Identity
Identity

- Individual identity has been studied since the time of Greek philosophers.
- Over the centuries the focus has slowly been extended, including groups of people, namely organizations.
As Albert noted … …

- The concept of identity has the advantage of being a concept, construct, or question that can be studied or posed at any level of analysis – individual, group, organization, or industry – because in a certain sense, the question of identity is at the heart of the idea of level…
• Identity has been researched at the level of the
  • Individual – in the fields of developmental psychology, social psychology, symbolic interactionism, and psychodynamics
  • Group – social identity theory and various perspectives on genre, racial, ethnic and national identities
  • Organization

Ashfort and Mael underline …
To a firm the attention in searching and defining its own identity is not optional.

Without a definite identity no firm can be identified by its potential customers, and therefore be recognizable and chosen by them.
Identity is not a formal problem, identity involves human beings and their emotion, their values, their culture or, in other words, people as a whole.
... identity is having the properties of an onion not merely because it is multilayered, but because an onion produces tears. One does not consider matters of identity, identification, or disidentification dispassionately. These topics often engender intense emotions: anguish, pride, anxiety, security sought and secured and so on.
Studies on the topic of organizational identity do not have a long tradition.

Organizational identity is defined by the distinctive aspects of the organization, and the attributes belonging to the considered organization.
But, is identity dynamic or enduring?

Gioia, Schultz and Corey’s point of view: 

“the notion of an identity that is **enduring** implies that identity remains the same over time – that it has some permanency. An identity with a **sense of continuity**, however, is one that shifts in its interpretation and meaning while retaining labels for ‘core’ beliefs and values that extend over time and context”
Organizational identity is considered as a process in development: if the environment changes so does identity.

More exactly: organization changes in order both to maintain its own identity in a constantly changing environment and to enhance and develop the elements that are better suited to cope with contingent circumstances.
Tomasi di Lampedusa wrote in *The Leopard*: 

*If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change*

The meaning is that the “core identity” maintains its own substance over time, while the complementary factors change each time as needed.
Basic constituent of identity: internal and external relations of interdependence within the organization

The ability given by a strong identity to change while remaining the same must be considered the most important “key for the road to success”
The notion and importance of corporate identity
Balmer highlights that the once narrow definition of corporate identity has been broadened to include three distinguishing features:

1. Corporate identity is fundamentally concerned with reality and what an organization is (strategy, philosophy, history, business scope, the range and type of products and services offered and its formal and informal communication)
2. Corporate identity is a multidisciplinary field relying on the roots of multiple disciplines

3. Corporate identity is based on the corporate personality of the organization
Corporate identity has been defined in many ways:

… the firm’s visual statement to the world of who and what the company is – of how the company views itself – and therefore has a great deal to do with how the world views the company (Selame and Selame 1975)
Carter (1982) wrote: *The logo or brand image of a company and all other visual manifestations of the identity of a company*

Subsequent research highlights that corporate identity is far more than just a logo.
Recently (Van Riel and Balmer 1997) observed

Every organization has an identity. It articulates the corporate ethos, aims and values and presents the sense of individuality that can help to differentiate the organization within its competitive environment.
Firms are becoming increasingly aware of the relevance of maintaining a strong corporate identity.

There are many ways in which a strong corporate identity can be effective:

... raising motivation among employees, inspiring confidence among the company’s external target groups, acknowledging the vital role of customers and acknowledging the vital role of financial target groups.
• A strong corporate identity creates a "we-feeling" in employees and in customers

• … and can be seen as a source of competitive advantage
Melewar and Jenkins model

Corporate identity

Communication and visual identity

Corporate culture

Behavior

Market conditions
Corporate communication

Uncontrollable communication

Architecture and location

Corporate visual identity

Communication and visual identity
... corporate communication is an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favorable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent.
Corporate communication

- Management communication
- Marketing communication
- Organizational communication
Management communication

- Refers to how managers convey to their employees different information to:
  - Develop a shared vision of the company within the organization
  - Establish and maintain trust in the organizational leadership
  - Initiate and manage the change process
  - Empower and motivate employees
... marketing communication consists primarily of those forms of communication that support sales of particular goods or services.
It is currently divided into a variety of activities:

- Public affairs
- Environmental communications
- Investor relations
- Labor market communication
- Internal communication
Uncontrollable communication

- It is any
  ... unintended or emergent messages through third party reports and informal communication on the part of employees with outsiders
An organization’s physical location is an important part of corporate identity.

Attention is also being placed on a firm’s architecture and the influence it can have on how their identity is perceived.
... corporate visual identity consists of the corporate name, logotype and/or symbol, typography and color

... it is not the symbol itself but what the symbol represents that has value
The adaptation of corporate identity

• A strong corporate identity is essential to create a distinct image for an organization in its competitive environment

• To maintain its competitive advantage an organization needs to adapt to the political, economic, technological changes
In order to face environmental changes...

corporate identity and corporate image are still some of the core building blocks of an organization’s strategy. Competing in the new economy will not only involve rationalizing the business process but also evaluating the attributes of the corporate identity and the consumer perception.
Business identity encompasses a triumvirate of related concepts and literature which are:

- Corporate identity
- Organizational identity
- Visual identity
An organization identity is a combination of those tangible and intangible elements that make any corporate entity distinct.

It is shaped by the actions of corporate founders and leaders, by tradition and the environment.

At its core is the mix of employees’ values which are expressed in terms of their affinities to corporate, professional, national and other identities.
It is multidisciplinary in scope and is a melding of strategy, structure, communication and culture.

It is manifested through multifarious communication channels encapsulating product and organizational performance, employee communication and behavior, controlled communication and stakeholder and network discourse.