.282). Moreover, the structure of an organization can affect the behavior of organizational members and employees' comfort (Davis, 1984, p.273). Comfort, overall layout, table/seating arrangements are the main elements of physical structure of a place (Han and Ryu, 2009, p.496).

***Physical stimuli/ambient conditions of an environment*** - service settings encourage consumers to pursue the service consumptions (Han and Ryu, 2009) and subsequently affect employees' behaviors, attitudes, satisfaction, and performance (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2006; Parish et al., 2008) toward the service provider (Han and Ryu, 2009; Nguyen, 2006). Ambient conditions/physical stimuli are those aspects of the place physical setting which are intangible background characteristics that intrude into the managers' or organization members' awareness and are likely to have a pervasive effect on his/her behavior (Davis, 1984, p.274). The physical stimuli are important factors of an environment to employees in many interpersonal service businesses such as banks, hospitals, and hotels (Bitner, 1992). Environmental psychology research suggests that employees need to have the opportunity to control task-relevant dimensions of their workplace environment (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007, p.196) because employees spend long hours in their workplace (Bitner, 1992). The physical stimuli have a direct influence on employees' attitudes, behaviors, satisfaction (Brennan et al., 2002) in turn, these provide improved job performance (Brennan et al., 2002; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011) and productivity (Parish et al., 2008, p.222).

Ambient conditions of a place may need to be a major priority for many managers (Davis, 1984). Managers regularly introduce ambient conditions into the workplace environment to remind themselves "of what needs to be accomplished" (Davis, 1984, p.275). Ambient conditions of a

place impact on physiological reaction, which can cause comfort or discomfort during the service encounter (Bitner, 1992; Nguyen, 2006). Importantly, the managers need to be aware that the employee preferences must be balanced against customer needs (Bitner, 1992).

*Symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts* - can be related to the aesthetics of the environment, which are intended to affect perceptions of culture (McElroy and Morrow, 2010) as well as affect customer satisfaction (Han and Ryu, 2009). According to some authors (Han and Ryu, 2009; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994), symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts not only contribute to the attractiveness of the physical environment but also affect customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Han and Ryu, 2009). Furthermore, physical artifacts impact on professional creative identities, personalities (Elsbach, 2009, p.1065) and develop a complex representation of workplace identity (Elsbach, 2004, p.99). However, there is a limited examination of “how employees perceive specific dimensions of workplace identities in work environments that limit the display of personal identity markers” (Elsbach, 2003, p.623).

Symbolic artifacts consist of the features of the physical setting of a place, which can be defined as the quality of the environment for a company’s employees (Davis, 1984, p.278). Elsbach (2004) states that in corporate settings, “office decor sits on the front lines of social judgment processes” (p.119). A company’s artifacts as the visible display of an organization may lead employees to perceive psychological pressure to express organizational attachment (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007, p.201), employee thought processes, and behaviors, and feelings (McElroy and Morrow, 2010, p.613). Elsbach’s (2004) study shows how corporate employees may interpret office decor as cues of workplace.

Companies try to communicate status differentiation between employees by assigning more to higher ranked individuals or improving their office rather than colleagues’ (McElroy and Morrow, 2010, p.619). Employees feel of loss of workplace identity because of the restricted ability to show uniqueness and classification through the display of their personal artifacts (Varlander, 2012). Furthermore, employees build their own alternative means of signaling status through other physical markers, for instance, the number of personal artifacts shows the different levels of managers (Elsbach, 2003, p.262). Employees personally select and display artifacts

even though they are not related to work, however, these types of uniqueness categorizations are essential to an employee's core sense of self (Elsbach, 2003, p.235). According to Elsbach (2004), a variety of “physical artifacts are examined and compared to specific managerial exemplars to develop a complex representation of workplace identity” (p.99).

## **METHOD**

In order to examine the relationships between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification from a multi-disciplinary approach, a qualitative, explorative approach was found to be appropriate. Previous studies on this specific topic are limited, and in cases where relatively little is known about the matter to be investigated, exploratory research is recommended (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). In alignment with Urde et al.'s (2007) recommendation, the main source or method for the data collection in the qualitative stage was semi-structured interviews and focus groups in order to gather qualitative data in order to determine which are important in the context of the research and why (Patton, 1990). This is explained in the following sections.

The context selected for this research is based on consumer/employees' perceptions towards a university business school. In order to capture the contextual and relational nature of corporate identity, where place architecture and stakeholders' identification are mutually related, then in undertaking one case study of a middle-ranked London-based Business School it is essential to discover the relationships between the research constructs. In addition, a middle-ranked London-based Business School would constitute a key case study for in-depth organizational analysis as it has a leading role in the UK education sector and has a distinctive and modern building. Using Yin (2009), there are three reasons why the single case study is appropriate in terms of theory development, (i) First rationale is that the case study represents a unique case. (ii) Second rationale for a single case study is to represent a critical case in testing a well-formulated theory by means of a clear set of propositions. As such, this case study confirms and extends social identity and attribution theory. Therefore, the case study makes a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building. (iii) Third rationale of the case study is that it is a revelatory case, where the observer has access to a phenomenon that was previously inaccessible. In addition, a case study helps to understand firm social phenomena (Yin, 2009, p. 61). Because the research

concepts from corporate identity do not consider industry-wide identity, for this reason, it was felt to be necessary to study corporate identity, place architecture, and the identification triad.

This approach facilitates us to achieve insight about consumer/employees' perceptions regarding the important elements of corporate identity and place architecture achieving identification. The goals of explanatory research are (i) to investigate the nature and degree of association between the corporate identity, architecture, and stakeholders' identification as the main variables, (ii) decide if additional variables are needed to provide a more accurate description of the phenomenon, and (iii) offer theoretical explanations of observed relationships. In addition, it addresses the issue of causality between variables (Snow and Thomas, 2001). As a result, new concepts of the relationships between the research constructs are defined and developed.

There are multiple reasons for selecting experts as the informants. First, the employees of Business Schools are likely to have more experience and knowledge about the school's identity and architecture of the building than the academic staff of other schools. Second, the respondents were chosen as they are likely to be able to verbalize their perception towards the building and the Business School identity and can provide more reliable organizational and industrial information. Third, senior managers and academics are mainly responsible for organization and identity decision-making (Balmer, 2001). Fourth, it is essential to incorporate the Business School members' perception about their feelings towards the workplace. Moreover, the academic staffs of Business Schools were a group of respondents whom the researcher could easily access. Therefore, the information obtained from managers and middle managers and academics at the Business School was expected to provide insight into the investigated phenomena, which was deep and rich as well as facilitating the generation of measurement dimensions.

Two sets of interview protocols for managers and employees were designed based on earlier studies, to check whether all the areas of interest were covered during the interviews (Malhotra and Birks, 2003). A two-stage study approach was employed. At the first stage, a pre-study interview was conducted with 3 academics. After the pre-study, the interview protocol guide was moderated and made slightly more precise. At the second stage, 15 interviews were conducted as the preliminary research stage and the interviewees were mainly the School Manager,

Administration team and academic staff of the Business School. The interviews were a face-to-face interpersonal role situation designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research phenomenon (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1987, p.232) and in order to establish a clear overview of the interplay of corporate identity, architecture, and identification to give the opportunity of obtaining a deeper understanding of the research objective. Table 1 illustrates the details of in-depth interviews.

<<<Table 1 Here>>>

In addition, 6 focus groups were conducted with a total of 36 academics (21 men and 15 women) to produce a wider range of information (Malhotra and Birks, 2003, p.163), to encourage a sufficient level of group interaction so as to foster discussion (Greenbaum, 2000; Krueger, 1994) and examine more directly the concept of the school identity, architecture, and identification (Table 2). The participants' social background was homogenous (Greenbaum, 2000) while between-group and in-group heterogeneity (e.g. age, gender, marital status, and occupation) were allowed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The age of the respondents ranged from 23 to 41 years. The details of focus group interviews are illustrated in Table 2.

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## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Following an overview of the findings, the researcher began with a theory in mind to test the data in the relationship between corporate identity, architecture, and identification enactment. The data needed verification in the workplace and raised questions yet to be answered by current research.

These points follow from the results: i) corporate identity, place architecture, and stakeholders' identification which are mutually influential. The associations between these concepts are reciprocal. Corporate identity can drive, guide, facilitate, prevent, and constrain identification while architecture can support, shape, dilute, and blur identification. ii) The relationship between identity and place architecture is more complicated than mutual influence. For example, place

architecture and corporate identity are linked and are significant factors affecting internal-stakeholders' perceptions of identification and corporate image (Nguyen, 2006). The changes in the social, physical, and psychological work environment affect identification, self-verification, and identity enactment (Thatcher and Zhu, 2006, p.1082) and this interplay between the concepts becomes more salient and significant. iii) Identity, place architecture, identification are symbiotic, and related to each other. Identification can be inferred from and enacted by identity and architecture. Moreover, the symbiosis of corporate identity, place architecture, and identification can be suggested by managerial cognitive reconciliation of perceived corporate identity, place architecture, and identification dissonance. At first glance the findings indicate, and the qualitative study supports the previous dimensions generated from literature. Based on the review of the related literature and qualitative analysis, the research model of corporate identity, place architecture, and identification is presented in Figure 1.

**< Please Insert Figure 1 Here >**

*Corporate identity* - is “increasingly important for contemporary consumer marketing due to the post-modern levity resulting from globalization of consumer markets, technologically savvy consumers” (He and Mukherjee, 2009, p.2). The richness and complexity of corporate identity is reflected by the existence of multiple types of identity within an organization. A model which has been developed by Balmer and Soenen (1999) is a sophisticated model of corporate identity management which was modified and improved by Balmer (2001) and Balmer and Gray (2003). The five identities have been termed in this model as: actual identity, communicated identity, conceived identity, ideal identity, and desired identity; they are supported by the focus groups and interviews in the research at the Business School. An academic defines corporate identity as “the family of things that are unique. The name, the logo, the slogan, many things that really differentiate the company from another company...It’s a kind of organizational culture. Each organization has their own strategy, view and vision and it impacts their behavior. I’m not sure about corporate identity but for me it’s the same”. The following comments illustrate participants’ assessment of the findings from this source:

*“I think possibly the first association that springs to my mind is brand, which is very similar I think to corporate identity. If you take the brand of the business is about*



*what the members of that entity think about the brand, what it means to them. Internal to me about corporate identity is the way something feels about itself. But I realise there is external perceptions of the brand as well. The first thing that came into my mind was about internal perception of the brand ...” (School Manager).*

*“... I think it is related to the company’s goals and missions, ... is aspirational, how you want your company to be perceived by internal and external entities, it must be perceived clearly and accurately in order to achieve the organization’s goals, mission and objectives. Corporate identity should communicate a company’s unique attributes and values very very clearly to stakeholders. Every organization, regardless of size, already has a corporate identity, planned or unplanned which should manage its identity in a purposeful manner” (Operations and Finance Manager).*

The above quotation is consistent with corporate branding corporate identity, and organizational behavior authors (Abratt, 1989; Balmer, 1998, 2001, 2008; Bick et al., 2003; Olins, 1990; etc.). They emphasize that corporate identity is ‘the sum of all the factors that define and project what an organization is’ (Downey, 1986, p.7) and management is responsible for fostering a culture of adaptability and flexibility. Management should be quick to respond when changes need to be made, quick to spot the need to do things differently, very flexible, quickly change procedures to meet new conditions and solve problems as they arise (McElroy and Morrow, 2010). Furthermore, actual identity is rooted in corporate ownership, the leadership style of management, organizational structure, business activities and markets, the quality of products and services, and business performance (Balmer, 2001; Balmer and Gray, 2003). An employee states that he is inclined to adopt the most meaningful vision and identity that are aligned with his belief structures. “It might actually be the one of the X University’s school. For some reason, it just appears to have a strong defined goal and you know, you can see some sort of value in what X is doing, like something that’s valuable being achieved”.

Management should convey the same message to the internal and external audience. Moreover, a consultant participant stated that “management of corporate identity is very significant for any organization; it helps to promote an image, change the reputation and also in the process of communication to people and employees. It can help organizations to motivate an employee and also motivate students as our main stakeholders. Our organization has its own brand, X which contains new building, X’s logo and other branding items to reflect our identity. All can be created to keeping the target audience in mind. Our school tried to express the personality

through a clear identity. The revised identity includes building, culture, values and mission of X. However, still I believe it needs more time to transmit the revised identity". Furthermore, a Lecturer states,

*"I believe, the reason of improving of the ranking the university is related to the management of corporate identity of X which is used as a tool to systematically and consistently communicate a company's unique attributes and values. As the evidence recently shows, management tried to ensure that all corporate communications reflect and reinforce the company's attributes and values in a consistent and positive manner through internal and external consumers" (Senior Lecturer).*

The findings are consistent with research by Balmer and Greyser (2003). They confirm that corporate identity is a hot topic for company management and those who advise them as well as for academics studying/working in the field. Management must make a judgment as to which groups' perceptions are most important. They recommend that managers should be sensitive to these variations, but should be cognizant of the single identity type of which they all are a part (Balmer and Greyser, 2003). The participants state that management "should be aware that corporate identity is manifested through histories, look at X, it dates back to around 18th century. Our old logo is the key element of our corporate identity. Over the years, it has become a symbol for our reliable services"... it's the image of corporation, organization, that differentiates it from the other company, in terms of its image and reputation". The following quotes reflect this idea:

*"I think from where I am sitting my ambition of the school is to embody its mission, its strategic vision. I have quite an idealistic perception and I think, we are quite successful in explaining to staff what mission of the school is but only to some extent. My ambition will be to completely get them aligned and on-board with the mission and the vision, but I realized we are not entirely successful. And I associate that with the identity"... I think the main purpose of X is related to its mission statement and it's aligned with the university mission statement, and we have a substantial strategic plan to try to implement that"... "Regarding corporate style and ethos, in order for it to be attractive for academics we have to emphasize collegiality and we have to emphasize support for their ambitions and their activity. It's how we reward either explicitly through paying conditions or implicitly by recognition. So I like for the school to establish the culture with that level of collegiately and respect what people do" (School Manager).*

Corporate visual and verbal elements are used to contribute to the corporate identity, corporate image, and corporate reputation; they may even reaffirm trust in the organization (Dowling, 1993). Corporate visual identity is the foremost element of corporate identity that a company

employs to project its prestige, quality, and style to stakeholders (Melewar and Saunders, 1999). Furthermore, corporate visual identity is a vehicle to form an organization with a modern touch and the organization employs graphic language to specify its modernity (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Martinez, 2006). Some authors believe that corporate visual identity should be up-to-date and modern (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Olins, 1978, 1989; Van den Bosch et al., 2005). Some authors state that when the company changes its strategy, it needs to change or update the organization's visual identity (Brun, 2002; Olins, 1978; Van Riel and Van Hasselt, 2002). Corporate visual identity uses tangible clues to differentiate its services (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1989) and is essential for the well-being and communications mix (Melewar, 2001) to make an expression of the organization (Cornelissen and Elving, 2003) in serving to remind about the corporation's real purpose (Abratt, 1989). Some authors (Abratt, 1989; Melewar, 2003; Melewar and Saunders, 1998, 1999) define corporate visual identity as an assembly of visual cues by which people can recognize the company and distinguish it from others. These explanations emerged from the in-depth interviews during the exploratory stage, when the respondents commented on the X visual identity:

*“... wish the corporate visual identity guideline was provided to all employees as well as students. It really influences that we are part of a family, we belong here, then all of us could have a signature of X. I think it has a big big impact on outsiders and could attract more students. If they feel we are proud of where we are studying, it motivates them to join” (Lecturer).*

The results are consistent with the authors Balmer (2001) and Balmer and Gray (2003). Corporate identity is used in an organization as a trustworthy and reliable indicator to reinforce the market leadership and brand strengths of the organization (Balmer and Soenen, 1999; Gray and Balmer, 1998; Kirby and Kent, 2010). For instance the statement, “I think the relationship between X architecture and corporate identity is the fact that anything bearing images of the building automatically inspires feelings of reliability and trustworthiness to me and my colleagues”, illustrates this point. A focus group participant stated that “there are many opportunities to learn and there is a lot of information in the website but just promising. For this reason, I had to attend some relevant to my PhD workshops at Oxford University. I believe X is just promising to us as students and not delivering their promising which affects our perceptions.

For example, more should be given the students academically, more academic support, rather than only building. I can see they are struggling to raise their standard”.

Conceived identity covers corporate image, corporate reputation, and corporate branding, which are the perceptions of various stakeholder groups (what X is seen to be). In the respondents’ opinion, what X is seen to be is shown by what a lecturer states, “I witness a progress, I could see it improving the students, the quality of research, for three years it’s a nice and tough atmosphere and easy going ... They form their idea on what school and we communicate to them. I think its PR, I think they communicate quite well but I’m not sure people invested lots of time to think about the school. But I think people would have another way of thinking if the school would really stress some unique points, like we moved to new building and very accessible to airport, variety of people with different cultures and unique MBA programme. It should communicate in the right way to be in the people’s head. It’s not really the classical things. But in general I never met anyone who came here and they had a negative opinion, always positive opinion from people. Well, it’s an education institution part of the larger institution where they are teaching groups of related (more or less) topics at different levels Masters, Undergraduates, PhD... The main activity is about education and teaching but they are also very active in terms of research and projects. So I would say it’s quite an active institution mainly working in education, research and also collaborating with industrial projects”. It can be explained more by the next comments,

*“The bottom line is I wouldn’t work here if I didn’t want to. I’m happy to go to my job. I have a positive view of the school. People are doing the best to work for the Business School. That is one side, on the other side, in order for us to achieve everything we want, there are a lot of constrains to fulfil our mission, mostly external constraint-financial constraints, because of volatility of the sector at the moment. There are limits because of our positioning on the caliber of people that we can attract, so we found it difficult to attract high rate 4 star researches but we have quite a solid research, so in general it is a quite good place to work” (School Manager).*

Regarding what respondents think other people think about the school, the majority believe that they are part of X and they receive favorable comments from the University. For instance, some of the respondents note the sense of favorability of corporate image to corporate identity,

*“I would hope that majority of people are relatively positive about it. If they won’t it would be because of constraints of expenditure and I guess it has a lot of fall out in terms of people have to work hard in many cases and not seeing an immediate future and support which they feel they need. These are tough times people working very hard for the same rewards as last year. If we are wanted to improve we will have to increase our profitability as a university” (School Manager).*

*“I think X Business School is working very hard and they are better than before. However they are middle and a bit above middle but didn’t reach a level of top universities yet ... There are 2 types of friends that go to high-ranking universities, they don’t think very high about X Business School. But my other friends that study in lower ranking universities, they said X is very good university. It’s not easy to get to Cambridge ... Value for money-education-it’s not bad but it’s not very great either ... I associated with X quite long and I can relate myself to X ... I get good response, people like it. Most of people think that it is in the middle of London ... I think they like it. We have such a big campus and so many students. When I talk to people, they know someone who is doing a degree here or done degree here. So I think it’s quite popular” (Focus Group 2).*

Communicated identity includes controlled and non-controlled communications, called by Balmer and Gray (2000) total corporate communications (primary, secondary, and tertiary communications). To understand what X tries to communicate to people, a lecturer said, “as a school it has to prove its identity on different levels, to its customers which are the students and the parents of students and the corporations for employees to sign contracts etc. and how good it is to advertise to the public and it’s important to have a certain ranking. The budget for libraries and everything goes for ranking, but it mainly doesn’t affect the customers, it affects the other peers for investment or sharing resources but not to customers... But there is the point research wise, when we are introduced to each other we need to give a background about the X and the university and the facilities this is the other type of identity”. In addition, a manager confirmed that X is “trying to communicate to people that the student here achieves a lot at the end, and what you pay for it and the degree it’s all worth it. At the end you leave X and should have a good job. They work towards improving image. It’s good... It’s about what its mission and the vision is. You might have the opinions that differ from it because they are not aware of the mission or the vision of the school and rather focus narrowly in their particular role” (School Manager).

*“How I see it there is a lot of promises and I just get used to being frustrated, always constantly we end up with the second best. Even when we moved in to this building,*

*the space given to PhD students at least there was a dedicated space, every desk had a machine. There were a lot of unfulfilled promises. I don't meet the staff here, they don't like their offices, and their noisy and etc. A lot of happy people and they voted by not coming in. MBA is quite happy, they got not much associated space. Our culture didn't become very interactive and you can argue for all sorts of reasons how much it was due to the building. When we were in a tin building we used to get frustrated by the lack of staff interaction. This building to me is not a friendly building, it never served its key point the staff and the students interactions, in fact undergraduate students we lost contact with them, we lost them a long time ago, but it is not a building thing. As a PhD student I never meet the PhD students. They weren't strongly interactive with staff; we never found the way to get people to regularly meet".*

Participants commented on advertising and public relations as communication tools,

*"We do have a lot of advertising but not traditional print media. It's a static media like websites and we also use social media-twitter, LinkedIn and etc. with a consistent set of images ... I distinguish between advertising, communication and public relations. When it comes to what classically relates to public relations then the university retains the PR Company as a needed basis and it has a contract with PR Company. Their job is to promote us as a classic role" (Operations Administrator).*

*"I think X doing quite good in PR and they have dedicated people to do that and they are doing quite well" (Lecturer).*

*"I think within the school you can see some ads but nothing special, it's keeping up. Like other schools I assume ... They are doing some PR on Facebook, I add them as a group but I don't use it" (Operations Administrator).*

**Place architecture** - is a visual presentation of a company (Jun and Lee, 2007) encapsulating the company's purpose, identity (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007; Trueman and Cornelius, 2006), and culture (Gray and Balmer, 1998) which influence stakeholders' attitude, and behavior (Brennan et al., 2002; Han and Ryu, 2009; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2006; Rooney et al., 2010). It can be decisive in facilitating employees' and stakeholders' identification (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Knight and Haslam, 2010). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of place architecture in sustaining a competitive advantage in today's global market (Kirby and Kent, 2010).

Several studies have developed the three main components of place architecture which are i) symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts, ii) physical structure/spatial layout and functionality, and iii) ambient conditions/physical stimuli (Bitner, 1992; Han and Ryu, 2009; McElroy and Morrow, 2010; Nguyen and Leblanc, 2002; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1999). The focus group interviewees made some comments on their feelings, experience, and the atmosphere of the current building of the school: “I think the building is very good, very nice, very convenient and better compared to the other Business Schools and the previous building”.

Another interviewee added, “I think X is the best building in the university. It’s a good place, the location is perfect. Everything is ok, except sharing desks. Only our X share desks”. Furthermore, another interviewee said, “... X is very comfortable place I think high technology, and secure. Well organized”.

“I really like this building, it has influenced the students’ and lecturers’ behavior and attitude, for example, they used to come with slippers to their office but since we moved to this building, everyone is dressed up, perfumed, and chic, also girls wearing makeup, I feel I belong to this building more than the old one”. “I prefer this building much more than the previous old ugly one. I would like to see a bit of light in this building. This building is for PhDs and postgraduates. Inside it should be more lively and more space to socialize”. “First of all in terms of location, I would say it’s acceptable. It’s not near the library or other university facilities. But in terms of parking I don’t drive. The important thing I notice there is so much noise in this area. Many cars make a noise for the students here in this building”. An academic states “... X is a part of X University which is a more research based university than teaching. They focused on developing students to develop our skills in general, many workshops and courses, but in X there is no large room with many computers for the workshops, I think it is a beautiful building but not practical as such”. Employees’ comments stated,

*“I see X place architecture as a product which changes the shape of uni, in general I do like the building. There was a design parameter that wasn’t particularly useful. If you have open plan space you have to put in security measures, which put a distance between typical students and undergraduate or postgraduate students and the offices of the space where the staff are sitting” (School Manager).*

*“... from outside it's quite nice. Personally they covered some mistakes from other buildings such as not too much glass now and not everyone can see what's going on inside. Located on the main entrance to the university means a lot. So every visitor will notice this building is the Business School. Architecturally it's nice from outside. But from inside out could be better” (Lecturer).*

**Physical structure/spatial layout and functionality** - can serve as an integral part of supporting the place architecture, even though it may not act as a primary factor. It has the most effect not only on the satisfaction of individual workers but on the performance of teams (Vischer, 2007). Comments about the physical structure/spatial layout and functionality of the school were seen as a main factor of the place architecture. Physical structure/spatial layout and functionality is the architectural design and physical placement of furnishings in a building, the arrangement of objects (e.g. arrangement of buildings, machinery, furniture, and equipment), the spatial relationships between them, physical location and physical layout of the workplace which are particularly pertinent to the service industry (Bitner, 1992; Elsbach and Bechky, 2007; Han and Ryu, 2009; McElroy and Morrow, 2010; Nguyen, 2006) and can be used to symbolize something (Saleh, 1998). The physical structure of place provides messages about a firm's capabilities and qualities to outsiders and employees alike (Bitner, 1992) and has been found to affect employee attitudes as well (Parish et al., 2008). Participants made numerous comments on the effective use of the right spatial layout and functional design and its influences on co-stakeholders' perceptions and behavior in the marketplace (Davis, 1984).

The focus group members discussed more practical issues, to which employees pay less attention. For example, one focus group member commented that: “I think they tried to use all the spaces, but I believe there are lots of waste spaces. I wish before they design the place, they collect questionnaires or interviews with the employees and students to find out their requirements. I do have enough space for my books and papers but as you are aware, PhD is not teamwork, is individual work... importantly, I don't have privacy and this place sometimes is very noisy”. As mentioned by another interviewee, “...I think it has excellent location it's near to London, it's near to the underground. It's in a very good area which is a safe area. Price is excellent. A respondent in a follow-up interview states,

*“I think it's used very good and modern construction methods. The atmosphere of the school is quite good. The tuning of the school in case of lighting, heating,*



*plumbing and arrangements is still going on, but I can see that they have properly done, it is not yet reforming fully” (School Manager).*

*“Ambient is bad, the color scheme is bad. The interior structure is bad. When you enter university it has to have a big entrance. The entrance is not inviting ... Noise is fine, privacy is fine. It’s taking care of you but it lacks the ambient” (Focus Group 2).*

**Ambient conditions/physical stimuli** - of an environment in service settings encourage stakeholders to pursue service consumption (Han and Ryu, 2009) and they subsequently have an effect on employees’ behaviors, attitudes, satisfaction, performance (Brennan et al., 2002; Bitner, 1992; Elsbach and Pratt, 2007; Han and Ryu, 2009; Kamarulzaman et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2006; Parish et al., 2008) and attitude toward the service provider (Han and Ryu, 2009; Nguyen, 2006). The modern office design or re-design efforts should be resisted given the increase in distractions and violations of personal space inherent in the changes in physical stimuli that accompany such designs (McElroy and Morrow, 2010). Similarly, in the current study, a manager and a lecturer comment on some aspects of the ambient conditions/physical stimuli, for example,

*“I’m working in the open area for researchers, light is fine when there is light outside. The temperature there is another issue, doors open automatically... It’s a professional working place” (Lecturer).*

*“I think except where we need to establish particular cultures in the open plan area, around quietness. I think the architecture works well the sound insulation between offices is good, but not perfect, most of the actual office areas are light and airy. We need to leave throughout summer cycle. Aesthetics are quite nice. Ventilation has a few problems. There are very nice teaching rooms” (School Manager).*

The lighting, noises, temperature and privacy were very influential factors that affected people’s judgment about ambient conditions/physical stimuli. For instance, “Light is ok in the morning, but at night it doesn’t work. I have to move every 7-10 minutes. The noise in the office is quite noisy because people are talking all the time”. In addition, another added that “... fine noise from outside, but inside it’s noisy and no privacy at all”. Also, the following interviewee highlighted,

*“... As I mentioned the most important thing you need to be in a quite area. I found it very difficult to have a quiet place here in the student area. This is one of the most important things that it makes me dissatisfied about the building” (Focus Group 2).*

*“Noise is fine, it’s not noisy, it’s good. (It’s very private here; it’s too private-meaning security and safety). But it’s not private, this is a very bad point, they should give each student a desk. I am paying 2000 pound per month and I deserve the desk. I am paying money I expected to have my own desk. This is so bad” (Focus Group 2).*

**Symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts** - are aspects of the place’s physical setting that individually or collectively guide the interpretation of the social setting (McElroy and Morrow, 2010), can be related to the aesthetics and attractiveness of the physical environment (McElroy and Morrow, 2010), develop a complex representation of workplace identity (Elsbach, 2004, p.99) and are mainly relevant to the service industry (Han and Ryu, 2009) since they create a positive image in the marketplace. Authors (Davis, 1984; Elsbach, 2004; Han and Ryu, 2009; McElroy and Morrow, 2010) emphasized the value of the symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts expressed through the architecture, which is also espoused by interview participants. As mentioned by interviewees,

*“X has an iconic identity another symbolic feature of X as an icon is its characteristic to communicate, its means of identification, with no longer bound by the specificities of culture, tradition or location. X constitutes a complex manifold of experience, lifestyle and effect” ... it has rebranded Uxbridge” (Research Student Administration).*

*“It’s good because I think it is quite modern and fits ambience of the building. White painted doors with open doors. At the same time it reflects to be environmentally friendly, building is a match to the furniture-both modern. I like my chair and my table” (Lecturer).*

*“I don’t mind the prevailing background, but we need to make sure that we populate the building with the color and the variety. The standard desking would be particularly my choice but it’s ok. The chairs are very good indeed, especially teaching rooms. The artwork is chipping at the moment and we are still busy doing things like communication screenings. We are adding a lot to back ground ... I like carpet, I’m perfectly happy with base colors” (School Manager).*

*“Chair is fine. Again the desk is fine in my opinion it should be bigger, before it was bigger” (Focus Group 2).*

**Identification** - is the degree to which a stakeholder defines him/herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization (Dutton et al., 1994, p.239; Knight and Haslam, 2010; Rooney et al., 2010). Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) recognized the two ways in which

place has been related to identity. The first is ‘place identifications’ which refers to a person’s expressed identification with a place. For instance, sex, race, occupation, sports or a person from London may refer to themselves as a Londoner and place can be considered to be a social category (the same rules as a social identification within social identity). As with this paper, the article by Marin and de Maya (2013) deals with issues of identification (social identity theory). The second way in which place has been related to identity is through the term place identity, which describes the person’s socialization with the physical world.

*“... overall I can say I am satisfied studying here, we faced lots of difficulties such as moving three times from office to office, sharing a table with very unorganized person, but since a week ago which I changed my table, I feel happy and motivated to finish my thesis soon... also I introduce X to friend of mine who started his research a couple of days ago” (Focus Group 2).*

*“I am feeling commitment to X as I wanted to study here... now, I am happy to spend the rest of my working life here ... and I have strong commitment here... here is my second home” (Lecturer).*

*“As a student I had my own table but since we moved here, I was given a hot-desk which means the desk is available to whoever arrives at the office early, I don’t have my own table, I have to share with a colleague, it means I can’t come to the office every day, otherwise I have to use another table, so annoying, I am not comfortable here when I have to move ...However, with all lack of comfort, when someone ask me where do you study, with a proud reply, from X Business School. Most of people say wow, especially who is studying in lower ranking university” (Focus Group 1).*

## **CONTRIBUTION**

As a qualitative exploratory study, this study provides rich data on the phenomenon to develop the triad relationship between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification. The most significant finding of the current study was to provide a better understanding of the following research questions: RQ1 – What is the relationship between corporate identity and place architecture? RQ2 – What is the relationship between corporate identity and identification? RQ3 – What is the relationship between place architecture and identification? and RQ4 – What is the relationship between corporate identity dimensions and place architectural dimensions?

### ***Managerial Implications***

In light of the findings, this paper provides policy/management recommendations to multiple substantive areas, such as university managers, school managers, and senior managers (who are instrumental in planning and delivering the changes that supported the new policy and strategic agenda, (Rooney et al., 2010)), board directors, identity management, strategic management and corporate branding to X Business School. Generally, the high or upper levels of the organization are responsible for strategic planning, policy and decision-making. The results of this research confirm, expand, but also challenge the extant understanding of the corporate identity/architecture/identification interplay. In other words, a clear understanding of the dimensions of the relevant concepts can assist managers in policy development to develop a coherent policy for managing favorable corporate identity and architecture which can influence stakeholders' identification.

The findings of this study should enable policy makers whose responsibilities it will be to determine the future identity of the corporation to be better informed about the ways in which universities can actively improve identification within their stakeholders. It is argued that i) corporate identity should be managed strategically, and should be in alignment with the identity elements (company's corporate visual identity, communication, and philosophy, mission and value); ii) place's architecture should be managed strategically, and should be in alignment with the identity elements; iii) corporate identity/ place architecture gap should be constantly carefully managed; iv) place architecture/identification (emotional attachment) gap should be regularly monitored. Moreover, the paper provides policy recommendations for higher education in the UK. In addition, the findings of this study may support and shape business policy.

By taking a holistic approach, this study suggests that the goals of the organization should ideally be transformed into a clear corporate identity, together with corporate visual identity - philosophy, mission and values - and corporate communication. From this research it becomes clear that in order to gain a competitive advantage; organizations should have clear guidelines about the organization's corporate image they desire and how it can be achieved. Today's business environment requires that companies develop long-term relationships with customers and this research proposes three main areas of action that could be undertaken in order to manage

corporate identity to attain higher levels of business performance. These relate to the dissemination of philosophy, mission and values, implementation of corporate visual identity and communication. The corporate identity management and its elements may already be managed by a business and in addition, the current study emphasized the need for their integration and consistency.

Decision makers and policy makers should place more emphasis on a differentiation between a company and the competitors by paying particular attention to the dimensions of corporate identity management. For instance, attention should concentrate on corporate visual identity implementation because this can present a main form of differentiation, especially in a rapidly changing competitive situation. A deeper view of visual aspects should be adopted and the overall visual presentation in the organization business units should be consistent. Managers and policy makers should realize that the identity of an organization must be based on solid foundations that contain an overall message. It is extensively established in the related literature that organizations should manage stakeholders as they impact on business survival and prosperity. Managers may be concerned with a consistent and a continuous programme of actions as a preferred way to transmit the desired message and image to stakeholders, as corporate identity is unquestionably functional in reaching different stakeholders.

With respect to the place architecture/environment, this study recommends that feelings of self-efficacy are maintained if the environment facilitates, or at least does not hinder, a person's everyday lifestyle. In the environmental literature, Winkel (1981) debates the concept of manageable environments as one in which the residents of an area are able to organize information from their immediate socio-physical environment in such a way that they can develop a predicative system that allows them to judge whether a setting supports their goals and purposes. Living in a "manageable environment means a person feels self-efficacious with respect to their daily functioning in that environment" (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996, p.208). At an applied level, the current study has implications for how policy makers and managers might facilitate (re)design of the architecture of the company to create a strong sense of social identity based on their identifications and connections with the workplace. The result of this study is consistent with Rooney et al. (2010).

According to the findings of this study, the relationship between architecture and identification illustrates the impacts on stakeholders' identification. According to policy/strategy, this study suggests that it is more likely that stakeholders can support the goals and contribute to overall organizational effectiveness. According to Ayoko and Hartel (2003), managers need to be aware of how territorial dynamics affect workplace satisfaction. This study reveals that when an environment is perceived as unmanageable it constitutes a threat to self-efficacy. It is at these junctures that architecture management is accorded particular importance by policy makers.

By bridging the gap between professionals and academic management, a favorable place architecture can be seen as an incorporated approach to expressing the company's communication skills internally and externally. Establishing that the architecture is a chief tangible asset in the expression of a service company can impact on internal-stakeholders' identification, thus this study aims to be supportive to communication, managers, decision makers, and professionals alike.

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this research confirm, expand, and in addition challenge extant observations on Six broad areas: corporate identity, architecture and multiple internal stakeholders' identification interplay, main elements of corporate identity/main elements of architecture interplay, corporate identity, architecture, and stakeholders' identification. The research contribution of this study covers i) a gap-bridging empirical study relating to the theoretical development and a substantive area (service industry–middle-ranked London-based Business School); ii) prospective research deriving from the current study; iii) theoretical implications, as well as managerial and policy makers' implications; and iv) interesting and important questions being raised.

Regarding the theoretical contributions of the current study, this research offers several potential theoretical contributions to the literature, as follows: the findings advance current knowledge by adding alternative insights to service industry and higher education views on possible antecedent factors of corporate identity and architecture. As discussed earlier, (i) to create a favorable place architecture, a favorable corporate identity is required (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Balmer,

2001, 2005; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Melewar, 2003; Pittard et al., 2007; Van den Bosch et al., 2005).

The present research complements the belief of scholars (Becker, 1981; Bitner, 1992; Campbell, 1979; Davis, 1984; Elsbach, 2004; Elsbach and Pratt, 2007; Fischer et al., 2004; Morrow and McElroy, 1981; Schmitt et al., 1995) that internal-stakeholders' perceptions of the servicescape and associated elements can lead their beliefs, attributions, and judgmental outcomes connected with the organization, its people, and its products in two directions; i) affecting how people assess their work environment, and ii) how they see themselves on the basis of the attributes and functioning of their work environment (Fischer et al., 2004).

This study also contributes to marketing theory. Place architecture has drawn the attention of marketing literature which states that architecture is an important part of communication strategy (Melewar and Saunders, 2000) and covers corporate design (Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007). Marketing professionals take aesthetics and style (as a kind of language which architects select as the essential elements to communicate) considerations in their work into account (Olins, 1990; Weggeman et al., 2007). Corporate communication and marketing are significant for workplace productivity and innovation and organizations need to integrate the latest innovations into workspaces to serve the multiple needs of today's organizations (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007) and, consequently, its identification (Nguyen, 2006). The findings of this research, which so far is one of the first studies to empirically validate the assumption made by researchers (Elsbach, 2003; Rooney et al., 2010) is that there is a relationship between corporate identity and place architecture in higher education - in this case, a London-based Business School.

In addition, this study contributes to grasping a broader view of architecture as a main element of corporate identity, as well as marketing by examining the relationship between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification from the eyes of internal-stakeholders. Architecture (physical environment) "must be designed in response to two types of needs: operations' needs expressed by the maximization of organizational efficiency, and marketing needs to create an environment which influences stakeholders' attitudes and beliefs toward the organization and, as a result, its identification" (Nguyen, 2006). So far, this is one of the earliest

studies to empirically validate the assumption made by scholars that there is an interplay between corporate identity, place architecture, and identification in the service industry (Davis, 2010; Elsbach, 2003; Han and Ryu, 2009; McElroy and Morrow, 2010; Rooney et al., 2010). Meanwhile, the current study also expands understanding regarding the interplay between corporate identity, architecture, and identification, therefore advancing current knowledge by adding alternative insights to the service setting - and helping to validate and refine the findings in the literature in this field. The main contribution of this research is to the corporate identity, design and services marketing literatures.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES**

The current research represents a preliminary foray into the conceptualization of corporate identity, place architecture and internal-stakeholders' identification as the main consequences. Notwithstanding the support that it lends to the theoretical research framework, it is clearly the case that there are a number of limitations to the present research. In addition, it is limited in terms of its sole focus on a multi-internal stakeholders' perspective, sole focus on a single distinctive sector, and its methodology of case studies. Nonetheless, it remains true that there is certainly a need for future research to scrutinize the variables that have been investigated in the current study. Perhaps the most significant need relates to an increase in the number of interviews and focus groups included in the research; however, we found that when new cases were added, little new information was revealed, indicating saturation. As this study employed exploratory research, replicated studies are now needed in order to gain greater for the examined relationships.

A limitation of the research refers to the fact that due to the size of the survey, the empirical study was conducted entirely within a single industry. Nevertheless, input from a variety of practitioners was obtained during the exploratory phase of the study. This provided insights into the corporate identity, place architecture, and identification arena. Another research stream could replicate this study in an additional sector or country.

Although the results of this study provide support for a relationship among corporate identity, place architecture, and identification, it only involved managers, employees, academics, and



students in the London-based middle ranking university. However, we argue that the findings revealed in this research are not specific, and have value for university managers conducting business across industries.

In terms of the research setting, the current research was carried out in a single setting, which was limited to the UK context. Although conducting the study in a single setting presents the researcher with better control over market and environmental differences, it does limit the external validity. The Business School setting enabled the researcher to clearly detect the effects of corporate identity factors and architecture factors on the internal-stakeholders' identification, as the nature of the institution is more likely to generate active involvement. In addition, middle ranking Business Schools are, therefore, not quite the same as other schools; for example, Business Schools might be more market-oriented than the rest of the schools. According to Walford (1996), the new public management and quasi market policies employed by governments around the world encourage educational institutions to be altogether more market-orientated. Furthermore, higher education institutions are being transformed into corporate enterprises (Henkel, 1997). Nevertheless, since the research was conducted in the UK, the findings of this study might not easily be generalized to the higher education institutions of other countries. Therefore, a future study would be recommended to repeat this research in other countries.. In addition, as the survey was started when the employees and students moved in to the new building, the future research should include conducting research before and after moving to the new building to understand stakeholders' feelings about the place.

One potential limitation of this study concerns the number and type of modern building architecture used. Future empirical study should be conducted to replicate this study with two or more types of building architecture. Also, future empirical research should be conducted to replicate this study in different settings.

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**Table 1: Details of in-depth interviews**

<b>Interview date</b>	<b>Interview position</b>	<b>Interview approx. duration</b>
6. 3. 2012	School Manager	65 min; 46 min.
16. 3. 2012	Operations' Administrator	55 min; 33 min.
16. 5. 2012	Operations' and Finance Manager	44 min.
17. 5. 2012	Research Student Administration	35 min.
18.5.2012	Professor	174 min; 112 min.
17. 5. 2012	Senior Lecturer	25 min; 18 min.
17. 5. 2012	Lecturer	37 min; 25 min; 17 min; 22 min; 15 min.
<b>Topics discussed with Managers</b>		
What do you think about what corporate identity means?		
In your opinion, what is the current identity of the school? Or what we really are? (Actual identity, concept = corporate identity)		
What are the business activities?		
What are the purposes of the school?		
What is the corporate style and ethos?		
In your opinion, what X says X is? Or what X tries to communicate to people? (Communicated identity, concept = corporate communications)		
Do you think the messages from both official and informal sources from the University can influence stakeholders' perceptions of the University?		
What do you think about the school's visual identification such as logo?		
What do you think about the school's advertising?		
What do you think about the school's public relations?		
In your opinion, What is X seen to be (Conceived identity, concept = Corporate Image)		
Do you have a positive or negative image of this school? Why?		
What do you think other people think about the school?		
In your opinion, What does the school stand for (Covenanted identity, concept = Corporate Brand)		
In your opinion, What ought we to be? (Ideal identity, concept = Corporate Strategy)		
In your opinion, What do we wish to be? (Desired identity concept = CEO Vision)		
How do you describe the current buildings?		
Why would you build the new building? Or what is the purpose of the new school building?		
What does the current building say about the present identity of the school?		
Has the new building changed the identity of the school?		
<b>Topics discussed with Employees</b>		
What do you think about what corporate identity means?		
How do you feel about the current identity of the school (eg. Proud,...)		
In your opinion, what is the current identity of the school? Or what X really is? (Actual identity, concept = corporate identity)		
What are the business activities?		
What are the purposes of the school?		
What is the corporate style and ethos?		
In your opinion, what X says X is? Or what X tries to communicate to people? (Communicated identity, concept = corporate communications)		
What do you think about the school's visual identification such as logo?		
What do you think about the school's advertising?		
What do you think about the school's public relations?		
In your opinion, What is X seen to be (Conceived identity, concept = Corporate Image)		
Do you have a positive or negative image of this school? Why?		
What do you think other people think about the school?		
In your opinion, What does the school stand for (Covenanted identity, concept = Corporate Brand)		
In your opinion, What ought we to be? (Ideal identity, concept = Corporate Strategy)		

In your opinion, What do we wish to be? (Desired identity concept = CEO Vision)
How do you feel about the current building of the school (experience, feeling, atmosphere)? Do you like the building?, why?, and what do you like about the current building?
How do you describe the current buildings?
How do you feel about the current building of the school (experience, feeling, atmosphere)? Do you like the building?, why?, and what do you like about the new building?
What is the purpose of the new school building?
Has the new building changed the identity of the school?
What does the current building say about the present identity of the school?
How do you feel about the physical structure/spatial layout and functionality of the school? (eg. Location)
How do you feel about the physical stimuli/ambient conditions of the school? (eg. Noise, Privacy, Light)
How do you feel about the symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts of the school? (eg. Design, Floor, Table/chair)
How do you describe yourself related to the school? (eg. Are you proud to tell others that you are part of the X, Does X's image in the community represents you?)

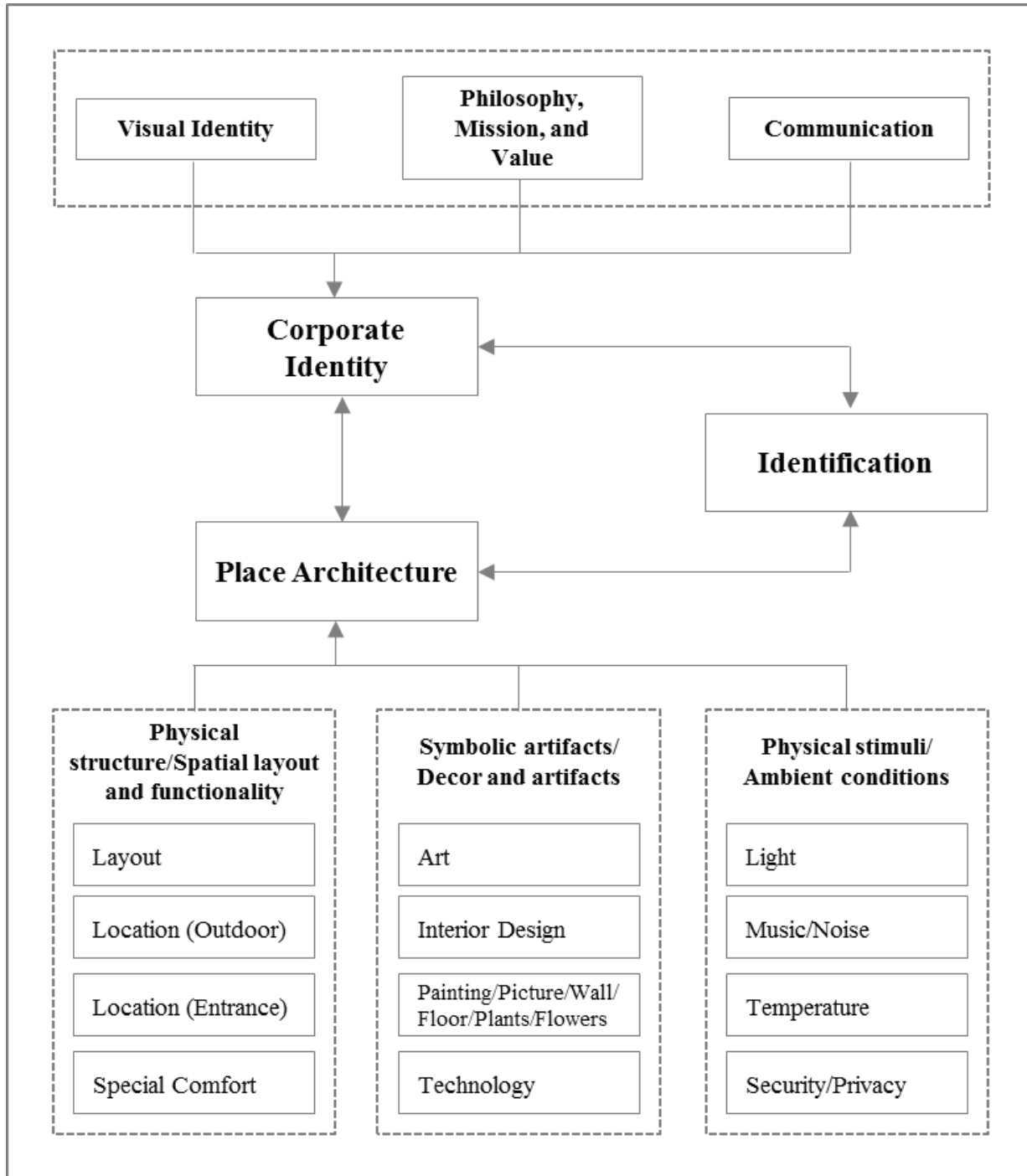
Source: Developed by the researchers

**Table 2: Details of focus groups and the core points discussed**

Date	Group size	Profile of participants	Session duration (approx.)	Age range
18. 4. 2012	6	Staff, Doctoral Researchers	95 min.	25-42
27.4. 2012	6	Staff, Doctoral Researchers	60 min.	30-37
27. 4. 2012	5	Staff, Doctoral Researchers	65 min.	23-32
17.11. 2012	6	Staff, Doctoral Researchers	45 min.	29-41
17.11. 2012	7	Staff, Doctoral Researchers	57 min.	30-40
18.11. 2012	6	Staff, Doctoral Researchers	69 min.	24-35
<b>Topics discussed</b>				
What do you think about what corporate identity means? (eg. set of characteristics – behavioral and intellectual – which serve to distinguish the institution from others)				
How do you feel about the current identity of the school (eg. Proud...)				
In your opinion, what is the current identity of the school? Or what X really is? (Actual identity, concept = corporate identity)				
What are the business activities?				
What are the purposes of the school?				
What is the corporate style and ethos?				
I.4. In your opinion, what X says X is? Or what X tries to communicate to people? (Communicated identity, concept = corporate communications)				
What do you think about the school's visual identification such as logo?				
What do you think about the school's advertising?				
What do you think about the school's public relations?				
In your opinion, What is X seen to be (Conceived identity, concept = Corporate Image)				
Do you have a positive or negative image of this school? Why?				
What do you think other people think about the school?				
In your opinion, What does the school stand for (Covenanted identity, concept = Corporate Brand)				
In your opinion, What ought we to be? (Ideal identity, concept = Corporate Strategy)				
In your opinion, What should we wish to be? (Desired identity concept = CEO Vision)				
How do you feel about the current building of the school (experience, feeling, atmosphere)? Do you like the building? why? and what do you like about the current building?				
How do you describe the X buildings?				
How do you feel about the physical structure/spatial layout and functionality of the school? (eg. Location)				
How do you feel about the physical stimuli/ambient conditions of the school? (eg. Noise, Privacy, Light, etc.)				
How do you feel about the symbolic artifacts/decor and artifacts of the school? (eg. Design, Floor, Table/chair)				
Has the new building changed the identity of the school?				
What does the current building say about the present identity of the school?				
How do you describe yourself relation to the school? (eg. Are you proud to tell others that you are part of the X, Does X's image in the community represents you)				

Source: Developed by the researchers

Figure 1: A Framework of Corporate Identity, Place Architecture, and Identification



Source: Developed by the researchers

