

**INDUSTRY CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING OF CORPORATE
IDENTITY IN NIGERIA'S BANKING SERVICES SECTOR:
AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF CORPORATE
ADVERTISEMENTS, 1970-2005**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)**

BY

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50

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to examine how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed through the corporate advertisements that were published in Nigeria's national press media between 1970 and 2005 by the major operators in the Nigerian banking industry. In order to accomplish this task, this research has been divided into ten chapters.

The first chapter introduces the research. It conceptualises a research question and provides an overall trajectory for this thesis. Chapter two established four ontologically grounded reasons for pursuing this research from the social constructionist perspective and chapter three sought to examine how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed (in theoretical literature) between 1970 and 2008. Chapter four presents an analysis of the construction of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity in the Nigerian banking industry between 1970 and 2005. Chapter six concerns research methodology and the specific research method drawn to address the question being investigated in this research. Chapters seven and eight presents the empirical findings and chapter nine makes an attempt to establish what has been accomplished in the process of this research by discussing its outcomes. Chapter ten concludes the thesis. It considers the contributions emerging from this research and its implications in terms of relevance for corporate identity theory and practice. In addition, it examines the limitations of the research as well as possible future research directions of this study. Finally, the thesis ends with a summary and conclusion.

Findings from this research indicate the emergence of four new scholarships, namely generic, distinctive, innovative and transformative corporate personalities. Importantly,

the outcome of this study provides ample evidence to argue that the industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed an ongoing flow of changes and stabilities, which run through these new scholarships.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
Title page	I
Abstract	II
Table of content	IV
List of tables	XVII
List of figures	XIX
Acknowledgement	XXII
Declaration	XXV
Dedication	XXVI
Chapter one: Introduction	02
1.1 Introduction	02
1.2 Research problem	05
1.3 Objective of this research	09
1.3.1 Key terminologies in research question and statement of objective	09
1.3.1.1 Firm	10
1.3.1.2 The notion of construct	10
1.3.1.3 The phenomenon of meaning	11
1.3.1.4 The concept of corporate identity	12
1.3.2 Why it is important to approach the research question from the social constructionist perspective	12
1.4 The motivation for undertaking this study in the Nigerian banking industry	14
1.5 The reason why the 1970 to 2005 period of investigation was chosen	14
1.6 The reason for investigating this study through corporate advertisements	15

1.7 Importance of this research	16
1.8 Thesis organisation	18
1.9 Summary	23
Chapter two: Social constructionism and the justifications for investigating the meaning of corporate identity through this lens	26
2.1 Introduction	26
2.2 Social construction	27
2.2.1 Peoples' understanding of the society as an external, objective reality	28
2.2.2 Peoples' understanding of the society as an internal, subjective reality	29
2.3 Corporate identity	32
2.3.1 Corporate identity formation process models: a review of typologies	33
2.3.2 Corporate identity models: a critique	37
2.4 The development of a social constructionist based corporate identity model	37
2.4.1 A social constructionist view on the meaning of corporate identity	42
2.5 Links between Berger and Luckmann's social constructionist ontological assumptions and the new social constructionist based corporate identity model	43
2.5.1 The notion of ongoing: a clarification	47
2.6 Reasons why work on the meaning of corporate identity could be approached from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist perspective	48
2.7 Summary	51
Chapter three: theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-2008: review and analysis	54
3.1 Introduction	54
3.2 Theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970 to 2008	56
3.2.1 Corporate identity as corporate personality and corporate identity (CI)	56

mix, 1970-1985: the period of stability	
3.2.2 Corporate identity as corporate personality, corporate identity mix (CI mix) and the change towards corporate distinctiveness, 1985 to 1995	60
3.2.3 Corporate identity as corporate personality and CI mix and the change towards ‘central’, ‘enduring’, distinctiveness’ (CED) and image, 1995 to 2008	65
3.2.4 A paradigmatic shift from the search for a universal definition to understanding	73
3.3 Models aiming to create a better understanding of the meaning of identity	75
3.3.1 Balmer’s (1995b) seven schools of thought on corporate identity	75
3.3.2 van Riel and Balmer’s (1997) three perspectives on the meaning of corporate identity	76
3.3.3 Moingeon and Ramanantsoa’s (1997) French school of thought	78
3.3.4 Cornelissen and Harris’s (2001) three metaphorical perspectives to corporate identity	79
3.3.5 He and Balmer (2007) four perspectives of corporate identity	82
3.4 The social theory models of corporate identity: the development of a synthesis	84
3.4.1 Level of convergence 1: The corporate identity mix (CI mix)	85
3.4.2 Level of convergence 2: Corporate personality	90
3.5 Contributions, weaknesses of models and the development of a research question	92
3.6 Summary	94
Chapter four: the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in the Nigerian banking services sector, 1970-2005	97

4.1 Introduction	97
4.2 Regulation of the Nigerian banking industry and stability in industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity as generic corporate personality, 1970-1985	100
4.3 Deregulation and its impact on the stability and the change from industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity as generic corporate personality towards distinctive corporate personality, 1986 – 1994	103
4.4 Industry distress, stability and the change from industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity as distinct corporate personality towards transformative and innovative corporate personality, 1994-2005	108
4.5 Summary	113
Chapter five: a summary and synthesis of key arguments in the theoretical literature	116
5.1 Introduction	116
5.2 Literature review: a summary of previous strands of literature	117
5.3 Literature review: a synthesis of previous strands of literature	119
5.4 Points of divergence in theoretical literature	122
5.5 A re-examination of the development of gap in literature	123
5.6 The importance of addressing the gap empirically	124
5.7 Bridging the gap within the literature of the meaning of corporate identity: an empirical approach	125
5.8 Summary	126
Chapter six: Research methodology	128
6.1 Introduction	128
6.2 Background to the research, research question and the development of a	129

schema	
6.3 Types of research methodology and how these fit into the research question	132
6.3.1 Quantitative research methodology	133
6.3.1.1 Why quantitative research methodology does not fit the research question	134
6.3.2 Exploratory research methodology	134
6.3.2.1 Exploratory research methodology cannot be used in this study	135
6.3.3 Mixed research methodology	136
6.3.3.1 Why mixed research methodology does not fit this study	136
6.3.4 Qualitative research methodology	137
6.3.4.1 Why qualitative research methodology cannot be used inspite of the qualitative nature of this study	139
6.3.5 Interpretive research methodology	139
6.3.5.1 The fit between interpretive research methodology and the research question	140
6.4 The development of an interpretive research methodology	141
6.5 The research design	142
6.5.1 Research design: breaking down the boundaries	142
6.5.2 The development of a qualitative research design	144
6.5.2.1 Phase 1-The hermeneutic method: meaning and brief historical development	145
6.5.2.2 The critical hermeneutic method: an outline	148
6.5.2.2.1 The semiotic process	149
6.5.2.3 The use of critical hermeneutics in the deconstruction of corporate advertisements	150
6.5.2.4 Drawback of critical hermeneutic method	153

6.5.2.5 Why senior executives were interviewed	155
6.5.2.6 Interpretive interview with senior managers	156
6.5.2.7 What is an interpretive interview?	156
6.5.2.8 Why interpretive interview is appropriate for this research	157
6.5.2.9 Why corporate communication managers were approached for interviews	157
6.5.2.10 Why senior managers were approached for this interview	158
6.5.2.11 The interpretive interview process	158
6.5.2.12 Stage one: preparation for interview	158
6.5.2.13 Stage two: actual interview	160
6.5.2.14 Closure of the interview	162
6.5.2.15 Post interview stage	162
6.6 Summary	162
Chapter seven: critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements of the three largest banks in the nigerian banking industry	165
7.1 Introduction	165
7.2 Method of analysis: Ricoeur's three stage (critical hermeneutic) dialectical processes	167
7.3 The deconstruction of corporate advertisements	177
7.3.1 Critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements, 1970-1986	178
7.3.1.1 Critical hermeneutic analysis of Standard Bank, Barclays Bank and UBA's corporate advertisements	178
7.3.1.1.1 The social-historical moment	178
7.3.1.1.2 The formal moment	182
7.3.1.1.3 The moment of interpretive and re-interpretive	203
7.3.1.1.4 Generic corporate personality: emergence of a new construct	206

7.3.2 Critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements, 1986-1994	207
7.3.2.1 Critical hermeneutic analysis of Standard Bank, Barclays Bank and UBA's corporate advertisements	207
7.3.2.1.1 The social-historical moment	207
7.3.2.1.2 The formal moment	212
7.3.2.1.3 The moment of interpretive and re-interpretive	240
7.3.2.1.4 Distinctive corporate personality: emergence of a new construct	243
7.3.3 Critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements, 1994-2005	244
7.3.3.1 Critical hermeneutic analysis of Standard Bank, Barclays Bank and UBA's corporate advertisements	244
7.3.3.1.1 The social-historical moment	244
7.3.3.1.2 The formal moment	248
7.3.3.1.3 The moment of interpretive and re-interpretive	269
7.3.3.1.4 Transformative and innovative corporate personalities: emergence of two new constructs	271
7.4 Discussion in the light of the conceptual schema and research question	272
7.5 Summary	274
Chapter eight: interpretive interview with senior executives of the three largest banks in the Nigerian banking industry	276
8.1 Introduction	276
8.2 The sample	277
8.2.1 Use of advertising briefs	279
8.2.1.1 Problem arising from the use of advertising bried	280
8.3 Method of analysis	281
8.3.1 Meaning interpretation method of analysis	281

8.4 Interview schedule	282
8.5 Interview schedule findings	283
8.5.1 Interpretation of corporate advertisements, 1970-1986	284
8.5.1.1 Analysis of interviewee interpretation of “Standard Bank. First in Nigeria. Your Partners in Progress” corporate advertisement	285
8.5.1.1.1 The things that came to mind when confronted with this advertisement	285
8.5.1.1.2 The meaning of the message conveyed through pictures	288
8.5.1.1.3 Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	289
8.5.1.1.4 Meaning of the message conveyed through the corporate signature	290
8.5.1.1.5 Standard Bank (now First Bank Plc): an analysis of interviewees’ interpretation of advertisement	292
8.5.1.2 Analysis of interviewee interpretation of “Barclays in Nigeria” corporate advertisement	293
8.5.1.2.1 The things that came to mind when confronted with this advertisement	293
8.5.1.2.2 The meaning of the message conveyed through Union Bank’s corporate symbol	295
8.5.1.2.3 Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	297
8.5.1.2.4 Meaning of the message conveyed through signatures	298
8.5.1.2.5 Barclays Bank (now Union Bank Plc): an analysis of interviewees’ interpretation of advertisement	298
8.5.1.3 Analysis of interviewee interpretation of “United Bank for Africa Limited” corporate advertisement	299
8.5.1.3.1 The things that came to mind when confronted with this advertisement	299
8.5.1.3.2 Message and the meaning of the message conveyed through the body copy	301

8.5.1.3.3	Meaning of the message conveyed through signatures	302
8.5.1.3.4	UBA Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisement	303
8.5.1.3.5	Generic corporate personality: emergence of a new construct	304
8.5.2	Analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisements, 1986-1994	306
8.5.2.1	Analysis of interviewee interpretation of First Bank's "You'll always leave First Bank with a smile – that's our goal" corporate advertisement corporate advertisement	306
8.5.2.1.1	The meaning of the message conveyed through pictures	308
8.5.2.1.2	Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	310
8.5.2.1.3	Meaning of the message conveyed through corporate signature	311
8.5.2.1.4	First Bank Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisement	313
8.5.2.2	Analysis of interviewee interpretation of Union Bank's "You can depend on Union Bank" corporate advertisement corporate advertisement	313
8.5.2.2.1	What came to mind when confronted with the advertisement	313
8.5.2.2.2	The meaning of the message conveyed through pictures	316
8.5.2.2.3	Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	317
8.5.2.2.4	Meaning of the message conveyed through corporate signature	319
8.5.2.2.5	Union Bank Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of Advertisement	320
8.5.2.3	Analysis of interviewee interpretation of UBA's "UBA...for innovative banking" corporate advertisement	321
8.5.2.3.1	What came to mind when interviewees were first confronted with advertisement	321
8.5.2.3.2	The meaning of the message conveyed through picture	322

8.5.2.3.3	Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	324
8.5.2.3.4	Meaning of the message conveyed through signatures	325
8.5.2.3.5	UBA Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisement	326
8.5.2.3.6	Distinctive corporate personality: emergence of a new construct	326
8.5.3	Analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisements, 1994-2005	328
8.5.3.1	Interviewee interpretation of First Bank's Century2 corporate advertisement	328
8.5.3.1.1	What came to mind when interviewees were first confronted with advertisements	328
8.5.3.1.2	The meaning of the message conveyed through pictures	331
8.5.3.1.3	Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	332
8.5.3.1.4	Meaning of the message conveyed through signatures	333
8.5.3.1.5	First Bank Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisement	334
8.5.3.2	Interviewee interpretation of Union Bank's Union Bank in the age of change corporate advertisement	335
8.5.3.2.1	What came to mind when interviewees were first confronted with advertisements	335
8.5.3.2.2	The meaning of the message conveyed through pictures	336
8.5.3.2.3	Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	338
8.5.3.2.4	Meaning of the message conveyed through signatures	339
8.5.3.2.5	Union Bank Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of Advertisement	340
8.5.3.3	Interviewee interpretation of UBA's How may we help you? corporate advertisement	341

8.5.3.3.1 What came to mind when interviewees were first confronted with advertisements	341
8.5.3.3.2 The meaning of the message conveyed through picture	343
8.5.3.3.3 Meaning of the message conveyed via body copies	343
8.5.3.3.4 Meaning of the message conveyed through signatures	344
8.5.3.3.5 UBA Plc: an analysis of interviewees' interpretation of advertisement	345
8.5.3.4 Transformative and innovative corporate personalities: the emergence of two new constructs	346
8.6 Discussion in the light of the conceptual schema and research question	348
8.7 Summary	349
Chapter nine: discussion of research findings	352
9.1 Introduction	352
9.2 Corporate identity as generic corporate personality (1970-1986)	354
9.2.1 Provision of credit support for industry, commerce and agriculture	354
9.2.2 Provision of comprehensive banking services	355
9.2.3 Corporate history	356
9.2.4 Size/branch network	356
9.2.5 The development of a generic corporate personality	357
9.2.6 Comments in the light of the research question and research objective	357
9.3 Corporate identity as distinctive corporate personality (1986-1994)	358
9.3.1 Rich but unique corporate history	359
9.3.2 Unique service quality that cannot be matched by competitors	359
9.3.3 Unique achievements	360
9.3.4 Innovative and groundbreaking activities	362
9.3.5 Core competencies	362

9.3.6 The development of a distinctive corporate personality	362
9.3.7 Comments in the light of the research question and research objective	363
9.4 Corporate identity as transformative and innovative corporate personalities (1994-2005)	364
9.4.1 Business and product process change	364
9.4.2 Redesign of new offices	365
9.4.3 Reengineering of management styles	365
9.4.4 Introduction of new technology	366
9.4.5 Development of new banking products	366
9.4.6 The development of transformative and innovative corporate personalities	367
9.4.7 Comments in the light of the research question and research objective	367
9.5 Comments in the light of the social constructionist model and findings	368
9.6 Summary	369
Chapter ten: research contributions, implications, limitations and future research directions	371
10.1 Introduction	371
10.2 Contributions emerging from thesis	371
10.3 Implication of contributions for corporate identity theory	379
10.3.1 The significance of the cultural context	386
10.4 Implication of thesis contributions for corporate identity practitioners	387
10.5 Limitation of research and future research directions	388
10.5.1 Strengths and weaknesses of data	390
10.6 Concluding remarks	391
References	393
Appendix	459

Appendix I	460
Appendix II	474
Appendix III	476

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Multidisciplinary perspectives influencing the meaning of identity	06
Table 2.1: Common points of interconnectivity between Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction epistemology and corporate identity	45
Table 3.1: Ongoing stability in theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-1985	59
Table 3.2: Four perspectives of corporate identity	83
Table 7.1: Industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-1986	204
Table 7.2: Industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1986-1994	241
Table 7.3: Industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1994-2005	270
Table 7.4: Findings from the critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements	273
Table 8.1: Number of interviewees and their designation	278
Table 8.2: First Bank of Nigeria (FBN) Plc, 1970-1986	292
Table 8.3: Union Bank of Nigeria (UBN) Plc, 1970-1986	298
Table 8.4: UBA Plc, 1970-1986	304
Table 8.5: Industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-1986	305
Table 8.6: First Bank of Nigeria (FBN) Plc, 1986-1994	313
Table 8.7: Union Bank of Nigeria (UBN) Plc, 1986-1994	320
Table 8.8: UBA Plc, 1986-1994	326
Table 8.9: Industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1986-1994	327
Table 8.10: First Bank of Nigeria Plc, 1994-2005	334

Table 8.11: Union Bank of Nigeria Plc, 1994-2005	340
Table 8.12: UBA Plc, 1994-2005	345
Table 8.13: Industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1994-2005	347
Table 8.14: Findings from the interpretive interview with senior executives	349

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Developments in the meaning of corporate identity	08
Figure 1.2: Structure of thesis	20
Figure 2.1: Cyclical and ongoing relationship between objective and subjective reality	29
Figure 2.2: A social constructionist model of corporate identity	39
Figure 3.1: Ongoing stability and change in theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-1985; 1985-1995	61
Figure 3.2: Ongoing stabilities and changes in the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-2008	66
Figure 3.3: ongoing construction of the meaning of corporate identity	74
Figure 3.4: Balmer's (1995b) schools of thought on corporate identity	75
Figure 3.5: Moingeon and Ramananstsoa (1997) perspective on identity	78
Figure 3.6: Metaphorical perspectives to corporate identity	80
Figure 3.7: Points of literary convergence: corporate identity mix	88
Figure 3.8: Corporate and internal personality: point of convergence	91
Figure 3.9: Authors' construction of the meaning of corporate identity (CI)	93
Figure 4.1: The change from corporate identity as corporate personality	103
Figure 4.2: Story telling through corporate advertisement	106
Figure 4.3: corporate identity as distinct corporate personality	107
Figure 4.4: corporate identity as transformative and innovative corporate personalities	108
Figure 5.1: Industry and theoretical construction of corporate identity: a synthesis	121

Figure 6.1: A schema representing ongoing stabilities and changes in industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity	131
Figure 6.2: Research design map	153
Figure 7.1: de Saussure's sign: a network of signified and signifier	170
Figure 7.2: First Bank Plc, Union Bank Plc and UBA Plc symbols: triggering feelings of good return on investment	171
Figure 7.3: Connotation	175
Figure 7.4: Standard Bank's (now First Bank Plc) corporate advertisement	184
Figure 7.5: Barclays Bank's (now Union Bank Plc) corporate advertisement	187
Figure 7.6: United Bank for Africa's corporate advertisement	191
Figure 7.7: First Bank of Nigeria Limited's corporate advertisement	213
Figure 7.8: Union Bank's corporate advertisement	216
Figure 7.9: UBA's corporate advertisement	220
Figure 7.10: First Bank's corporate advertisement	250
Figure 7.11: Union Bank's corporate advertisement	254
Figure 7.12: UBA's corporate advertisement	257
Figure 8.1: Policy and decision making designations in the Nigerian banking Industry	278
Figure 8.2: Standard Bank Ltd's (now First Bank Plc) corporate advertisement	287
Figure 8.3: Barclays Bank Ltd's (now Union Bank Plc) corporate advertisement	295
Figure 8.4: United Bank for Africa (UBA) Ltd's corporate advertisement	300
Figure 8.5: First Bank (Standard Bank Ltd's) corporate advertisement	307
Figure 8.6: Union Bank Ltd's (previously Barclays Bank Ltd) corporate advertisement	314
Figure 8.7: United Bank for Africa (UBA) Ltd's corporate advertisement	323

Figure 8.8: FirstBank Plc's (previously First Bank Ltd) corporate advertisement 330

Figure 8.9: Union Bank Plc's (previously Union Bank Ltd) corporate advertisement 337

Figure 8.10: United Bank for Africa (UBA) Ltd's corporate advertisement 342

Figure 10.1: Corporate identity divide 374

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DECLARATION

This is to declare that the paper below was published by the author of this research from this thesis:

“Understanding the meaning of corporate identity: A Conceptual and Semiological Approach”, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp.414-432 (first author) with T.C. Melewar.

DEDICATION

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to the life and times of my maternal grandmother, Comfort, a unique and remarkable woman who passed on to the great beyond in the course of my doctoral studies in the UK. “Mama” (as we call her) devoted her entire life to the care, progress and spiritual wellbeing of all her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her memory lives in my heart. I shall never forget her.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The concept of 'corporate identity' was coined in the early period of the post Second World War by Gordon Lippincott (founder of Lippincott and Margulies, now Lippincott) in order to differentiate Lippincott and Margulies designs from the works of other design firms (Meech, 2006). Between the said period and 1960, some practitioners began to construct the concept of corporate identity implicitly as corporate image (Boulding, 1956), corporate personality (Martineau, 1960) or a combination of both (Martineau, 1958). For the purpose of this study, the notion of construct refers to how actors profess reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

The implicit construction of corporate identity as corporate image and corporate personality continued throughout the 1960s with the publication of several works, which conceived this concept from these perspectives (Schladermundt, 1960; Rood, 1963; Easton, 1967; Pilditch, 1967; Selame, 1968; Feldman, 1969; Handel, 1968; Herhursky, 1969; Stridsberg 1969; Campbell, 1969; Christopher and Pitts, 1969).

The 1970s witnessed a monumental development as the publication of practitioner texts (see for instance the works of Margulies, 1970; Pilditch, 1970; Selame and Selame, 1971; Durwood, 1971; Richman, 1972; Click, 1973; Caust, 1973; Landor, 1973; Hunt, 1974; Schecter, 1975; Margulies, 1977, 1978; Olins, 1978), some of which influenced the understanding of the concept, started to emerge.

Of the contributions made by authors in the 1970s, Pilditch's (1970) work, which addressed the communication, design, planning, management and control of corporate identity as well as the differences between corporate identity and corporate image (Alessandri, 2001; Abratt, 1989), provides the most comprehensive insight into this concept. With the exception of Olins (1978) text, no other work in the said period addressed the concept of corporate identity comprehensively as Pilditch (1970).

Since Pilditch (1970) however, the amount of attention paid to the entire corporate identity discipline grew phenomenally (He and Balmer, 2007; Cornelissen, et al. 2007; Cornelius et al., 2007; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005; Balmer, 2002a; Melewar, 2003; Christensen and Askegaard, 2001). There is now a vast amount of literature contributing towards the development of theory in this field. The increased number of articles in business, marketing, corporate communications and public relations journals devoted to issues concerning corporate identity provides strong evidence in this regard (Balmer, 2001b).

The heightened interest in corporate identity is made even more visible given the recent introduction of modules in this discipline at some business schools in some western countries. Today, corporate identity modules are offered at Columbia Business School, Columbia University, New York, USA; Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus, Rotterdam, Netherlands; Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde, Scotland (UK); Westminster Business School, University of Westminster, London (UK); Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland (UK) and recently at Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London (UK).

Three multidisciplinary factors (Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996; Whetten and Godfrey, 1998; Balmer, 1998) explain the reasons why there has been a rise in the volume of conceptual and empirical literature put forward on this subject.

First are corporate marketing led factors of shortening product life cycles, desire for differentiation, merger and diversification/consolidation activities and high rates of media inflation. Other corporate marketing factors include the redefinition of businesses from a marketing perspective, increasing recognition of the value of integrated marketing communications, finer approaches to segmentation, rising incidence of crisis situations (Marwick and Fill, 1997), rise in product innovation and reorientation of corporations towards customer service (Schmidt, 1995).

Second are socio-economic factors of unification of Europe, challenges of economic recession, value change and related increase in environmental awareness, opportunities and challenges of the European market (Schmidt, 1995), and privatisation and divestment of government stocks (Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996).

Third are business and strategy-induced factors of globalisation of markets and production, stiffer competition, rising cost of business operations, and crises in many areas of industry. Others include increased desire for re-engineering among today's corporations and many other factors, which place severe challenges on corporations' national and international competition more than ever before (Schmidt, 1995).

Importantly, these three factors have contributed immensely to the rise in interest in corporate identity as it is being witnessed in today's global business environment.

1.2 The research problem

One topical issue arising from the unprecedented rise in interest on corporate identity is the debate concerning its meaning. Over the years, the meaning of corporate identity has been constructed theoretically as symbolism (see Selame and Selame, 1975; Birkigt and Stadler, 1980; Antonoff, 1985; Abratt, 1989; Blauw, 1994; Dolphin, 1999; Gioia, 2000; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). In another vein, this concept has been viewed as an image (Carter, 1982; Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Gioia, 1998; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). In other texts, it has in fact been conceived as a combination of a firm's behaviour and corporate communications (see Abratt, 1989; Lux, 1986; Leuthesser and Kohli, 1997; Alessandri, 2001; Korver and van Ruler, 2003; Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

Importantly, the variety of ways in which the meaning of the concept of corporate identity has been constructed reflects the discord and heated disagreement (Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Topalian, 2003; Cornelissen and Elving, 2003; Motion and Leitch, 2002; Balmer, 2002b; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Wilkinson and Balmer 1996; van Rekom, 1997; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Baker and Balmer, 1997) that has permeated this discipline for decades.

It appears that the failure to achieve a universal agreement for the meaning of the concept of corporate identity might have (in addition to other factors) encouraged the inauguration of several corporate identity conferences that addressed this problem. The first International Corporate Identity Group symposium, which was held in 1994

to (among other things) identify a universal definition for this concept provides a useful example in this regard. Although, this symposium came up with what is known today in Europe as the “Strathclyde Statement” (see van Riel and Balmer, 1997), however, there is no shred of evidence in theoretical literature to demonstrate that this definition has been universally adopted. In fact there is no indication that a universal agreement as to what the concept of corporate identity truly means has been achieved.

Table 1.1: Multidisciplinary subjects influencing the meaning of corporate identity

Marketing perspective	Organisational theory perspective
<p>Balmer, 1993; Balmer, 1994; Balmer, 1995a, Balmer, 1995b; Balmer, 1996; Balmer, 1997; Balmer, 1998; Balmer, 1999a; Balmer, 1999b; Balmer, 2001a; Balmer, 2001b; 2001c; Balmer, 2002a; Balmer 2002b; Balmer and Gray, 2000; Balmer and Gray, 1999; Balmer and Dinnie, 1999; Balmer and Greyser, 2002; Balmer and Greyser 2003; Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Balmer and Soenen, 1999; Balmer and Stotvig, 1997; Balmer and van Riel, 2000; He and Balmer, 2007; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991; Balmer et al., 2007; Gray and Balmer, 1998; Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996; Baker and Balmer, 1997; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar, 2001; Melewar, 2003; Melewar and Bains, 2002; Melewar, Bassett and Simões, 2006; Melewar and Harrold, 2001; Melewar and Jenkins, 2002; Melewar et al., 2005; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Melewar, Meadows and Saunders, 2001; Melewar and Navalekar, 2002; Melewar and Sabel Akel, 2005; Melewar and Saunders, 2000; Melewar and Saunders, 1999a; Melewar and Saunders, 1999b; Melewar and Saunders, 1998; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2000; Melewar, Saunders and Balmer, 2001; Melewar and Storrle, 2001; Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001; Birkigt and Stadler, 1980; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Morison, 1997; Schmidt, 1995, Schmidt, 1997; Podnar, 2005; van Rekom, 1992; van den Bosch et al., 2005; van den Bosch et al., 2006; van Rekom, 1997; Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996; van den Bosch, 2004; Simões et al, 2005; Kirsch, 2004; Abratt, 1989; Andriopoulos and Gotsi, 2001; Christensen and Askegaard, 2001; Foo, Check-Teck and Lowe, 1999; Foo, Check-Teck and Foo, Check-Tong, 1999; Thomas and Hill, 1999; Ackerman, 1988; Antonoff, 1985; Argenti, 1998; Arnold, 1988; Bernstein, 1984; Black, 1995; Blauw, 1994; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; Dolphin, 1999; Downey, 1986; Garbett, 1988; Hannebohn and Blocker, 1983; Hawn, 1998; Hehir, 1994; Tyrell, 1995; Henrion, 1980; Ind, 1990; Ind, 1992; Ind, 1996; Ind, 1997; Jefkins, 2001; Jefkins, 1994; Kammerer, 1988; Keller, 1990; Korver and van Ruler, 2003; Lambert, 1989; Leitch, 1999; Lux, 1986; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Portugal and Halloran, 1986; Stewart, 1991; Birkigt, Stadler, and Funck, 1995; Tannebeger, 1987; Thomas and Kleyn, 1989; van Riel, 2000; van Riel, 1996; van Riel, 1995; van Riel, Smidts and Pruyn, 1994; van Riel and van den Ban, 2000; van Riel and van Hasselt, Jan-Jelle, 2002; Davies et al., 2003; Dowling, 1986; Dowling, 1993; Dowling, 1994; Dowling, 2001; Kennedy, 1977; Meijs, 2002; Smythe et al. 1992; Olins, 1978; Olins, 1979; Olins, 1989; Olins, 1990; Olins, 1991; Gutjahr, 1995; Olins, 1995; Schmitt et al., 1995; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005; Leitch and Motion, 1999; Bromley, 2000; Vella and Melewar, 2007; Leuthesser and Kohli, 1997; Markkanen, 1998; Handelman, 2006; Heaton, 1967; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997; Simões et al. 2006; Brønn, 2005; Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Fukukawa et al., 2007; Huppatz, 2005; King, 1982; Landry, 1997; Perkins, 1995; Harrison, 1972; Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Marziliano, 1998; Holtzhausen and Fourie, 2008; He and Balmer, 2005; He, 2008.</p>	<p>Albert et al. 2000; Albert, 1998; Albert and Whetten, 1985; Brown, 1997; Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Cheney and Christensen, 2001; Carroll and van Riel, 2000; Carroll and van Riel, 2002; Cock et al. 1984; Dandridge et al. 1980; Ezzy, 1998; Fiol et al. 1998; Gioia, 1998; Gioia et al. 2000; Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000; van Dick et al. 2005; Bouchikhi, Fiol, Gioia, Golden-Bibble, Hatch, Rao, Rindova and Schultz, 1998; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Ashford and Johnson, 2001; Corley, Gioia and Fabbri 2000; Alvesson, 1990; Bouchikhi and Kimberly, 2003; Corley, 2002; Corley, 2004; Gioia, et al 2000; Glynn, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Hatch and Schultz, 1998; Hatch and Schultz, 2000; Hatch and Schultz, 2002; Reger, Gustafson, DeMarie and Mullane, 1994; Rindova and Fombrun, 1998; Rindova and Schultz, 1998; Stimpert, Gustafson and Sarason, 1998; Whetten and Godfrey, 1998; Whetten and Mackey, 2002; Czarniawska, 1997; Gaertner, Bachman, Dovidio and Banker, 2001; Brown, 2001; Brown and Humphreys, 2002; Brown, 1994; Brown, 1995; Brown and Starkey, 2000; Brown, Humphreys and Gurney, 2005; Brown and Humphreys, 2006; Coupland and Brown, 2004; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Clark, 1972; Dutton et al, 1994; Porac, Wade and Pollock, 1999; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Hogg and Terry, 2001; Pratt and Foreman, 2000; Czarniawska and Wolf, 1998; Brickson and Brewer, 2001; Brickson 2000a; Brickson, 2000b; Brickson, 2000c; Scott and Lane, 2000a; Voss et al., 2007; Ashford and Mael, 1989; Scott and Lane, 2000b; Schultz et al. 2000; Smidts et al. 2001; Dukerich et. al, 2002; Sarason, 1995; Ruud, 1996; Gustafson and Reger, 1995; Dutton and Penner, 1993; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997; Pratt, 1998; Pratt, 2000; Rodrigues and Child, 2003; Alvesson, 1994; Sillince, 2006.</p>
	<p>Graphics and visual perspective</p>
	<p>Carls, 1989; Carter, 1975; Carter, 1976; Carter, 1982; Carter, 1983; Carter, 1985; Carter, 1986; Carter, 1997; Chajet and Shachtman, 1992; Napoles, 1988; Pilditch, 1970; Margulies, 1970; Margulies, 1971; Margulies, 1977; Selame and Selame, 1975; Mollerup, 2004; Seigel, 1993; Formosa and Kroeta, 2002; Topalian, 1984; Spaeth, 1991; Topalian, 2003.</p>
	<p>Communication perspective</p>
	<p>Cheney, 1983; Cheney and Tompkins, 1987;; Alessandri, 2001; Grunig, 1993; Alessandri and Alessandri, 2004; Grunig and Hunt, 1993; Stuart, 1998a; Stuart, 1998b; Stuart, 1999a; Stuart, 1999b.</p>
	<p>Architecture and interior design perspective</p>
	<p>Flight, 2005; Hawkins, 2002; Lamb, 2001; Alpert, 1991; Plunkard, 2004; Capowski, 1993; Walker, 1982; Hill, 1977; Leinfuss, 1994.</p>

Source: developed by author

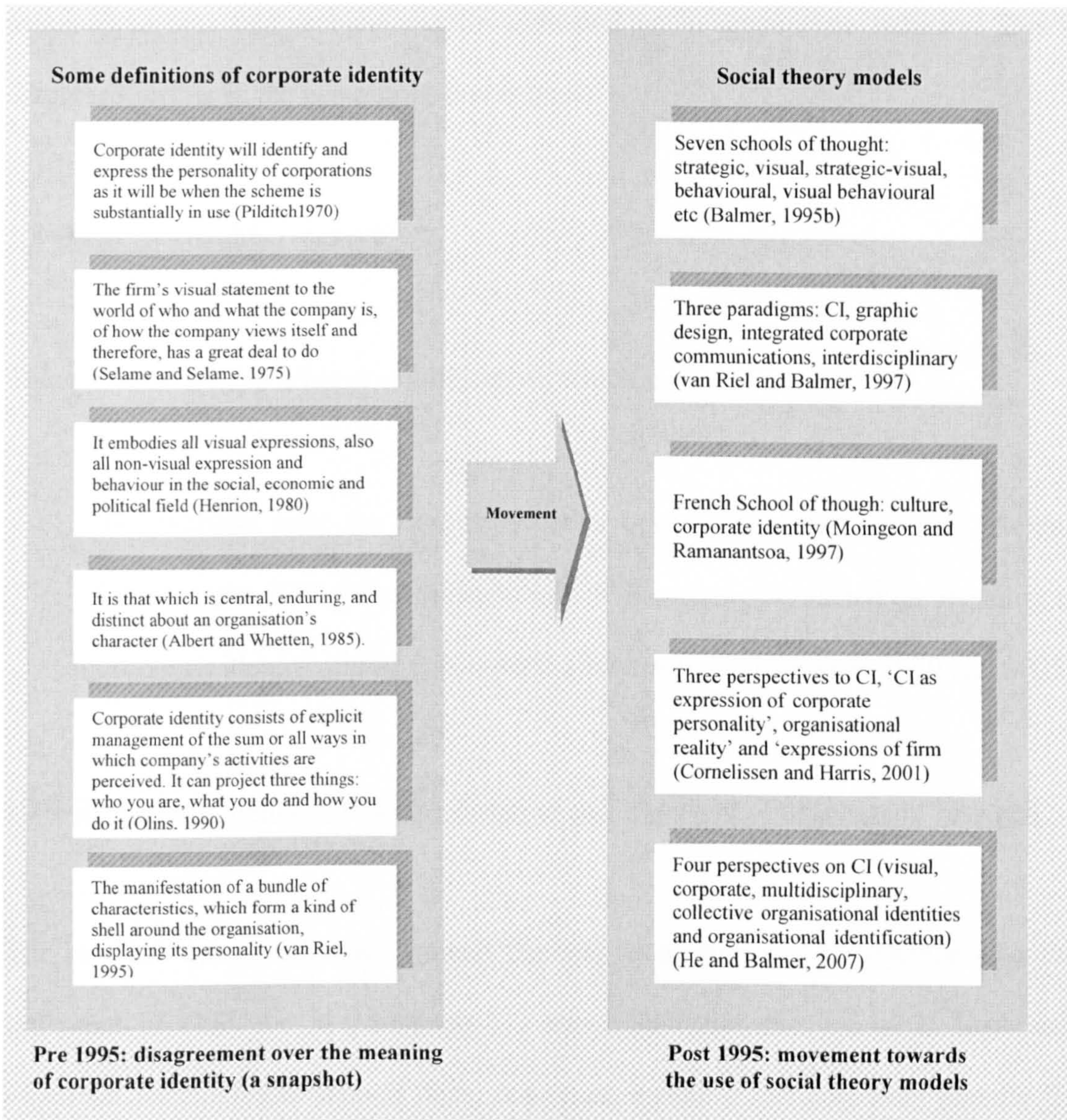
Perhaps a factor challenging the goal to achieve a universal definition for corporate identity is the fog (Balmer, 2001b) that has enveloped the construction of the entire discipline. The fog hovering over the construction of the meaning of the concept has contributed to its reckless and promiscuous use (Cornelissen and Harris, 2001) amongst practitioner and academic authors (Balmer, 2001b). In addition, the multidisciplinary perspectives, from which this concept has been constructed, appear to be one of the underlying forces contributing to the disagreement over the construction of the meaning of the concept. Various academic literature (see Table 1.1) which gives an overview of the multidisciplinary perspectives from which the concept of corporate identity has been constructed, lends support to this view.

In the light of table Table 1.1, it is conceivable that the diverse academic and practitioner backgrounds of authors may have provoked the confused (Cornelissen and Harris, 2001) construction of the concept. Hence a lack of consensual agreement on the construction of the meaning of corporate identity holds sway (Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Melewar, 2003; Topalian, 2003; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Wilkinson and Balmer 1996; van Rekom, 1997; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Balmer, 2001b).

The failure to resolve the confusion that beset the construction of the meaning of corporate identity (in literature) might have influenced some notable corporate marketing authors to give up the search for a universal definition for the concept (van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). There is now a gradual movement towards the construction of social theory models (see Balmer, 1995b; van

Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) (see Figure 1) which explain the meaning of the concept.

Figure 1.1: Developments in the meaning of corporate identity



Source: developed by author

Although these social theory models (see chapter three for details) explained the concept, amplified conceptual literature and galvanized attention to corporate identity, they took no cognisance of how firms construct the meaning of the concept. These constructions, which are often concealed in corporate communication texts, are

capable of generating a meaning (Phillips and Brown, 1993). More importantly, these models are weak at addressing one simple but important question, which is, *how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity over time?* This question, which is at the heart of this thesis, will form the core problem of this research. The issue then arises as to how this problem can be addressed in an appropriate industry. This is discussed further in the paragraphs that follow.

1.3 Objective of this research

This research aims to achieve one objective, which is:

1. To establish how the dominant banks operating in the Nigerian banking industry (pre 2005 forced recapitalisation exercise) constructed the meaning of corporate identity (through corporate advertisements) between 1970 and 2005.

1.3.1 Key terminologies in research question and statement of objective of research

The research question (posed towards the end of paragraph 1.1) together with the statement of objective in paragraph 1.2 above indicates the use of at least four important terminologies namely firm, construct, meaning and corporate identity. In order to give a clearer understanding and avoid subjectivity, an attempt is made in the paragraphs below to explain what each of these terminologies mean.

1.3.1.1 Firm

Broadly speaking, a firm refers to profit or non profit led business entities such as sole proprietorships, limited liability companies or a corporation (Berle and Means, 1991). However, for the purpose of this study, the notion of a firm refers to public limited liability companies created primarily to make profit and maximise investors' return on investment. In addition, the notion of the firm (in this study) refers to a financial institution providing commercial banking services to customers.

1.3.1.2 The notion of construct

The objective of this study lays emphasis on how firms in the Nigerian banking industry constructed the meaning of corporate identity over time. A review of the words constituting this statement of objective indicates that the terminology 'construct' is subjective. Importantly, the phenomenon connotes two meanings. On the one hand, the terminology is originally conceived as a psychological phenomenon (Kelly, 1955) signifying a variety of meaningful behaviours that are interconnected. On the other, this terminology, coined from social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) also refers to how meanings are created, developed, habitualised and institutionalised from ongoing interactions among social actors (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Given the subjective nature of this terminology, it is important to clarify right from the outset that the terminology "construct" (as highlighted in the objective of this thesis and throughout this thesis) refers to the sociological notion of

construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966); and not Kelly's (1955) psychological theory of personal construct.

More explicitly, the notion of "construct" (drawn from the statement of objective of this research) addresses the ways that social actors profess reality. It refers to how institutionalized entities of human conduct, which are created by social actors in a specific society develop into a tradition following an agreement (among social actors) to behave or follow specific conventional guidelines (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Thus, the notion of construct being referred to in this study has no bearing and has little to do with Kelly's (1955) psychological theory of personal construct.

1.3.1.3 The phenomenon of meaning

Meaning refers to interpretations given to ideas, concepts, objects, things and activities. Meaning is communicated formally and informally through language and behaviour and it provides an interpretation of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, the signifier and its user or the signifier and other signs (Noth, 1995). Meaning provides insight into the relationship that subsists between truth and ontology. Central to the phenomenon of meaning is a reconstruction thoughts, ideas, concepts, objects, things and activities (Schleiermacher, 1838; Dilthey, 1900; Betti, 1962/1980) based on the linguistic domain common to an author and the target audience (Noth, 1995). The role of interpretation is to give actual meaning to words and signs within a given context and audience against the background of a given situation (Ricoeur, 1978c). More specifically, it is to give constructive meanings to the ways that organisations construct themselves.

1.3.1.4 The concept of corporate identity

The concept of corporate identity has been defined in literature as a phenomenon reflective of corporate symbols, corporate communications and corporate behaviour (van Riel and Balmer, 1997). In addition, it has been defined as a combination of who and what they are (Gioia et al., 2000; Topalian, 1984); where they are and why they are there (Melewar, 2003); where they are going (Downey, 1986); what they do (Topalian, 1984); how they run their business, what they stand for (Topalian, 1984); what they believe in and how they operate (Abratt, 1989).

1.3.2 Why it is important to approach the research question from the social constructionist perspective

Given that the notion of ‘construct’ (which features prominently in the research question) is a social constructionist phenomenon; it is possible to assume that the most suitable philosophy capable of addressing the question under investigation in this research is social constructionism. However, it will be academically inadequate and theoretically insufficient to simply adopt social constructionism on the basis of such a weak assumption. Indeed, the decision to adopt a specific epistemological and ontological approach must be founded on a sound theoretical argument that will ultimately provide a solid theoretical reasoning.

What must be done therefore will be to position the research question within the context of social constructionism; and on this basis, establish a number of reasons

why this research should be approached from the social constructionist perspective. Hopefully, the positioning of social construction as an underlying philosophy for examining how firms construct the meaning of corporate identity will provide a good foundation for gaining deeper knowledge and robust intellectual insights into the true meaning of corporate identity, which is currently fraught by heated debate (Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Topalian, 2003; Cornelissen and Elving, 2003; Motion and Leitch, 2002; Balmer, 2002b; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Wilkinson and Balmer 1996; van Rekom, 1997; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Baker and Balmer, 1997; Balmer, 2001b).

Broadly speaking, the notion of epistemology and ontology signifies a huge debate about knowledge, how knowledge is acquired (Annis, 1978; Butchvarov, 1970), what people know and how knowledge relates to the conceptions of truth, belief and justification (Cohen, 1998; Bovens and Hartmann, 2003; DeRose, 1992; Gettier, 1963). It follows therefore that the development of an epistemological and ontological foundation for the question under investigation (as suggested above) is a huge philosophical task that extends beyond the scope of this chapter. Thus, in order to establish a strong and robust epistemological and ontological foundation for this thesis, it is reasonable to address this issue under a separate chapter. Consequently, it was decided that the next chapter will address this issue by developing seven mutual points of interconnectivity based on a synthesis between social constructionism and a typology of corporate identity models (see chapter two) developed by the researcher. This typology include environment driven models (Kennedy, 1977; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005); corporate personality driven models (Abratt, 1989; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b); mission

driven models (see Baker and Balmer, 1997; Alessandri, 2001); communication driven model (Dowling, 1986) and strategy driven model (Marwick and Fill, 1997). The justification for approaching this research via social constructionism was thereafter presented on the basis of these points of interconnectivity.

1.4 The motivation for undertaking this study in the Nigerian banking industry

The motivation for undertaking this study within the Nigerian banking industry is to gain the kind of insight that only comes from a non-familiar context. That is, as scholars, we are unlikely to grasp a fuller or robust picture of the meaning of corporate identity unless we develop insights into how this concept is constructed by industry in other parts of the world. This allows academics to gain a balanced view of how this concept is conceived in developed and developing economies. Besides, by approaching this study from an unfamiliar perspective, scholars are offered new, unique and fresher conceptualisations of the meaning of corporate identity.

1.5 The reason why the 1970 to 2005 period of investigation was chosen

This period of investigation (i.e. 1970 to 2005) was chosen for three reasons. First, 1970 represents the period in which the first comprehensive literature on the concept of corporate identity was published. Second, this period was marked by the promulgation of various decrees and the institutionalisation of many policies that shaped and influenced the construction of the meaning of corporate identity by the Nigerian banking industry. (This is demonstrated in chapter four of this thesis.) Third, the year 2005 witnessed the emergence of a new era in the history of commercial

banking in Nigeria. It was a period that all the 89 banks in Nigeria were forced to consolidate into 25 banks owing to Central Bank of Nigeria's recapitalisation policy.

1.6 The reason for investigating this study through corporate advertisements

This thesis examines the meaning of corporate identity. Consequently, it is reasonable to address this objective through corporate advertisement because it is a representational system that is capable of producing meanings (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004; Schroeder, 2002; Borgerson and Schroeder, 2002). Advertisements enhance the production of meanings (Hackley, 2003) by conjoining the world and the object (McCracken, 1988a).

In addition, corporate advertisements were drawn as the unit of analysis because it enjoys the patronage of service industries (Crane, 1990) especially banks, and it is conceived as one of the veritable media for constructing a firm's corporate identity (Crane, 1990). In addition, many firms (especially banks) that operated within the real productive sectors of the Nigerian economy employed corporate advertisements throughout the period under investigation. Although there are several sectors in the Nigerian economy, corporate advertisements produced by the Nigerian banking industry were however adopted as sample universe because they appeared in the media more frequently than those produced by other industries in other sectors.

1.7 Importance of this research

This research is valuable and important for several reasons. First, it provides a broad, comprehensive and longitudinal analysis of how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed for nearly four decades and highlights the ongoing changes and stabilities witnessed in the theoretical construction of the meaning of this concept. This theoretical analysis provides corporate marketing scholars with a broad view of the meaning of corporate identity and it gives insights into the scope and boundaries of its meaning. Insight into the boundaries and scope of authors' conceptualisations of the concept provides the basis on which work on other theoretical issues (i.e. communication, planning, management, measurement of corporate identity etc) that depend on a clear understanding of the meaning of corporate identity can advance.

Second, this research is valuable and important because it demystifies, draws the lines, highlights and pinpoints the issues that constitute the meaning of corporate identity in theoretical literature.

Third, the review of works on this concept (in this study) provides scholars with a clarification of and insight into what the concept of corporate identity is and what it is not. In essence, by making a review of this subject, academics are provided with an analysis that squarely distinguishes corporate identity from other related concepts and provides a means of confining the meaning of the concept, which might otherwise allow it to claim more territory and importance for itself than is legitimate.

Fourth, the review of existing literature indicates that academic work on the concept of corporate identity (a marketing phenomenon) has been positivistic in nature. Hitherto, there are very limited works in good quality (peer reviewed) marketing journals that addressed corporate identity issues from a social constructionist lens. So far, a number of studies, which approached the notion of identity from a social constructionist lens, did so from organisational theory (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), social psychology (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and organisational psychology (Haslam et al, 2006) perspectives. Consequently, this study will introduce corporate marketing scholars (majority of who are positivists) to social constructionism and initiate how this can be drawn as an underlying philosophy for addressing topical issues within corporate identity studies.

Fifth, this study is important because it attempts to make a break from the traditional positivist approach to corporate identity. It attempts to lay a foundation for further research into interpretivist corporate identity and corporate marketing studies.

Sixth, the review of literature (see chapter three) reveals that social theory models (see Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) which summarise the meaning of corporate identity is limited to authors' construction. There is a lack of conceptual and empirical studies addressing how firms' (in developed or developing economies) construct this concept. This study is important because it seeks to fill this gap. Thus, the outcome of the study will provide a comprehensive insight into how firms construct the meaning of the concept of corporate identity.

1.8 Thesis organisation

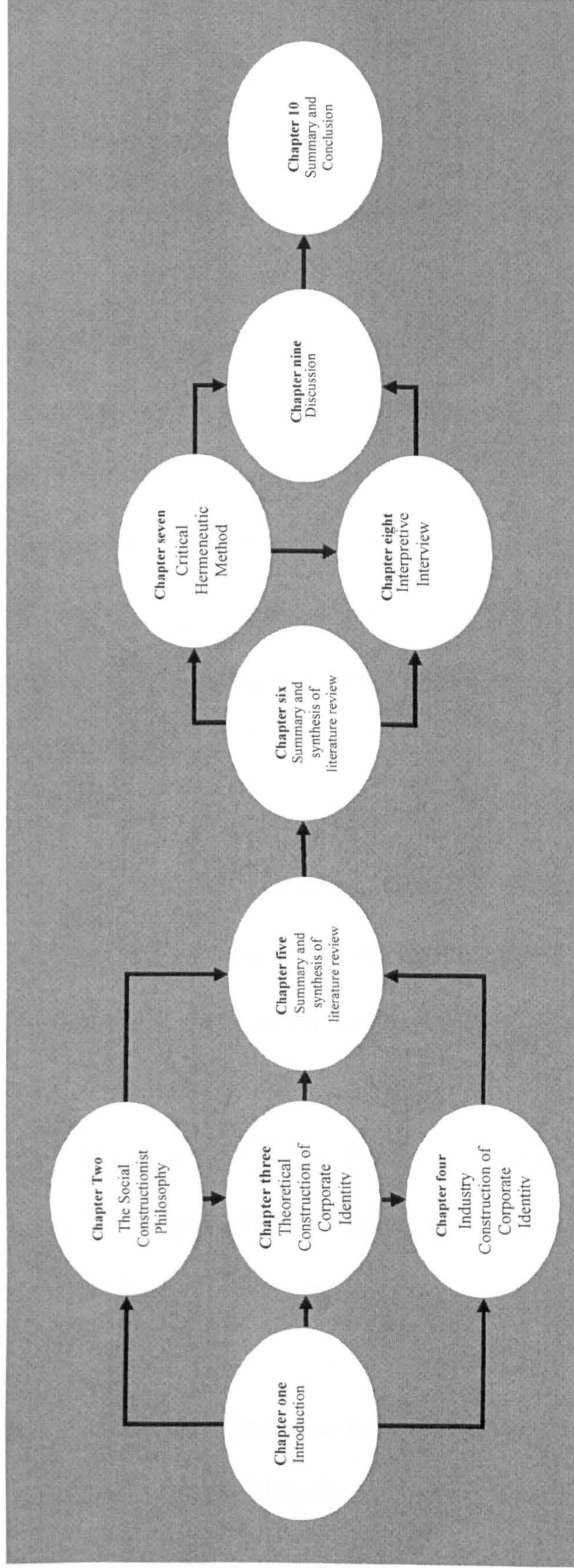
This thesis has been delineated into ten chapters (see diagram 1.2) and this chapter constitutes the first. Chapter two marks the beginning of the literature review section. It sets the scene by providing epistemologically and ontologically grounded reasons why studies on the meaning of corporate identity could also be approached from a social constructionist perspective. The chapter discusses Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist epistemological and ontological assumptions and makes a critique of various corporate identity models (Kennedy, 1977; Dowling, 1986; Abratt, 1989; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b; Alessandri, 2001; Melewar and Woodridge, 2001; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005), which are positivistically inclined and presents a social constructionist based corporate identity model. The new model is drawn and positioned within the context of Berger and Luckmann's ontological assumptions and used to develop seven mutual points of interconnectivity between the social constructionist philosophy and the concept of corporate identity.

The chapter identifies the notion of 'ongoing' and positions it as a domineering integrant running through the seven mutual points of interconnectivity between social constructionism and the concept of corporate identity. The notion of ongoing exemplifies the underlying forces through which human and corporate actions and interactions develop, change and move cohesively, logically and sequentially; step by step; from the simple to a more complex state, with no cease. In essence, without the concept of 'ongoing', the institutionalisation of human and corporate actions may never be achieved. Consequently, these mutual points of interconnectivity are drawn

to provide four ontologically grounded reasons, why work on the meaning of corporate identity can also be approached from a social constructionist perspective.

Chapter three builds on the social constructionist notion of ‘ongoing’ which was crystallised in chapter two by arguing that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity is an ongoing phenomenon that changes and stabilises over time. This chapter argues that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed an ongoing flow of change and stability through a series of constructs between 1970 and 2008. Thus, the arguments to be presented in this chapter will be grounded in the review of literature on the meaning of corporate identity published in various literatures between 1970 and 2008. Evidence were drawn to argue that the meaning of corporate identity, which was dominantly constructed as corporate personality and CI mix between 1970 and 1985 changed dramatically to corporate distinctiveness between 1985 and 1995. Evidence was also given to substantiate the notion that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity stabilised as corporate distinctiveness between 1985 and 1995 but changed to ‘CED-central, enduring, distinctiveness’ and organisational image between 1995 and 2008. Furthermore, it was argued that the construction of the meaning of this concept as corporate personality and CI mix remained stable throughout these periods (i.e. 1970-2008) and also that work on the construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a paradigmatic shift from definition to understanding between 1995 and 2008. A critique of works (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007), which compartmentalise authors’ perception of the meaning of corporate identity, is made.

Figure 1.2: Structure of thesis



Source: developed by the author

Thus, a research question (i.e. how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity) is developed following a critique of these models.

Chapter four attempted to address the question that was conceptualised in chapter three. It argued that the industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity in Nigeria's banking industry has been on an ongoing flow of stability and change over time. Evidence was given to argue that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in Nigeria's banking industry which stabilised as generic corporate personality between 1970 and 1985 changed dramatically to distinct corporate personality between 1986 and 1994. It will also be argued that industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a change from distinct corporate personality to a combination of innovative corporate and transformative corporate personalities between 1995 and 2005.

A summary of the conceptual findings emerging from the review of literatures presented in chapters two, three and four are discussed in chapter five. In addition, an analysis of the various strands of the mainstream arguments presented in these chapters (i.e. chapters two, three and four) are integrated and analysed. Also, this chapter made a summary of the gap and limitation in conceptual literature, highlighted the research question being investigated in this thesis, drew attention to how the problem came about and emphasised why it is important to address this problem.

Chapter six concerns the identification of the most suitable research methodology for this research. In order to achieve this task, this chapter makes an attempt to position the research question (how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity over

time) within the context of various methodologies. These include qualitative, quantitative, exploratory, mixed and interpretive research methodologies. After a review and critique of these models, the interpretive research methodology was adjudged the most suitable of these methodologies. Consequently, a two-phase research design, which incorporates critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements and interpretive interviews with senior managers and corporate communication managers of the three largest banks in Nigeria, was presented.

Chapter seven concerns the critical hermeneutic analysis of nine corporate advertisements published in four of Nigeria's leading national and general interest newspapers (i.e. Daily Times, Punch, Guardian and Thisday) between 1970 and 2005. The critical hermeneutic analysis of these advertisements were achieved on the basis of Ricoeur's (1971, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c) dialectical processes involving three moments namely a moment of social-historical analysis, moment of formal analysis and moment of interpretation and re-interpretation. Findings from the critical hermeneutic analysis of these corporate advertisements strengthens the argument that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in Nigeria's banking industry which stabilised as generic corporate personality between 1970 and 1985 changed dramatically to distinct corporate personality between 1986 and 1994. The outcome of this study also supports the argument that the industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity changed from distinct corporate personality to a combination of innovative and transformative corporate personalities between 1995 and 2005.

Chapter eight contains the findings from the interpretive interviews with senior managers and managers responsible for the management of corporate identity in the

three largest banks in Nigeria. Findings from this chapter also provides the evidence to argue that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity changed from generic corporate personality between 1970 and 1985 to distinct corporate personality between 1986 and 1994 and to a combination of innovative corporate personality and transformative corporate personality between the period 1995 and 2005.

A discussion of the issues addressed (in this thesis) in relation to what has been accomplished in the course of this research is presented in chapter nine. The arguments presented in this thesis are concluded in chapter ten by considering the contributions emerging from this research, its implications, limitations and possible future directions. Clearly, a basis is formed for further research with a variety of industries in other countries. The arguments made in this thesis have significant implications for corporate marketing literature and corporate marketing practitioners. These implications are considered in chapter ten.

1.9 Summary

This chapter introduced the nature of this research and drew attention to the trend witnessed in the development of corporate identity and its meaning. It conceptualised the research question and the objective of this research and itemised the importance of this research, highlighting the structure of the thesis. The thesis organisation provides a trajectory of how this research has been developed. Each facet of argument presented in the chapters that follow provides answers to the question being investigated in this research. Generally speaking, this chapter forms part of the foundation structure upon which this thesis develops. Consequently, the next chapter

attempts to strengthen this foundation by identifying seven mutual points of interconnectivity between corporate identity and social constructionism. Importantly, these points are drawn to justify the reason why work on the meaning of corporate identity can also be addressed through social constructionist philosophy.

**CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE
JUSTIFICATIONS FOR INVESTIGATING THE MEANING
OF CORPORATE IDENTITY THROUGH THIS LENS**

**CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING
OF CORPORATE IDENTITY, 1970-2008: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

**CHAPTER FOUR: INDUSTRY CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING
OF CORPORATE IDENTITY IN THE NIGERIA'S
BANKING INDUSTRY, 1970-2005**

**CHAPTER FIVE: A SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS OF KEY
ARGUMENTS IN THE THEORETICAL LITERATURE**

CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE
JUSTIFICATIONS FOR INVESTIGATING THE MEANING
OF CORPORATE IDENTITY THROUGH THIS LENS

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the overarching question being investigated in this study, which is *how do firms' construct the meaning of corporate identity overtime*. It proposed that a suitable approach capable of addressing the question (under investigation in this study) is the social constructionist philosophy (see paragraph 1.2.1). This chapter strengthens this proposition by providing four ontologically grounded reasons why this question can be approached from social constructionism.

Consequently, the aim of this chapter is not to merely state that the most suitable lens through which the issue under investigation could be addressed is social constructionism. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to position the concept of corporate identity within the context of social constructionism and on this basis develop ontologically grounded reasons why the question under investigation, can also be approached through the social constructionist lens.

In order to achieve this objective, this chapter has been divided into seven main paragraphs – and this constitutes the first. The chapter opens in the second paragraph with a review of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist philosophy. This is followed by the deconstruction and a critique of corporate identity models in

the third paragraph. Following the critique of corporate identity models, a social constructionist based corporate identity model is presented in the fourth paragraph. The linkages between the social constructionist philosophy and corporate identity are drawn in the fifth paragraph and the reasons why social constructionism is suitable for addressing the research question (above) is conceptualised in paragraph six. This chapter ends in paragraph seven with a summary of the issues discussed.

2.2 Social construction

Social constructionism is an epistemological position popularised by Berger and Luckmann (1966). The notion behind social construction is to unearth the ways in which individuals, groups and firms construct and profess reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Social constructionists argue that ‘objects’ of thought and belief relating to everyday life emanates from deep beliefs in societies (Hackley, 2001).

Social construction therefore aims to examine the ways that social phenomena (i.e. beliefs) and trends are produced, shaped, entrenched and made into custom (Hacking, 1999) by groups and individuals. By social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) refers to an enduring dynamic process, created and recreated by people given their interpretations and knowledge of such changing processes.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) observed that all knowledge, including the most basic, taken-for-granted common sense knowledge of everyday reality, is derived from and maintained by social interactions (Gergen, 1994). In everyday life, individuals and firms relate upon the common belief that their views of reality are connected (see

Shotter, 1993a; 1993b) and as such they act upon this belief as a reinforcement of what is conceived as reality takes place (Searle, 1995). Thus, since the common belief of reality is negotiated and created, individuals, human typifications, significations and firms are presented as part of an objective reality. It is on this basis that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Social constructionism is grounded on two epistemological assumptions. First is that people attempt to understand the society as an external, objective reality and second that people experience and approach the society as an internal, subjective reality.

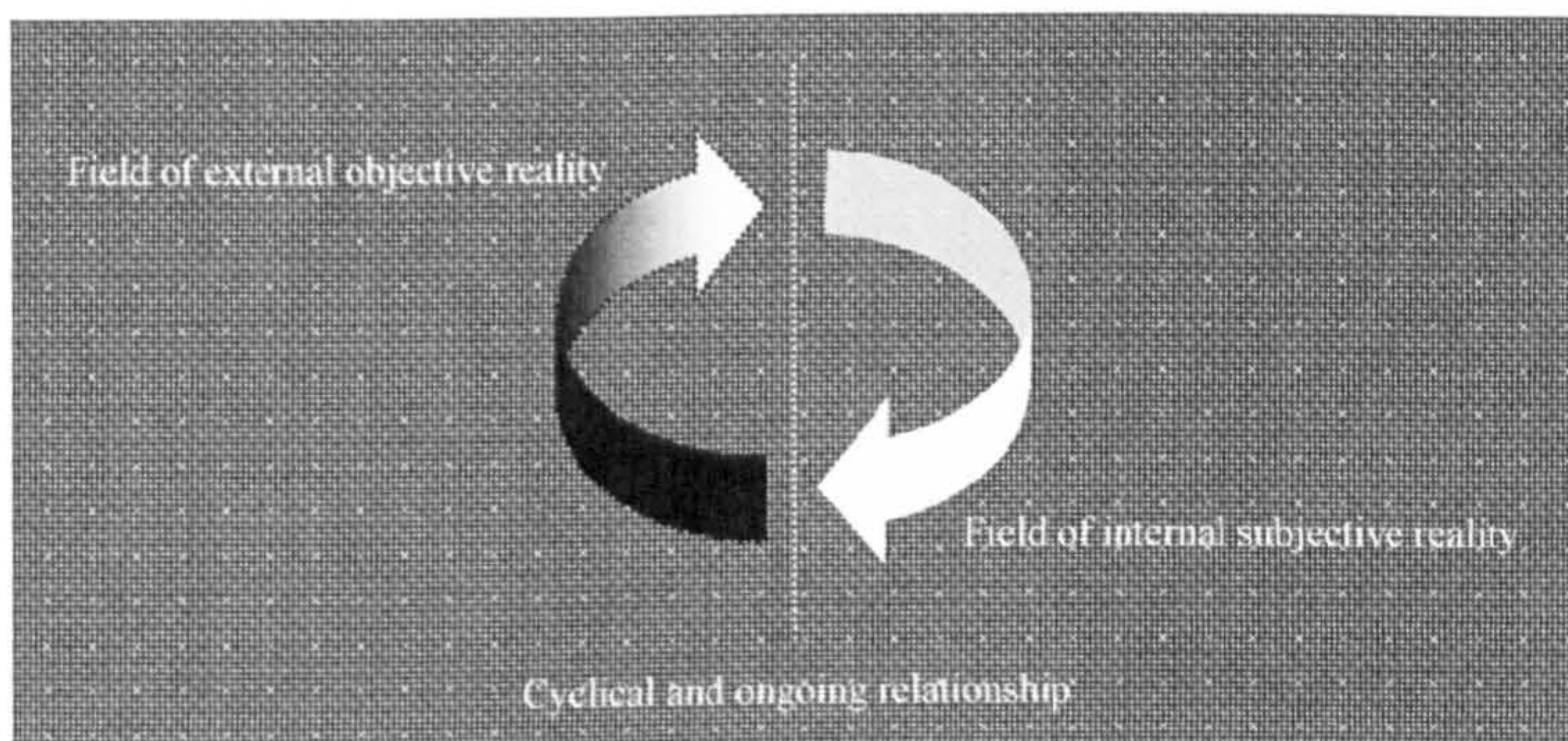
2.2.1 Peoples' understanding of the society as an external, objective reality

Societies impose specific norms, values and ways of life repetitively to which members old and new must conform. Failure to conform to these norms may force designated actors to invoke sanctions to ensure compliance. These forceful dictations and impositions (based on societal beliefs, norms and behaviours) appear to individuals as objective reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 151) explains further: "Every individual is born into an objective social structure within which he encounters the significant others who are in charge of his socialisation. These significant others are imposed on him. Their definitions of his situation are posited for him as objective reality. He is thus born into not only an objective social structure but also an objective social world. Thus, when individuals conform to dictated norms repetitively (over time), their actions become habitualised and institutionalised.

2.2.2 Peoples' understanding of the society as an internal, subjective reality

Internal subjective reality occurs when individuals attempt to breakaway from objective reality by making sense of their own worlds and identifying with people of their own class, thoughts and beliefs. It emerges when individuals consistently challenge or query the dictates of (institutionalised) objective reality by interpreting and making meanings of all activities within the society and acting on these interpretations. It is at this point that individuals acquire a subjective coherent plausible identity, which in the long run influences the society. Consequently, the society experiences these individual actions as objective reality.

Figure 2.1: Cyclical and ongoing relationship between objective and subjective reality



Source: developed by author

The review of literature reveals that Berger and Luckmann's (1966) epistemology of objective and subjective reality is trapped in 'a never ending cycle of change'. Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) epistemology indicates that the pursuit of specific actions based on an individual's experience triggers the development of a subjective version of reality, which is then presented as objective reality to other individuals. The acceptance of the individual's subjective reality as objective reality

by other individuals may trigger the imposition of new norms, which if repeated becomes habitual and institutionalised. Consequently, a cyclical or ongoing relationship (see Figure 2.1) between external objective reality and internal subjective reality emerges.

The cyclical and ongoing relationship between external objective reality and internal subjective reality is being shaped by seven important ontological assumptions including social order, direction, stability; habitualisation; social interaction; institutionalisation; control; historicity. Put another way, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of social constructionism makes no sense without its ontological foundations. Thus, it becomes imperative to examine these ontological assumptions.

First ontological assumption: social order, direction, control: human activity is founded on the pillars of social order, direction and stability. Social order refers to those facets of society which are stable over time (Hetcher and Horne, 2003). Direction is the course towards a well defined goal. Stability is the state in which social institutions operate steadily, peacefully and cohesively (Rowe, 2003). The problem here however, is that it is difficult to estimate the extent to which social order impinges on human conduct (Horrell, 1996).

Second ontological assumption: social interaction: men together produce the human environment based on ongoing psychological formations or mental representations (i.e. meanings) of actors' interactions. Unfortunately, this position does not provide details of how mental representations come about. Several authors (Gergen, 1977; Shotter, 1997; Danziger, 1997; Moscovici, 1968) have attempted to fill this gap by

presenting detailed cognitive processes of how human interactions trigger mental representations.

Third ontological assumption: habituation: the frequent repetition of human activities together with the total psychological formations or mental representations (i.e. meanings and interpretations) that come with these repetitions become cast into a behavioural pattern; and then habituated. Butressing, Bourdieu (1989) argues that habituation emerges as a product of conditioning and connected to specific living conditions and activated through human experience and develops from a numerous human activities. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) position is weakened by the failure to establish when it is exactly that human actions such as thumb sucking, fingernail biting, cuticle picking, nose picking (just mention a few) become habituated.

Fourth ontological assumption: institutionalism: Institutionalisation develops based on a variety of reciprocal typification of habituated actions together with psychological formations or mental representations (i.e. meanings and interpretations) that emerge during the reciprocal typification of these actions. This theory is weak in that it approached institutionalisation as a phenomenon that develops from repetitive actions alone. The notion that institutionalisation may emerge from a single action was disregarded.

Fifth and sixth ontological assumption: history and control: Reciprocal typification of actions (i.e. institutionalisation) develops over time through history. This is controlled ongoingly (i.e. see Conklin, 1992) by codes of conduct. Gergen (1999) challenged this position by arguing that the control of human actions is not limited to

the boundaries of societal rules and regulations. Human beings lack the natural ability to exercise control over various aspects of their lives – adding that human beings cannot control their fate, their destiny, their lives and more importantly their death. The control of institutions is intrinsic to institutionalisation even before or without any mechanism of sanction.

Seventh ontological assumption: communication: As Berger and Luckmann (1966) argues, ongoing transmission or communication of stable or changed actions produces reality. The shaping of the world is an ongoing activity that is fully transparent to those who originally carried out specific actions. The originators of such actions understand the meanings of these actions fully and therefore the ability to change or abolish these practices (which might have been stable over a prolonged period of time) lies within their will power and authority. These actors are capable of changing, stabilising and communicating these actions continuously to new generations.

2.3 Corporate identity

The previous paragraphs addressed the meaning of social construction together with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) epistemology and ontological assumptions. This section attempts to extend the notion of social construction into the concept of corporate identity. This is achieved in two ways. First is by deconstructing existing corporate identity formation models into typologies. Second is by making a critique of these models. Existing corporate identity models are deconstructed because there is a lack of a definitive corporate identity formation or management process (Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005) that can be used to underpin the social constructionism.

2.3.1 Corporate identity formation process models: a review of typologies

The review of literature indicates the publication of as many as eleven corporate identity formation process models (Kennedy, 1977; Dowling, 1986; Abratt, 1989; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b; Alessandri, 2001; Melewar and Woodridge, 2001; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005) which compete for relevance within the corporate marketing literature. In the paragraphs that follow, these models are deconstructed into a typology of models (i.e. environmental, corporate personality, mission, strategy and communication driven models) in order to provide clearer insights into the key arguments presented in the models as well as highlight the mandatory presence of some important components, which promote the translation of a firm's corporate identity into corporate image or corporate reputation.

Environment driven models (Kennedy, 1977; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005) recognise the shaping of corporate identity through activities in the internal and external business environment as well as through a joint, interactive and ongoing process. Three key arguments are made by proponents of these models. First is that the formation of corporate identity is an exercise achievable through ongoing interactions between corporate actors (who act on behalf of the firm) and stakeholders (who make meanings of interactions and exert a myriad of extraneous influences) on firms. Second, ongoing constructions of multiple corporate personality (i.e. corporate policy, Kennedy, 1977; corporate behaviour, Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001; culture, history, van Riel and Balmer, 1997; corporate strategy, Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005) are constructed through

employee behaviour (Kennedy, 1977), communication (Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001), creativity (Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005) or the corporate identity mix (van Riel and Balmer, 1997). Third, consistent construction of corporate personality through these medium generate multiple interpretations (Kennedy, 1977) and meanings among stakeholders.

Corporate personality driven models Unlike internal and external induced models, which is heavily reliant on consistent interactions between corporate actors and stakeholders, character induced models (see Abratt, 1989; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b) rely mainly on the conceptualisation of the constituents of corporate personality (i.e. corporate philosophy, core values, corporate culture, strategy, mission, objectives, Abratt, 1989; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b) as the foundation of the corporate identity formation process. Two important conceptualisations emerged from these models. First, the models address the consistent articulation and construction of multiple corporate personalities {i.e. a synopsis of ‘what the firms is’, ‘what it is to do’, ‘what it is to achieve’ and ‘how to achieve its objectives’, (Abratt, 1989)} to stakeholders through employee behaviour, symbolism and interpersonal communication, marketing communications or the corporate identity mix (Abratt, 1989; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b). Second, the models emphasise the transformation of corporate personalities into corporate image or corporate reputation (Abratt, 1989; Stuart, 1998b, 1999b) through stakeholder mental processing and consistent interaction between corporate actors and stakeholders.

Mission driven models (see Baker and Balmer, 1997; Alessandri, 2001) promote the articulation of the corporate mission as the basis of corporate identity formation

process. Baker and Balmer's (1997) and Alessandri's (2001) corporate image/corporate identity interface model addresses the relationship between corporate identity and corporate image and how this relationship aids the acquisition of a favourable corporate reputation. Mission driven models are founded on three theoretical assumptions. First is that corporate missions are translated into a combination of corporate personality (Baker and Balmer, 1997) and corporate identity (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Alessandri, 2001) through corporate culture, visual presentation and corporate behaviour (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Alessandri, 2001). Second, communicated identity or corporate reality (Baker and Balmer, 1997) is translated into corporate image and later on to corporate reputation (Alessandri, 2001) through stakeholder decision making process. Third, corporate identity and corporate reputation emerges from the interactions between corporate actors and stakeholders.

Communication driven models: Dowling (1986) provides the only communication driven model. The model articulates how corporate policies impacts upon corporate strategy and culture. Unlike Kennedy's (1977) model, which failed to address corporate identity communications, Dowling's (1986) model underscored the importance of various aspects of corporate communications (i.e. internal and marketing media communication) within the corporate identity formation process. Dowling (1986, p. 111) argued that "while interpersonal communication represents the images of the firm held by these groups, mass media communication represents the company's perception of itself". Two important conceptualisations can be derived from this model. First, formal policies, which constitute the bulk of corporate personality, are conveyed through culture, media marketing communications, external interpersonal communications, previous product experience and distributors and so on

to create meanings or corporate image. Second, the notion of corporate identity, image and reputation emerges based on a myriad of a firm's corporate communication activities.

Strategy driven model: The only work dominating this perspective of corporate identity management is Marwick and Fill's (1997) corporate identity management planning (CIMP) model. This model is hinged on the conceptualisation and implementation of predetermined plan of actions (or strategy). This in Marwick and Fill's (1997) view is germane to the development of corporate personality, which in essence is deeply rooted in a variety of activities pursued by firms. The model advocated the use of van Riel's (1995) framework of corporate communications, composed of management, organisational and marketing communications. The key argument in Marwick and Fill's (1997) work is that while management communications transforms a firm's corporate personality into corporate identity, planned and unplanned organisational and marketing communications translate corporate identity into corporate image or reputation. In addition, Marwick and Fill's (1997) model promoted the need to fully consider environmental influences (see Kennedy, 1977) as a significant factor impinging on the translation of corporate identity into corporate image. Corporate identity and corporate image or reputation emerges through strategic management from ongoing interaction between corporate actors and stakeholders.

2.3.2 Corporate identity models: a critique

The models above belong to Comte's metaphysical realm of positivism because they are assertive, non critical theories grounded on the assumption that the objective physical and social world exists independently of humans and also that the existence of a priori fixed relationships within a given phenomena (i.e. corporate identity) can be identified and tested through a hypothetic-deductive logic and analysis (Dube and Pare, 2003). Although, these models advanced existing knowledge, shed light on corporate identity formation processes, they are however limited in horizon to positivistic orientations. Put another way, these models, do not suffice for a study of this nature because they cannot accommodate some of the critical issues of concerns that are central to social constructionist or interpretivistic lens (Gioia, 1998) of corporate identity. Furthermore, the models demonstrate the mandatory presence of interaction between actors, but they failed to recognise the notion of ongoing, which is solely responsible for activating a never-ending set of interactions between firms and stakeholders. The notion of ongoing is a fundamental requirement for the development and maintenance of desired corporate images or corporate reputations.

The models disregard the important roles of the pillars of social order, direction and stability in the corporate identity formation process. The pillars provide the basis, platform and the structural foundation on which social interactions between firms and stakeholders occur. In addition, the models made a fundamental error by arrogating the conceptualisation of meanings to stakeholder realm of interpretations of corporate actions alone. These positivistic models lacked the ability to understand that meanings

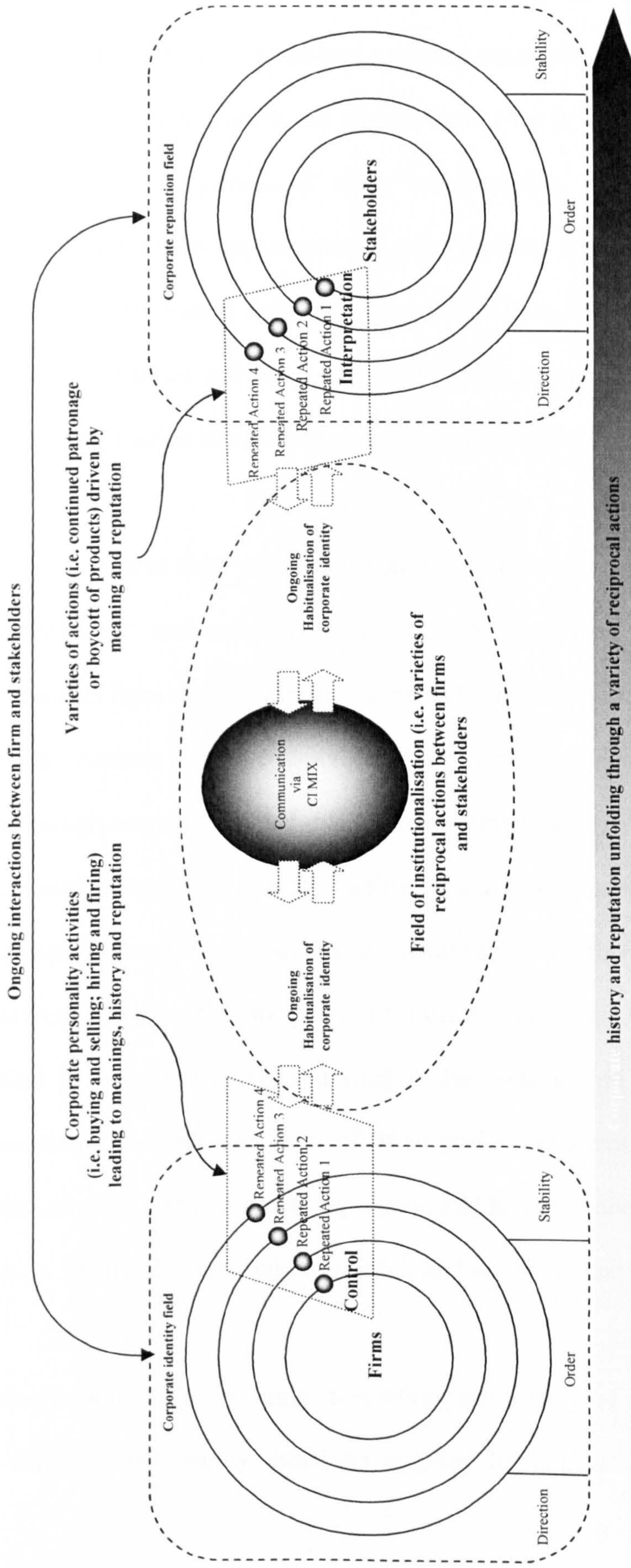
can also be generated through habitualisation or the frequent and ongoing repetition of corporate activities. The models promote the development of desired corporate image and corporate reputation through the nurturing of relationships between firms and various stakeholders. But there is no indication from these models that firms pursue a variety of shared habitual and ongoing interactions (i.e. institutionalisation), which is fundamental to the development of a strong corporate image or corporate reputation. In addition, the models argue that the end product of the relationship between firms and stakeholders is corporate reputation. However, they disregarded the notion of business history, which is fundamental to the development of corporate reputation.

2.4 The development of a social constructionist based corporate identity model

By taking into account the disabilities identified in the positivistic based models (above) and the key issues highlighted under Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work, it is possible to develop a social constructionist based model that clearly explains the corporate identity formation process. This model is represented in Figure 2.2 below.

The corporate identity based social constructionist model is firmly grounded on the assumption that all activities between corporate actors (i.e. all employees) and stakeholders takes place within the context of the pillars of social order, direction and social stability. These pillars are drawn into the corporate identity model because they provide the structural foundation upon which ongoing interactions between firms and stakeholders (which is dominated and constituted by human beings) occur. All human interactive activities (be it social or business) cannot be successfully accomplished in the absence of the underlying forces of social order, direction and social stability.

Figure 2.2: A social constructionist model of corporate identity



Source: developed by author

Once the pillars of social order, direction and social stability are firmly established, it is then possible for firms to pursue various corporate personality activities ongoingly. These activities are pursued towards the development of a firm's corporate identity. The repetition or ongoing pursuit of these activities (i.e. providing top quality services, offering high return on investment etc) generates meanings. The frequent repetition of actions cast human activities into a habit. Thus, meanings are generated from the repetition of these activities over time. In the process, firms are endowed with a history and reputation based on the repetition of these activities.

The sovereignty to repeat these corporate identity or corporate personality activities provide firms with the autonomy to inject corporate control into the meanings or reputation generated from these activities – especially if these meanings are negative. Specifically the control of these activities (i.e. corporate identity or corporate personality) through corporate policy making and implementation allows firm to re-examine and redefine what it is exactly the firm is and what it is not and other issues that encapsulates the corporate identity or personality. Furthermore, the use of corporate control allows the firm to spell out (in great detail) what it does and what it does not; what the firm stands for and what it does not and so on. The frequent, ongoing repetition and implementation of these policy measures generates desired meanings and stimulate good corporate reputation and builds up the corporate history. With time, these intangible assets will exemplify and epitomize the firm's personality.

The conceptualisation of the meaning, reputation and history of a firm's corporate identity or corporate personality based on ongoing habitualisation and control of

activities sets the stage for ongoing communications through the corporate identity mix (i.e. either one or a combinations visual signs, behaviour, corporate advertising).

Following the consistent, repetitive and ongoing construction of corporate personality or corporate identity (i.e. what it does and what it does not; what the firm stands for and what it doesn't; what the firm is and what it is not; what the firm does and what it does not etc) through the corporate identity mix, corporate personality messages are received and interpreted by stakeholders ongoingly and repetitively. Consequently, the meanings generated from the interpretation of the messages are acted upon by stakeholders through various actions (i.e. boycott or continued patronage of product or brands, investments and divestments etc.) The frequent and ongoing repetition of these actions is cast into a pattern and then habitualised over time.

Repetitive actions by stakeholders in response to the meanings generated from the formal and informal communication of corporate activities, which constitute the corporate personality or corporate identity triggers the institutionalisation of a variety of relationships. The institutionalisation of these relationships is reflective of the reciprocity and types of relationship emerging from the meanings of the repetitive or habitualised interactions between the firm and stakeholders overtime.

Finally, the varieties of reciprocal actions derived from the ongoing relationships between firms and stakeholders (i.e. institutionalisation) accumulate into history and reputation.

2.4.1 A social constructionist view on the meaning of corporate identity

The conceptualisation of the new model (above) provides a unique insight into the workings and the mechanism of a social constructionist based corporate identity model. The development of this model raises an important issue about how the meaning of corporate identity should be viewed. Given the new insights emerging from this new model, a social construction based perspective on the meaning of corporate identity is proffered. It is conceived therefore that:

Corporate identity is a phenomenon that emerges from ongoing interactions between firms and stakeholders. It is a signification of several corporate personality actions, which like many human activities, is founded on the pillars of order, direction and stability. It is reflective of how corporate personality is controlled and constructed repetitively or (habitually) through the corporate identity mix - and the varieties of ways that stakeholders reciprocate and respond to these constructed personalities.

The value of this new definition is that it underscores the possibility of generating meanings not only from stakeholder interpretation of corporate identity but also from ongoing construction of corporate personality and corporate identity. Meanings are embedded in the repetitive expression of corporate identity over time.

2.5 Links between Berger and Luckmann's social constructionist ontological assumptions and the new social constructionist based corporate identity model

The review of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ontological assumptions together with the new corporate identity model presented above provide evidence to suggest that the disciplines of social construction and corporate identity are fundamentally connected. Thus, it is possible to locate areas in which social constructionism and corporate identity interrelate. This claim is based on the evidence that many of the key insights emerging from the review of literature and the new model presented (above) are compatible and can therefore be integrated. An attempt is made to integrate these two disciplines by bringing together key issues within them. These key issues, which are highlighted in Table 1 below, are discussed:

First point of connection: Human and business activities grounded on social order, direction and stability

The pursuit of all human activities occurs within the context of social order, direction and stability. Without these pillars no human activity can take place successfully. Similarly, the conduct of various activities which conceptualises the personality or corporate identity is also hinged on these pillars. Essentially, the formation of corporate identity is inconceivable without the support of these pillars.

Second point of connection: Meanings generated via ongoing interactions

The review of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist ontological position indicates that meanings emerge from ongoing interactions between at least two actors within a society – and that ongoing interactions among actors create psychological and mental representations, which trigger meanings. The ongoing interactive and collaborative nature of human production is not limited to the discipline of social construction alone. It is also an important aspect of corporate identity studies. Evidence from the corporate identity model presented above indicate that corporate identity is fundamentally connected to social construction because meanings are generated from ongoing interactions between social actors (i.e. firms and stakeholders). The formation of corporate identity (as indicated in the corporate identity model) is hinged on a collaborative effort achieved via ongoing interaction between firms and stakeholders.

Third point of connection: meanings via repetitive and ongoing actions

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that meanings are generated from the frequent, consistent and repetition of all human actions and that the meanings derived from these actions become cast into a pattern and then habituated over time. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ontological position also holds true within the realm of corporate identity studies. The new corporate identity model (presented above) reveals that meanings emerge from regular, ongoing, repetitive and consistent business actions.

The model indicates that meanings are generated and produced from the repetition of corporate activities– and that these meanings become habitualised overtime.

Table 2.1: Common points of interconnectivity between Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) social construction epistemology and corporate identity

Key issues in social construction (SC)	Mutual points of connection between SC and CI	Key issues in corporate identity (CI)
<p>The pursuit of all human activities is occurs within the context of social order, direction and stability. Without these pillars no human activity can take place successfully.</p>	<p>Human and business activities founded on the pillars of social order, direction and stability</p>	<p>The formation of corporate identity is grounded on the pillars of social order, direction and social stability.</p>
<p>Human activities are produced through joint and ongoing and sustained social interactions among social actors who develop mental develop meanings and interpretations of each others actions overtime.</p>	<p>Meanings generated from ongoing interactions among actors</p>	<p>The pursuit of corporate identity is firmly grounded on ongoing interactions between firms and stakeholders, which create meanings.</p>
<p>Meaning develops from the regular, ongoing and recurrent repetition of human activities, which is cast into a behavioural pattern – and becomes a habit over a period of time.</p>	<p>Meanings via repetitive and ongoing actions and constructions</p>	<p>Firms establish meanings and define their corporate identity or corporate personality ongoingly through frequent repetition of corporate activities which cast into a pattern and habitualised.</p>
<p>Institutionalisation emerges from ongoing reciprocal typified habitual action by social actors overtime. Reciprocal typifications are institutions, which emerge in different forms. Institutionalisation is founded on the development of a variety of meanings generated during the habitualisation phase.</p>	<p>Ongoing pursuit of varieties of actions triggers institutionalisation of meanings</p>	<p>Institutionalisation of relationships occurs based on the varieties of relationships that emerge from ongoing interactions between the firm and stakeholders. Institutionalisation is incomprehensible without the varieties of meanings generated during the habitualisation process.</p>
<p>Historicity emerges based on institutionalisation, which is the reciprocal typifications of action and meanings, which develop ongoingly over a period of time and not instantaneously. All institutions have a history, which produce them over a prolonged period of time from year to year.</p>	<p>History of actions emerging from ongoing reciprocal typifications</p>	<p>The repetition of various business activities generates meanings ongoingly, becomes habitualised over time and endows firms with a history.</p>
<p>Institutions control human conduct ongoingly and continuously (and with no cease) through codes of conduct, which impinge on human conduct.</p>	<p>Ongoing control of actions</p>	<p>Firms have the autonomy to control activities that constitute their corporate personality or corporate identity repetitively and ongoingly through the stipulation and implementation of various business policies.</p>
<p>Meanings from ongoing transmission or communication of stable or changed actions resulting in the creation of reality.</p>	<p>Meanings generated from ongoing communication of corporate personality activities or corporate identity</p>	<p>Meanings generated from the pursuit of various corporate activities are formally communicated to stakeholders through the corporate identity mix.</p>

Source: developed by author

Fourth point of connection: Emergence of institutionalisation through ongoing pursuit of a variety of habitualised actions

Institutionalisation emerges from ongoing reciprocal typified habitual actions. The notion of typified habitual actions (which in essence constitute institutions) refers to all types of habits and habitual actions that are developed and shared based on consistent and ongoing interactions among actors. Similarly, the notion of institutionalisation occurs within the framework of the corporate identity (i.e. see new corporate identity model above) when a variety of interactive actions materialise based on ongoing interactions between firms and stakeholders. In essence, institutionalisation occurs within the realm of corporate identity when a variety of meanings are generated habitually from ongoing constructions and interpretation of corporate personality.

Fifth point of connection: History of actions emerging from ongoing reciprocal typifications

When human actions are repeated and prolonged over a long period (see Berger and Luckmann, 1966), they accumulate into history. All institutions have a history of which they are the products. The history of shared RTHA cannot be created instantaneously. A series of activities has to be created repeatedly over a long period of time and in some cases passed from one generation of actors to another. It is through these activities that history is created. Similarly, as the new corporate identity model above reveals, the pursuit of a variety of reciprocal actions ongoingly,

consistently and repetitively over a long period of time accumulates into corporate history. This makes the concept of corporate identity (as seen from the corporate identity model above) to be tightly connected to corporate history.

Sixth point of connection: ongoing control of actions and business activities

Human conduct is controlled ongoingly by a predefined set of codes of conduct – and it is these rules and regulations that channel human conduct towards a specific direction. Firms also attempt to control their corporate personality during the ongoing pursuit of various business activities. The ongoing control measures set by firms inevitably influences the nature corporate personality, reputation and history.

Seventh point of connection: Ongoing transmission and communication of actions

Actors' collaborative actions and interactions are transmitted and communicated ongoingly from one generation to another. In the process, reality about the world is created. Similarly, the actions and interactions between firms and stakeholders are constructed and communicated ongoingly through the corporate identity mix.

2.5.1 The notion of ongoing: a clarification

One major and domineering theme running through the seven points of interconnectivity presented above is the notion of 'ongoing'. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) defines 'ongoing' as a state in which a phenomenon continues with no cease. It could be inferred from this definition therefore that the

concept of 'ongoing' as applied in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thesis addresses the evolution, development, continuum and never ending actions and interactions that take place among social actors or between firms and stakeholders. It is a major underlying force and a key ingredient responsible for the production and activation of the habituation and eventual institutionalisation of human and corporate actions (which continues without end). The notion of 'ongoing' set-forth a never-ending set of interactions between people and the society or between firms and stakeholders. This inadvertently results in the habituation and institutionalisation of the actions and interactions between people and society as well as firms and stakeholders. The key philosophy that underpins this theory is that it provides the underlying forces through which movement or change from one condition to another occurs with no cease. It is a representation of how human and corporate actions and interactions develop, change and move cohesively, logically and sequentially; step by step; from the simple to a more complex state, with no cease. In essence, without the concept of 'ongoing', the institutionalisation of human and corporate actions may never be achieved.

2.6 Reasons why work on the meaning of corporate identity could be approached from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist perspective

Work on the meaning of corporate identity can also be approached through Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist thesis because the key ontological arguments in this work addresses how individuals, groups (including firms) and the society at large make meanings of human activities. Four ontological arguments (see Berger and Luckmann, 1966), which emphasises the making of meanings is drawn to substantiate this view.

First: conceptualisation of meaning through social interaction: one of the key ontological arguments in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thesis addresses how individuals, groups (including firms) and other actors within the society interact by carrying out various activities. The key argument here is that in the course of interactions, meanings are developed through mental representations of actors' actions. This argument is characterized by the belief that meaning is socially constructed by at least two actors. The review of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work indicates that things do not mean and man alone can fix meanings. Meanings emerge following ongoing social interactions among individuals. Thus, individuals and groups (including firms) adopt various representational systems to construct meanings, make them meaningful to target audience and communicate the substance of their message most especially their corporate identity effectively to internal and external stakeholders.

For clarification purpose, the notion of 'meaning' addresses the interpretation of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, the signifier and its user or the signifier and other signs (Noth, 1995). Central to meaning is 'interpretation', a reconstruction of actors' thoughts, ideas, concepts, objects, things and activities (Schleiermacher, 1838; Dilthey, 1900; Betti, 1962). The role of interpretation is to give actual meaning to signs of interactions against the background of a given situation (Ricoeur, 1978c). More specifically, it is to give constructive meanings to the ways that individuals and firms represent themselves.

Second: creation of meaning through habituation: an important ontological argument in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work addressing how meanings are generated focuses on the habituation process. For Berger and Luckmann (1966) the frequent and consistent repetition of human activities habituates human actions. Importantly, habituated actions generate, carry and retain meanings through the repetition of human activities. Thus, habituation provides the platform on which meanings are generated from all frequently repeated actions.

Third: generation of meaning through institutionalisation: another key ontological argument in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work lays emphasis on the making of meanings through institutionalisation of human actions and interactions. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) argues the notion of institutionalisation emerges based on reciprocity of institutional typifications and the typicality of not only these actions (which are often habituated) but also the actors in institutions. Thus, typifications of habituated actions that constitute institutions are always shared ones. It is on the basis of these habituated actions, which develop based on the repetition of human activities together with the total psychological formations or mental representations of these actions and interactions that meanings emerge.

Fourth: development of meaning through history: Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thesis underscores the making of meanings through historicity. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) observes, history develops following the reciprocal typification of actions (i.e. institutionalisation) over time. Thus, meanings are created following the institutionalisation process, which is heavily reliant on the frequent repetition or the habituation of human actions and interactions.

2.7 Summary

This chapter sought to establish why social constructionism can be adopted as a suitable approach for addressing the issue under investigation in this research. The development of four social constructionist grounded reasons took place following the need to further clarify the phenomenon of 'construct', which features prominently in the statement research question under paragraph 1.2 of chapter one.

The reasons for approaching work on the meaning of corporate identity were presented based on the recognition of the need to position the question being investigated in this study within the context of social constructionism. Consequently, the two interrelated theories (i.e. external objective reality and internal subjective reality) constituting the bulk of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of social constructionism were reviewed as a 'cyclical' and 'ongoing' relationship that can never cease.

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist epistemology was presented as a cyclical and ongoing relationship between external objective reality and internal subjective reality. It was argued that the cyclical and ongoing relationship between external objective reality and internal subjective reality is firmly grounded on seven important ontological assumptions including social order, direction, stability; habitualisation; social interaction; institutionalisation; control; historicity and communication.

Following the conceptualisation of these ontological assumptions, corporate identity models (Kennedy, 1977; Dowling, 1986; Abratt, 1989; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Stuart, 1998b; Stuart, 1999b; Alessandri, 2001; Melewar and Woodridge, 2001; Suvatjis and de Chernatony, 2005) were deconstructed to develop a typology of models. These typologies include environmental driven models, corporate personality driven models, mission driven models, communication driven model and strategy driven model. Importantly, a critique of these corporate identity models led to the development of a social constructionist based corporate identity model. Thus, the key discourses emerging from the ontological assumptions under social constructionism and the new social constructionist based model were synthesised.

Because the notion of ongoing was highlighted as a domineering factor running through the synthesis (as well as throughout this chapter), this phenomenon was further clarified. Importantly, the notion of ongoing was explicated by the researcher as a phenomenon representing how human and corporate actions and interactions develop, change and move cohesively, logically and sequentially; step by step; from a simple to a more complex state, with no cease. Consequently, four ontologically grounded arguments (based on the ongoing and repetitive generation of meanings) were advanced as justifications for the pursuit of work on the meaning of corporate identity from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist philosophy.

The argument developed in this chapter contributes significantly towards 'setting the scene' and enhances the development of a philosophical foundation for the question under investigation in this research. Metaphorically speaking, this chapter forms part of the 'foundation laying stone' or undergirding structure upon which this thesis

develops. Thus, the next chapter draws and builds on the notion of ‘ongoing’ (a dominant factor integrating social construction and the concept of corporate identity) as the philosophical basis for conceptualising how the meaning of corporate identity was theoretically constructed in the literature between 1970 and 2008.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING OF CORPORATE IDENTITY, 1970-2008: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented four ontologically grounded arguments, which justifies why work on the meaning of corporate identity can also be approached from a social constructionist perspective. In addition, the preceding chapter highlighted the notion of ongoing, a dominant factor running through the synthesis emerging from the points of linkages between Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ontological arguments and the new social constructionist based corporate identity (CI) model.

This chapter builds on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of 'ongoing' (which is a representation of how human and corporate actions and interactions develop, change and move logically, cohesively and sequentially from a simple to a more complex state, with no cease) by arguing that the *theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity is an ongoing phenomenon that changes and stabilises over time.*

The purpose of this chapter therefore is not merely to provide evidence for the ongoing stabilities and changes in the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, which in itself is insufficient to form a theoretical framework but also to illustrate this argument with reference to the objective of this thesis. Thus, the arguments to be presented in this chapter will be grounded in the review of works, which were published on the meaning of corporate identity between 1970 and 2008.

Specifically, it will be argued that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed an ongoing flow of change and stability through a series of constructs between 1970 and 2008.

In order to substantiate this view, three strings of thought will be presented. First, it is conceived that the meaning of corporate identity was dominantly constructed as corporate personality and CI mix between 1970 and 1985. The stability witnessed during this period was cut-short following the construction of corporate identity as corporate distinctiveness in 1985. This construction continued unabated until 1995. Following this stable period, the theoretical construction of corporate identity changed dramatically to the notions of ‘central’, ‘enduring’, ‘distinctiveness’ (CED) and image between 1995 and 2008. Second, theoretical evidence will be drawn to argue that the stability witnessed in the construction of the meaning of this concept as corporate personality and CI mix extended beyond the 1970 to 1985 period into 1985 to 1995 and the 1995-2008 periods. Third, it is also conceived that work on the construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a paradigmatic shift from the search for a universal definition to ‘understanding’ between 1995 and 2008.

This chapter opens with a review of a variety of definitions advanced by authors between 1970 and 1985. Thereafter, definitions constructed between 1985 and 1995 are analysed followed by those constructed between 1995 and 2008. Consequently, the shift from the search for a universal definition for corporate identity to the construction of social theory models, which attempt to provide a better understanding of the meaning of the concept, is highlighted. In the paragraph that follows, several

concepts (i.e. schools of thought, paradigms, perspectives etc) in the models, which are conceptually similar, but addressed (by the authors of the models) as if they were different are synthesised. The contributions and weaknesses of these models are highlighted and a research question is conceptualised based on these weaknesses. Finally, the issues discussed in this chapter is thereafter summarised and concluded.

3.2 Theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970 to 2008

3.2.1 Corporate identity as corporate personality and corporate identity (CI) mix, 1970-1985: the period of stability

Corporate identity was dominantly constructed in theoretical literature as a phenomenon reflective of corporate personality and CI mix between 1970 and the early 1980s (see Figure 3.1). Pilditch's (1970) definition, which positioned corporate identity as an embodiment of corporate personality serves as a useful starting point.

Pilditch (1970) defined corporate identity as a phenomenon that expresses the corporate personality of a firm. Pilditch's (1970) notion of corporate personality refers to 'what the firm is', 'what the firm stands for' (Topalian, 1984), 'where the firm is going' (Olins, 1978) and how these are conveyed to stakeholders. Although Pilditch's (1970) definition is not explicit in relation to how corporate personalities are constructed, however, it is conceivable that the successful construction of a firm's personality is a responsibility that relies heavily on the use of one or more of the elements belonging to the corporate identity mix (van Riel and Balmer, 1997).

Five years after Pilditch's (1970) pioneering thesis, Selame and Selame (1975) advocated the need to construct a firm's corporate personality through corporate visuals, which is an important element of the corporate identity mix (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). Selame and Selame (1975) argue that corporate identity is the visual presentation of a firm's corporate personality (i.e. 'who and what the firm is') and its corporate image (i.e. how internal and external stakeholders perceive the firm).

Similarly, Margulies' (1977) definition, which was published in the aftermath of Selame and Selame's (1975) work, highlighted the use of an all-inclusive method of conveying a firm's corporate personality to stakeholders. Margulies (1977) argued that the notion of corporate identity reflects all the ways a firm chooses to identify itself to all stakeholders, namely the community, customers, employees, the press, present and potential stockholders, security analysts and investment bankers. Again, it is not clear from Margulies' (1977) definition how corporate personalities are constructed. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that the task of constructing these personalities relies mainly on the use of a variety of elements belonging to the CI mix (see Melewar, 2003; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Balmer and Stotvig, 1997).

Following Margulies (1977), Olins (1978) presented a definition that identifies with the construction of corporate personality through corporate communications (which is another important element of the CI mix). As Olins (1978) observed, corporate identity is the tangible construction of a corporate personality. It is that which is projected to reflect the real status of a firm's personality and its strategic intent (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994) or what Balmer (2001a) described as desired identity.

Two years after the publication of Olins's (1978) important text, Birkigt and Stadler (1980) put forward a thesis that identified with the notion that positioned corporate identity as a visual phenomenon. In their work, Birkigt and Stadler (1980) declared that corporate visual identity constitute one of the very important elements of the corporate identity mix (Baker and Balmer, 1997). They argued that corporate visuals serve as a major embodiment of corporate identity. Similarly, Henrion (1980) declared that corporate identity is a way of constructing a corporation's personality through all visual, non-visual, and behavioural means. It is a means of expressing corporate reality via a well-defined corporate identity mix. Closely linked to Selame and Selame's (1975) visual conception of corporate identity is Carter's (1982) definition. Carter (1982) confined corporate identity to visual and brand imagery and conceived the concept as that which represents the visual expressions of corporations. It signifies a logo or brand image and all other visual expressions of a firm (Carter, 1982).

Hannebohn and Blocker's (1983) work on corporate identity presented a different approach to the understanding of the concept, stressing its role in corporate efficiency, economic performance, business integration and the conceptualisation of values. These authors argue that corporate identity is the strategy that enhances economic performance and corporate efficiency. It is a phenomenon that co-ordinates a firm's achievement, policies, goals, objectives, mission, culture, values and information. It ultimately leads to integration of all corporate activities or the corporate personality.

Topalian (1984) addressed the concept of corporate identity from three basic angles. First is that corporate identity is 'what the firm is'. Second, corporate identity is 'what

the firm stands for'. Third, corporate identity is 'what the firm does'. By conceiving corporate identity as 'what the firm is', Topalian (1984) queries the innate, actual and basic traits of a firm as well as other phenomenon that make up, signify and define the firm. Topalian's (1984) notion and conception of 'what the firm stands for' refers to a set of principles, values, system of ethics commonly shared by members of a firm. In addition, the definition of corporate identity as 'what the firm does' in Topalian's (1984) work signifies the nature of the business of a firm. It supports the notion that corporate identity was constructed as corporate personality during this period.

Table 3.1: Ongoing stability in theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-1985

<u>Definitions of corporate identity, 1970-85</u>	<u>Authors' construction</u>
Pilditch (1970): A good corporate identity is the one that will identify and express the personality of the corporations as it will be when the scheme is substantially in use	Corporate personality CI mix
Selame and Selame (1975): 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.	CI Mix Corporate personality Image
Margulies (1977): Corporate identity means the sum of all the ways a company chooses to identify itself to all its publics - the community, customers, employees, the press, present and potential stockholders, security analysts and investment bankers.	Corporate personality CI mix
Olins (1978): The tangible manifestation of a corporate personality is a corporate identity. It is the identity that projects and reflects the reality of the corporate personality. Sometimes, as we know, the corporate identity is introduced as a catalyst to encourage the development of a corporate personality; sometimes it reflects not what is, but what the corporation would like to be.	Corporate personality CI mix
Birkigt and Stadler (1980): Visuals of an organisation	CI Mix
Henrion (1980): Embodies all visual expressions, also all non-visual expression and behaviour in the social, economic and political field	CI mix
Carter (1982): The logo or brand image of a company and all other visual manifestations of the identity of a company.	CI mix
Hannebohn and Blocker (1983): The strategy that helps to increase the economic performance and efficiency of a company. It co-ordinates achievements, values and information, and leads to integration in the sense of corporation	Corporate personality
Lee (1983): The personality and the soul of the corporation	Corporate personality
Topalian (1984): Articulates what the firm is, what it stands for and what it does. Corporate identities are projected and are largely under the control of host organisations	Corporate personality CI mix
Dominant perception/dichotometric divide, 1970-1985 (STABILITY)	1-Corporate personality 2-CI mix

Source: developed by author

The construction of corporate identity, 1970-1985: a stable but dichotometric divide

The review of literature above reveals that dominant views on the meaning of corporate identity between 1970 and 1985 were stable but dichotometrically divided between corporate personality and corporate identity mix. The dichotometric conceptualisation of corporate identity is founded on authors' overarching recognition of the concept as an expression of corporate personality (i.e. 'what the firm is', 'what it stands for', Topalian, 1984) and corporate identity mix (i.e. symbols, corporate communications and behaviour - the vehicles that convey corporate personality).

3.2.2 Corporate identity as corporate personality, corporate identity mix (CI mix) and the change towards corporate distinctiveness, 1985 to 1995

The theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a movement from corporate personality and CI mix towards corporate distinctiveness between 1985 and 1995; with theoretical perception of corporate identity as corporate personality and CI mix remaining constant throughout this period (see figure 3.1). Definitions put forward by Antonoff (1985), Lux (1986), Birkigt and Stadler (1986), Portugal and Halloran (1986), Carls (1989), Olins (1989), Olins (1990), Balmer (1993), Smythe et al. (1992), Blauw (1994) support this view.

The shift towards corporate distinctiveness might (in addition to other important factors) have been influenced by the publication of Albert and Whetten's (1985) influential thesis, which constructed the meaning of corporate identity as a central,

enduring and distinctive (CED) phenomenon. The notion of central character claimed in Albert and Whetten's (1985) thesis points to the very essence of a firm, which leaders attempt to define through policy making (van Rekom, 1997).

Figure 3.1: Ongoing stability and change in theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-1985; 1985-1995

Definitions of corporate identity, 1970-85	Authors' Construction	Definitions of corporate identity, 1985 to 1995	Authors' construction
Pilditch (1970): A good corporate identity is the one that will identify and express the personality of the corporations as it will be when the scheme is substantially in use	Corporate personality CI mix	Albert and Whetten (1985): It is that which is central, enduring, and distinct about an organisation's character	Central, enduring & distinctive
Selame and Selame (1975): 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.	CI Mix Corporate Personality Image	Antonoff (1985): Corporate identity is the sum of all methods of portrayal, which the company uses to present itself to employees, providers of capital, and the public. According to organisational units, corporate identity is the total of all typical and harmonised methods of portrayal of design, culture and communication	Corporate personality CI mix
Margulies (1977): Corporate identity means the sum of all the ways a company chooses to identify itself to all its publics - the community, customers, employees, the press, present and potential stockholders, security analysts and investment bankers.	Corporate personality CI mix	Lux (1986): Corporate identity is the expression of the personality of a company that can be experienced by anyone. It is manifested in the behaviour and communication of the company and it is aesthetic, formal expression; it can be measured as perceptual result amongst internal and external target groups	Corporate personality CI mix
Olins (1978): The tangible manifestation of a corporate personality is a corporate identity. It is the identity that projects and reflects the reality of the corporate personality. Sometimes, as we know, the corporate identity is introduced as a catalyst to encourage the development of a corporate personality; sometimes it reflects not what is, but what the corporation would like to be.	Corporate personality CI mix	Downey (1986): Corporate identity is the sum of all factors that define and project what an organisation is and where it is going-its unique history, business mix, management style, communication policies and practices, nomenclature, competencies and market and competitive distinction	Corporate Personality CI mix Distinctiveness
Birkigt and Stadler (1980): Visuals of an organisation	CI Mix	Portugal and Halloran (1986): The comprehensive and orchestrated presentation of what a corporation is, where it is going, and how it is different. It facilitates the communication of a corporation's strategic commitments, business competencies, market participants, competitive positioning, organisational character and standards of performance	Corporate personality CI Mix
Henrion (1980): Embodies all visual expressions, also all non-visual expression and behaviour in the social, economic and political field	CI mix	Birkigt and Stadler (1986): Corporate identity is the strategically planned and operationally applied internal and external self-presentation and behaviour of a company. It is based on an agreed company philosophy, long term goals and in particular a desired image, combined with the will to utilise all instruments of the company as one unit, both internally and externally	Corporate personality CI mix
Carter (1982): The logo or brand image of a company and all other visual manifestations of the identity of a company.	CI mix	Ackerman (1988) It is the unique capability of a company that is the cross-functional mix of experience, skills knowledge and talents-which distinguish the corporation and determine its ability to create value in proprietary ways	Distinctiveness
Hannebohn and Blocker (1983): The strategy that helps to increase the economic performance and efficiency of a company. It co-ordinates achievements, values and information, and leads to integration in the sense of corporation	Corporate personality	Abratt (1989): It is a set of visual cues-physical and behavioural that makes a firm recognisable and distinguishes it from others. These cues are used to represent or symbolise the company	CI MIX Distinctiveness
Lee (1983): The personality and the soul of the corporation	Corporate personality	Olins (1989): Corporate identity is the tangible manifestation of the personality of a company. It is identity that reflects and projects the real personality of a company (see Olins, 1990; Balmer, 1993)	Corporate personality
Topalian (1984): Articulates what the firm is, what it stands for and what it does. Corporate identities are projected and are largely under the control of host organisations	Corporate personality CI mix	Lambert (1989): Identity includes all distinct manifestations of a firm, (see Ackerman, 1988; Tannenberger, 1987)	Distinctiveness
		Blauw (1994): Corporate identity is the total of visual and non-visual means applied by a company to present itself to all its relevant target groups on the basis of a corporate identity plan (Smythe et al. 1992)	CI Mix
Dominant construction/dichotometric divide, 1970-1985 (STABILITY)	1-Corporate Personality 2-CI Mix	Dominant construction/trichotometric divide 1985-1995 (STABILITY)	1-Corporate Personality 2-CI Mix 3-Distinctiveness

Source: developed by author

It guides managers on what a firm should do and how other institutions in the environment should relate to them. Albert and Whetten's (1985) notion of enduring or stability refers to those corporate characteristics that are stable over a long period of

time. Just like individuals, corporate history can also be traced. The history of firms may display a set of values, philosophy, style, behaviour and culture. Although literature may have positioned Albert and Whetten (1985) as the originators of the enduring or stability concept, it is observed, however, that this theory may have been drawn from the earlier work of Topalian (1984) whose perception of the concept of corporate identity is akin to corporate philosophy. For Albert and Whetten (1985) the notion of distinctiveness addresses issues relating to what employees consider as being unique about their firm.

Corporate identity as a distinctive phenomenon, 1985-1995

Following the construction of corporate identity as a distinctive phenomenon (Albert and Whetten, 1985), several authors presented various definitions that appear to construct corporate identity as a distinctive phenomenon. For instance, Downey (1986) recognised the use of unique corporate history and core competencies etc. as critical factors distinguishing corporations from others with similar business inclinations. Downey (1986) averred that corporate identity is the summation of various factors that characterise and convey strategic messages in relation to what the firm is, where it is going, business history and business mix, management approach, corporate communication policies and practices, nomenclature, core competencies, market conditions and competitive distinction. Although Downey (1986) underscored the construction of corporate identity in passing, he is however silent on how a firm's corporate personality is expressed. It is imaginable however that Downey's (1986) reference to the word 'project' may actually be referring to the use of elements of the

corporate identity mix (van Riel and Balmer, 1997) as the means through which a firm's corporate personality is expressed to stakeholders.

Abratt (1989) addressed the role of corporate identity as a tool commonly used in differentiating firms from competitors. According to Abratt (1989, p. 68), "corporate identity is an assembly of visual cues including physical and behavioural that makes a firm recognisable from others. These cues are used to represent or symbolise the company". Lambert's (1989) short definition equally supports the view that corporate identity was perceived as a distinctive corporate phenomenon between 1985 and 1995. For Lambert (1989), corporate identity is related to all unique constructions made by a firm about itself. Some other authors, namely Ackerman (1988) and Tannenberger (1987), also addressed this subject from a distinctive perspective.

Corporate identity as corporate personality and corporate identity mix, 1985-1995

At the same time that the concept of corporate identity was dominantly perceived as corporate distinctiveness, the diametric positioning of corporate identity as corporate personality and corporate identity mix continued unabated between 1985 and 1995. For instance, Antonoff (1985) argued that corporate identity refers to all the methods of conveying a firm's corporate personality. It is reflective of the use of the corporate identity mix as a means of expressing the corporate personality (Antonoff, 1985).

A year after Antonoff (1985), Lux (1986) averred that the notion of corporate identity reflects a firm's corporate personality and that it is expressed through corporate behaviour, communication and other elements constituting the corporate identity mix.

That same year, Portugal and Halloran (1986) theorised corporate identity as a construction of three corporate phenomena: what the firm is, where it is going, and how it is different. Corporate identity expedites the construction of corporate strategic commitments, core competencies, market participants, competitive positioning, organisational character and standards of performance (Portugal and Halloran, 1986).

The expression of corporate personality through one or more elements of the corporate identity mix was also recognised by Birkigt and Stadler (1986). In the views of these authors, corporate identity is a strategically planned and operationally applied issue that drives the expression of a firm's corporate personality through corporate behaviour. It is built on the integration of the factors of corporate philosophy, strategic goals etc. into one cohesive unit (Birkight and Stadler, 1986).

Three years after Portugal and Halloran's (1986) and Birkigt and Stadler's theses (1986), Olins (1989) described corporate identity as an expression of corporate personality via the corporate identity mix. This view was also firmly supported by Olins (1990) and Balmer (1993). In the same vein, Blauw (1994) recognised the use of one or more elements of the corporate identity mix in constructing a firm's corporate personality. For Blauw (1994), corporate identity is reflective of visual and non-visual means drawn by the firm to construct the corporate personality.

The construction of corporate identity 1985-1995: a stable but trichotometric divide

Dominant views on the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity between 1985 and 1995 were stable but divided along trichotometric views of

corporate personality, corporate identity mix and distinctiveness. The trichotometric conceptualisation of corporate identity along these lines is founded on authors' recognition of the concept as an expression of corporate personality (Topalian, 1984) and corporate identity mix (van Riel and Balmer, 1997). It is also in recognition of corporate identity as a distinctive phenomenon (Albert and Whetten, 1985).

3.2.3 Corporate identity as corporate personality and CI mix and the change towards 'central', 'enduring', distinctiveness' (CED) and image, 1995 to 2008

Following a stable period of ten years, the theoretical construction of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity as corporate distinctiveness, corporate personality and CI mix changed towards CED and organisational image. However, the construction of corporate identity as a combination of corporate personality and CI mix continued unabated during this period, (See Figure 3.1). Importantly, the change in the theoretical construction of corporate identity towards CED and image grew out of the rise in the number of articles which approach corporate identity from a multidisciplinary perspective (Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; He and Balmer, 2007). Figure 3.2 demonstrates how the multidisciplinary perspective to corporate identity might have influenced the construction of corporate identity as a central, enduring, distinctive (CED) phenomenon and image.

Corporate identity as central, enduring, distinctiveness (CED), 1995-2008

One of the definitions that aligned with Albert and Whetten's (1995) theory of distinctiveness is Schmidt's (1995) notion of corporate identity. In Schmidt's (1995)

Figure 3.2: Ongoing stabilities and changes in the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, 1970-2008

Definitions of corporate identity, 1970-85	Author Constructions	Definitions of corporate identity, 1985 to 1995	Author Constructions	Definitions of corporate identity, 1995-2008	Author Constructions
Pilditch (1970): A good corporate identity is the one that will identify and express the personality of the corporations as it will be when the scheme is substantially in use	Corporate personality CI mix	Albert and Whetten (1985): It is that which is central, enduring, and distinct about an organization's character	Central, enduring & distinctive	Schmidt (1995): Corporate identity is the degree to which a firm achieves a distinct and a coherent image in its aesthetic output.	Distinctiveness
Selame and Selame (1975): 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.	Corp. Per Corp. Image CI mix	Antonoff (1985): Corporate identity is the sum of all methods of portrayal, which the company uses to present itself to employees, providers of capital, and the public. According to organizational units, corporate identity is the total of all typical and harmonised methods of portrayal of design, culture and communication	Corporate personality CI mix	Van Rekom (1997): The set of meanings by which an object allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it	Corporate association Recognition
Margules (1977): Corporate identity means the sum of all the ways a company chooses to identify itself to all its publics - the community, customers, employees, the press, present and potential stockholders, security analysts and investment bankers.	Corporate personality CI mix	Lux (1986): Corporate identity is the expression of the personality of a company that can be experienced by anyone. It is manifested in the behaviour and communication of the company and it is aesthetic, formal expression; it can be measured as perceptual result amongst internal and external target groups	Corporate personality CI mix	Leuthesser and Kohli, (1997): It is the way an organization reveals its philosophy and strategy through communication, behaviour and symbolism, (Alessandri, 2001; Korver and van Ruler, 2003).	Corporate personality CI mix
Olins (1978): The tangible manifestation of a corporate personality is a corporate identity. It is the identity that projects and reflects the reality of the corporate personality. Sometimes, as we know, the corporate identity is introduced as a catalyst to encourage the development of a corporate personality; sometimes it reflects not what is, but what the corporation would like to be.	Corporate personality CI mix	Downey (1986): Corporate identity is the sum of all factors that define and project what an organization is and where it is going-its unique history, business mix, management style, communication policies and practices, nomenclature, competencies and market and competitive distinction	Corporate Personality CI mix Distinctiveness	Hatch and Schultz (1997): We view organizational identity as grounded in local meanings and organizational symbols and thus embedded in organizational culture, which we see as the internal symbolic context for the development and maintenance of organization identity. The symbolic construction of corporate identity is communicated to organizational members by top management, but is interpreted and enacted by organizational members based on cultural patterns of the organization, work experiences and social influence from external relations on the environment	Organisational identity; Symbolism Corporate personality Communication Image of organisation held by employees
Birkigt and Stadler (1980): Visuals of an organization	CI mix	Portugal and Halloran (1986): The comprehensive and orchestrated presentation of what a corporation is, where it is going, and how it is different. It facilitates the communication of a corporation's strategic commitments, business competencies, market participants, competitive positioning, organizational character and standards of performance	Corporate personality CI mix	Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997): It is a set of interdependent characteristics that gives an organization specificity, stability and coherence, thus making it identifiable. These characteristics alone do not make it possible to identify an organization. It is the configuration or pattern of the system that establishes the uniqueness of the organization, which plays a significant role.	Specificity Enduring Coherence Distinctiveness
Henrion (1980): Embodies all visual expressions, also all non-visual expression and behaviour in the social, economic and political field	Corp. Per CI mix	Birkigt and Stadler (1986): Corporate identity is the strategically planned and operationally applied internal and external self-presentation and behaviour of a company. It is based on an agreed company philosophy, long term goals and in particular a desired image, combined with the will to utilise all instruments of the company as one unit, both internally and externally	Corporate personality CI mix	Gray and Balmer (1998): Corporate identity is the reality of an organization. It is the distinct characteristics of the firm.	Corporate personality Distinctiveness
Carter (1982): The logo or brand image of a company and all other visual manifestations of the identity of a company.	Corp. Per CI mix	Carls (1989): "active" and visual consistency is more about "attitude" than a rigid set of values. The corporate identity programme is a series of compatible but non-uniform images	CI mix Enduring	Gioia (1998): Organizational identity is (a) what is taken by the organization; (b) what makes the organization distinctive from other organizations (at least in the eyes of the beholding members); and (c) what is perceived by members to be an enduring or continuing feature.	Corporate personality Distinctiveness; Image of organisation held by employees; Enduring
Hannebohn and Blocker (1983): The strategy that helps to increase the economic performance and efficiency of a company. It co-ordinates achievements, values and information, and leads to integration in the sense of corporation	Corporate personality	Abbratt (1989): It is a set of visual cues-physical and behavioural that makes a firm recognisable and distinguishes it from others. These cues are used to represent or symbolise the company	CI mix Enduring CI mix Distinctiveness	Dolphin (1999): Identity concerns the presentation of the corporate persona. Unlike image, identity does not change from one audience to another until the time it is altered, it remains consistent. Identity is not corporate image. Corporate identity is the individuality of the organization. The way that it actually is, in short, corporate personality. See also Hawm, 1998; Leitch, 1999)	Corporate personality CI mix: Symbolism
Lee (1983): The personality and the soul of the corporation	Corporate personality	Olins (1989): Corporate identity is the tangible manifestation of the personality of a company. It is identity that reflects and projects the real personality of a company (see Olins, 1990; Balmer, 1993)	CI mix Enduring CI mix Distinctiveness	Gioia et al. (2000): It is the consistent and targeted representation of the firm, with emphasis on symbol and logos. It is strategic and applied both internally & externally	Corporate personality Enduring: Symbolism
Topalian (1984): Articulates what the firm is, what it stands for and what it does. Corporate identities are projected and are largely under the control of host organizations	Corporate personality	Lambert (1989): Identity includes all distinct manifestations of a firm, (see Ackerman, 1988; Tannenberger, 1987)	CI mix	Kiriakidou and Millward (2000): Corporate identity is the tangible representation of the organizational identity, the expression as manifest in the behaviour and communication of the organization	Organizational identity CI mix
	1-Corporate Personality 2-CI mix	Blauw (1994): Corporate identity is the total of visual and non-visual means applied by a company to present itself to all its relevant target groups on the basis of a corporate identity plan (Smythe et al. 1992)	Corporate personality Distinctiveness	Davies et al. (2003): Identity is what holds a group together, the corporate glue, a sense of belonging, the informal and formal set of rules that we abide by, an understanding of who can join. It is socially constructed. It does not exist but is created through our interaction with other members. It may be formalised in part by a company history, rulebooks, terms and conditions of employment and documents such as the mission and vision statement, but it is still difficult to encapsulate in any formal way.	Corporate bond, corporate personality Created through interaction among members
	1-Corporate Personality 2-CI mix		CI mix	Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006): the presentation of an organization to every stakeholder. It is what makes an organization unique and it incorporate the organization's communication, design, culture, behaviour, structure, industry identity and strategy. It is thus intrinsically related to both the corporate personality and image	Corporate personality CI mix Distinctiveness Organisational image
	1-Corporate Personality 2-CI mix	Stable/Dominant construction of CI A Trichotometric divide, 1985-1995	1-Corporate Personality 2-CI mix 3-Distinctiveness		1-Corporate personality 2-CI mix 3-Central, endure, distinct 4-Organizational image

view, the concept of corporate identity reflects the degree to which a firm achieves distinct and coherent image. This position was firmly supported by several authors who linked the meaning of corporate identity to corporate distinctiveness. For instance, Marwick and Fill (1997) opined that the phenomenon of corporate identity addresses the ways that a firm distinguishes itself from others. Quoting The International Corporate Identity Group's statement, van Riel and Balmer (1997) argued that corporate identity is that which helps a firm to differentiate itself from competitors. Following Albert and Whetten's (1985) theory of CED, Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) conceived the concept of corporate identity not only as a measure of a firm's distinctiveness and identifiability but also a reflection of its specificity, stability (i.e. endurance) and coherence. In the same vein, van Riel and Balmer (1997) argued that corporate identity is a concept representing how firms construct issues relating to centrality, sameness over time (i.e. enduring) and distinctiveness.

A year after Moingeon and Ramanantsoa's (1997) and van Riel and Balmer's (1997) articles appeared in the European Journal of Marketing's special issue on corporate identity, Gioia (1998) argued that corporate identity is that which makes a firm distinct. Gray and Balmer (1998) also put forward a definition that positioned corporate identity as a concept reflective of a firm's distinctiveness. For Gray and Balmer (1998) the concept of corporate identity exemplifies the characteristics and the distinctive nature of a firm. Following Gray and Balmer's (1998) work, Balmer and Dinnie (1999) observed the usefulness of corporate identity in providing corporate distinctiveness for a firm. In Balmer and Dinnie's (1999) view, the notion of corporate identity enhances the identification of a firm. Almost ten years after the publication of

Balmer and Dinnie's (1999) work, Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) confirmed Gray and Balmer's thesis by arguing that the concept of corporate identity is a phenomenon that addresses the unique status of a firm. It is that which makes an organisation unique among others with similar business inclinations.

Corporate identity as corporate personality and corporate identity mix, 1995-2008

Between 1995 and 2008, a number of authors positioned the concept of corporate identity from corporate personality and CI mix perspectives. As Olins (1995) observes, the concept of corporate identity exemplifies every business activity, which presents the corporate personality of the firm to stakeholders formally and informally through the corporate identity mix. Corroborating Olins (1995) view on this issue, van Riel (1995) confined the concept of corporate identity to that which expresses a variety of corporate characteristics and personalities through various elements of the CI mix. Substantiating this view two years after the publication of Olins (1995) and van Riel (1995) theses, van Riel and Balmer (1997) avowed that the concept of corporate identity is indicative of how firms presents themselves (i.e. what the firm is, what the firm does etc) through corporate symbols and other elements of the CI mix.

In the same year, Balmer and Soenen (1997) conceived corporate identity from three corporate personality standpoints. First is the mind (i.e. the product of conscious decision making); second is the soul (i.e. the outcome of subjective elements such as the firm's distinct corporate values and the sub-cultures present in the firm) and third is the voice representing how firms construct their corporate personalities through corporate communications and other elements of the CI mix.

Following several other works that conceived corporate identity from corporate personality and CI mix perspectives, the International Corporate Identity Group (see van Riel and Balmer, 1997), argued that the concept of corporate identity represents the corporate ethos and corporate values and character as well as how these are communicated coherently through one or more elements of the CI mix.

The conceptualisation of corporate identity as a combination of corporate personality and corporate identity mix was reiterated in Leuthesser and Kohli's (1997) work. Leuthesser and Kohli (1997) avowed that corporate identity addresses issues relating to how a firm constructs its corporate personality through a mix of communication, behaviour and symbolism (Alessandri, 2001; Korver and van Ruler, 2003). Corporate identity is a reality for the firm and it determines how the distinct characteristics of the firm are revealed through the corporate identity mix (Gray and Balmer, 1998).

In the year following the publication of Leuthesser and Kohli's (1997) work, Leitch (1999) introduced the element of control into the meaning of corporate identity. In Leitch's (1999) view, corporate identity is a corporate artefact subject to total control through policy making and self regulation of various activities that brings a firm's corporate personality to life. In a text that reviewed the management of corporate identity, Dolphin (1999) confined the concept of corporate identity to corporate personality and corporate identity mix. As Dolphin (1999) observes, the notion of corporate identity signifies the construction of messages about a firm's corporate personality together with other issues that crystallises the individuality of the firm.

By the year 2000, more definitions, which positioned corporate identity from corporate personality perspectives, were advanced from organisational theorists and psychologists. For instance, Gioia et al. (2000) defined corporate identity as the consistent and targeted construction of the firm (including, what it is, what it stands for and so on) through the corporate symbol or other elements constituting the CI mix. Kiriakidou and Millward (2000) observed that corporate identity is the tangible representation of a firm (including what it is; what it does; what it stands for) and how these are constructed through corporate behaviour and corporate communications.

Following Leitch's (1999) thesis, Davies et al. (2003) drew attention to corporate personality, bonding among employees and the emergence of corporate identity through interaction among employees. For Davies et al. (2003) corporate identity is that which holds a firm together. It is the corporate glue that binds the firm and provides a sense of belonging to employees. Corporate identity is socially constructed through formal and informal business guidelines that employees abide by. As Davies et al. (2003) puts it, corporate identity does not exist. It is a phenomenon created through continued interaction among employees. They opined that corporate identity is formalised partly through the articulation of corporate history, business policies, terms and conditions of employment, corporate literatures as well as through mission and vision statements.

In the course of addressing a thesis on how brands become iconic, Holt (2004) pointed out that the notion of identity symbolises what is to be done and provides opportunities for self-expression. It enables customers and other stakeholders who wish to identify with these identities the opportunity to construct their personalities.

Two years after Holt's (2003) work, Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) presented a definition that constructed corporate identity as a projection of strategic intentions (see Hamel and Prahalad, 1994) which play key roles in the articulation of corporate personality. In Melewar and Karaosmanoglu's (2006) view corporate identity is that which conveys what the firm is (Topalian, 1984) to stakeholders and makes the firm distinct (see Ackerman, 1988; Tannenberger, 1987). Quoting Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006, p. 864) "corporate identity is the presentation of a firm to every stakeholder. It is what makes a firm unique and it incorporates the firm's communication, design, culture, behaviour, structure, industry identity and strategy. It is thus intrinsically related to both the corporate personality and image".

Corporate identity as image, 1995-2008

During the period under review, a number of notable authors from different fields of study published various articles (appearing in the European Journal of Marketing special issue on corporate identity in 1997), which confined corporate identity to corporate image. For instance, van Rekom's (1997) contribution to this special issue approached the concept of corporate identity as a phenomenon embedded in meanings. As van Rekom (1997) observes, the concept of corporate identity is indicative of the meanings, which stakeholders ascribe to a firm. Meaning in this instance implies the perception or image of a firm as held in the minds of stakeholders. Corroborating in the same special issue, Marwick and Fill (1997) argued that corporate identity could be defined as the ways a firm would like to be perceived among stakeholders. Similarly, in this special issue, the International Corporate

Identity Group (a pan European corporate identity think-tank) in van Riel and Balmer (1997) opined that corporate identity is a phenomenon that translates corporate communication into corporate image. Hatch and Schultz (1997) conceive corporate identity as a concept grounded in meanings (i.e. perceptions and images). They argued that as the internal-external distinction that signifies the differences between corporate identity and organisational identity collapses, the notion of corporate identity is increasingly influenced by image. The following year, Gioia (1998) argued that corporate identity is what stakeholder perceives to be distinct in a firm.

Three years after Gioia's (1998) thesis, Alessandri (2001) presented a definition that positioned the concept of corporate identity as corporate image. In Alessandri's (2001) view, corporate identity is a tool drawn by firms to establish a positive corporate image and good corporate reputation over time among stakeholders. Following Alessandri (2001), Melewar and Karaosmanoglu also conceived the concept of corporate identity from corporate image point of view. For these authors, corporate identity is that which is intrinsically related to a firm's corporate image.

The construction of corporate identity, 1995-2008: a stable but quartochotometric divide

The review of literature in the paragraphs above indicates that dominant views on corporate identity between 1995 and 2007 were stable but divided by four quartochotometric views. The quartochotometric divide is grounded on authors' philosophy that corporate identity is an expression of corporate personality (Topalian,

1984), corporate identity mix, distinctive phenomenon (Albert and Whetten, 1985) and corporate image (Hatch and Schultz, 1997).

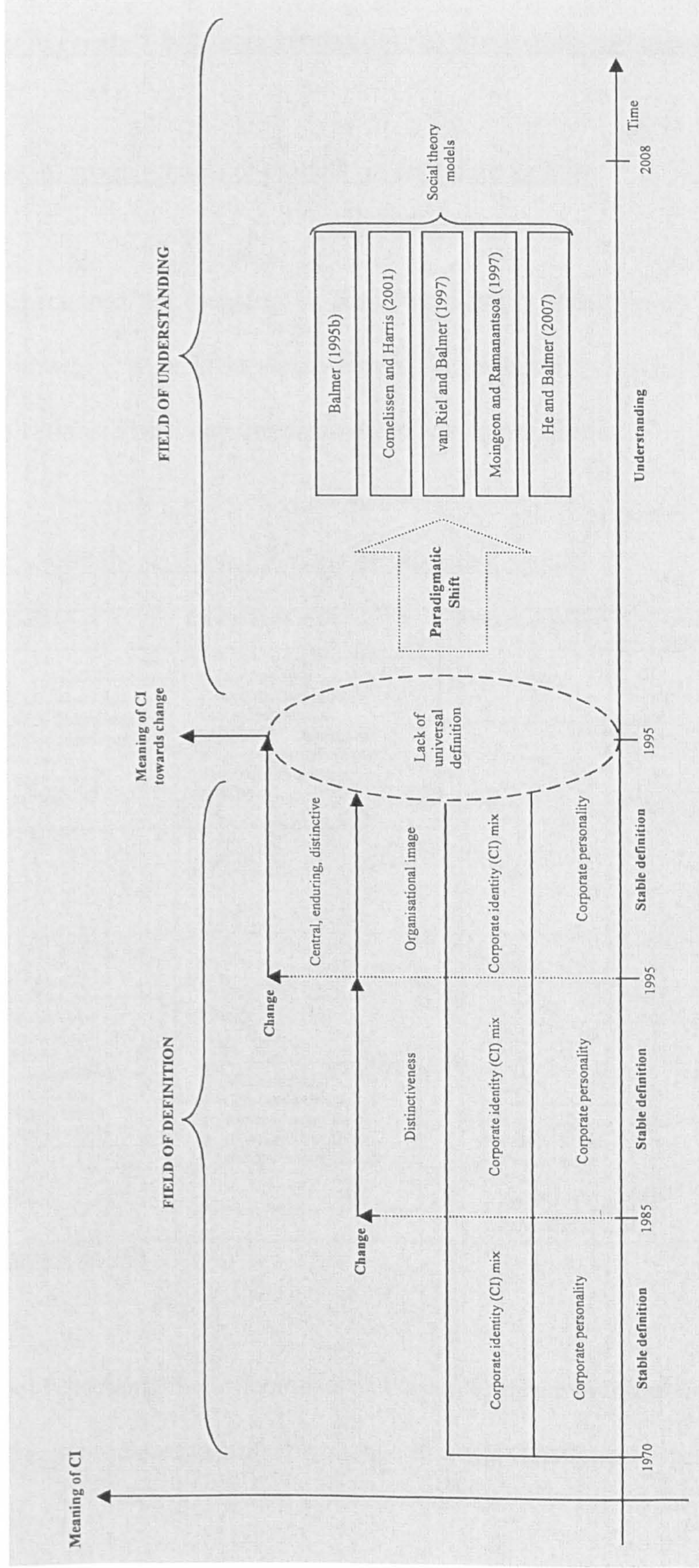
3.2.4 A paradigmatic shift from the search for a universal definition to understanding

The review of literature (in the paragraphs) above provides evidence to suggest that there are four dominant viewpoints (i.e. corporate personality, CI mix, CED, image) on the meaning of corporate identity. The emergence of these viewpoints supports the notion that there is a disagreement on the meaning of this concept (Topalian, 2003; Whetten and Mackey: 2002; Gioia, et al., 2000; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Wilkinson and Balmer 1996; van Rekom, 1997; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Balmer, 2001b).

The inability to establish a consensual statement on the meaning of corporate identity might have influenced some authors to give up the search for a universal definition (van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). Thus, there is a paradigmatic shift from the construction of ‘definitions’ towards an ‘understanding’ of the meaning of corporate identity via the development of social theory models. These models are known to compartmentalise common assumptions in the meaning of corporate identity. Figure 3.3 gives a representation of the paradigmatic shift.

In the following paragraphs, a variety of social theory models (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) that were theoretically constructed to provide an understanding of the meaning of corporate identity are comprehensively reviewed.

Figure 3.3: ongoing construction of the meaning of corporate identity



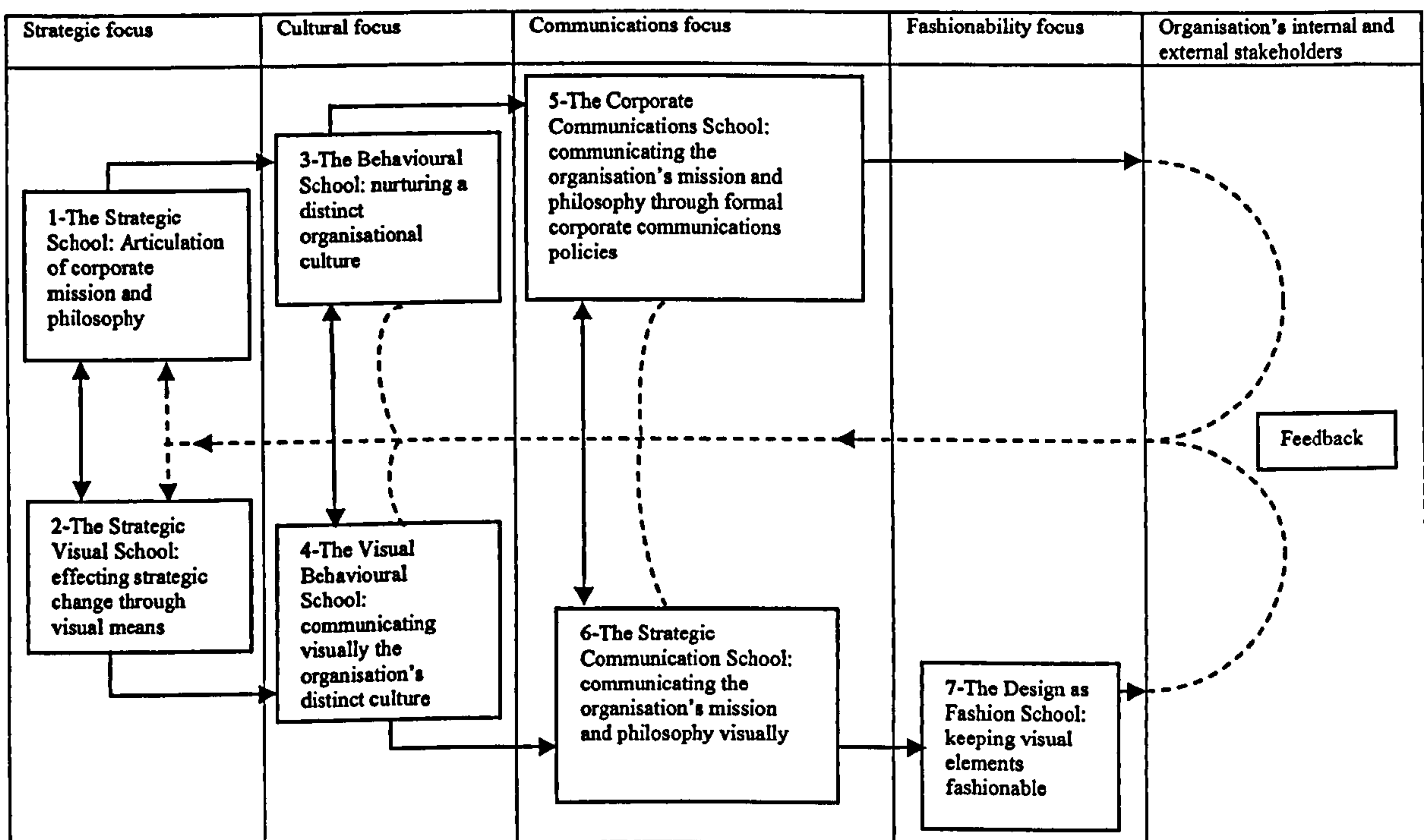
Source: developed by author

3.3 Models aiming to create a better understanding of the meaning of identity

3.3.1 Balmer's (1995b) seven schools of thought on corporate identity

Balmer (1995b) approached the meaning of corporate identity using seven schools of thought namely strategic, visual, strategic-visual, behavioural, visual behavioural, corporate communications, visual communications and design-as-fashion.

Figure 3.4: Balmer's (1995b) schools of thought on corporate identity



Source: Balmer (1995b, p. 37)

The strategic school represents the articulation of corporate mission and philosophy and the strategic-visual school relates to strategic change through visual means. Similarly, the

idea behind the behavioural school concerns the nurturing of a distinct cultural mix and the visual-behavioural school represents the need to communicate a firm's distinct culture visually. The corporate communications school highlights the need to convey the firm's mission and philosophy through formal corporate communication whilst the visual communication school emphasises the communication of the mission visually. Lastly, the designer-as-fashion school advocates the need to keep visual elements fashionable. (See Figure 3.4 for Balmer's 1995b model).

3.3.2 van Riel and Balmer's (1997) three perspectives on the meaning of corporate identity

Building on Balmer's (1995b) seven schools of thought, van Riel and Balmer (1997) drew three disciplinary paradigms namely 'graphic design', 'integrated corporate communications' and 'interdisciplinary' to explain the meaning of corporate identity. Under the graphic paradigm, van Riel and Balmer (1997) avowed that corporate identity was originally conceived in literature (see Pilditch, 1970; Jackson, 1987; Carter 1975, 1976, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1997; Birkigt and Stadler, 1980; Selame and Selame, 1975; Bernstein, 1986; Ind, 1990; Olins, 1978, 1989, 1995; Margulies, 1977; Jenkins, 1991; Schmidt, 1995) as logos and house styles. They argued that the concept was originally conceived from logos, house style and visual identification standpoints. Although visual designs were used earlier as a lens for defining this concept, some definitional constructs (see van Riel, 1995; Birkigt and Stadler, 1985) in literature reveal

that it has been assigned greater responsibility in firms' strategic positioning and achievement of competitive advantage.

The rising desire to convey coordinated organisational messages through corporate symbols and corporate marketing campaigns efficiently and consistently attracted the attention of several authors in the 1980s and 1990s. Subsequently a new definitive construct reflective of the communication of corporate personality (see Abratt, 1989) emerged in the literary definition of corporate identity (see also Leitch and Motion, 1999; Bernstein, 1986; van Riel, 1995). van Riel and Balmer (1997) called this the integrated corporate communication paradigm arguing that definitions within this paradigm are most illuminative of visual and non visual presentation of organisational characters to stakeholders (Blauw, 1994) and the fundamental difference that subsists between the management of corporate communications mix and marketing communications mix.

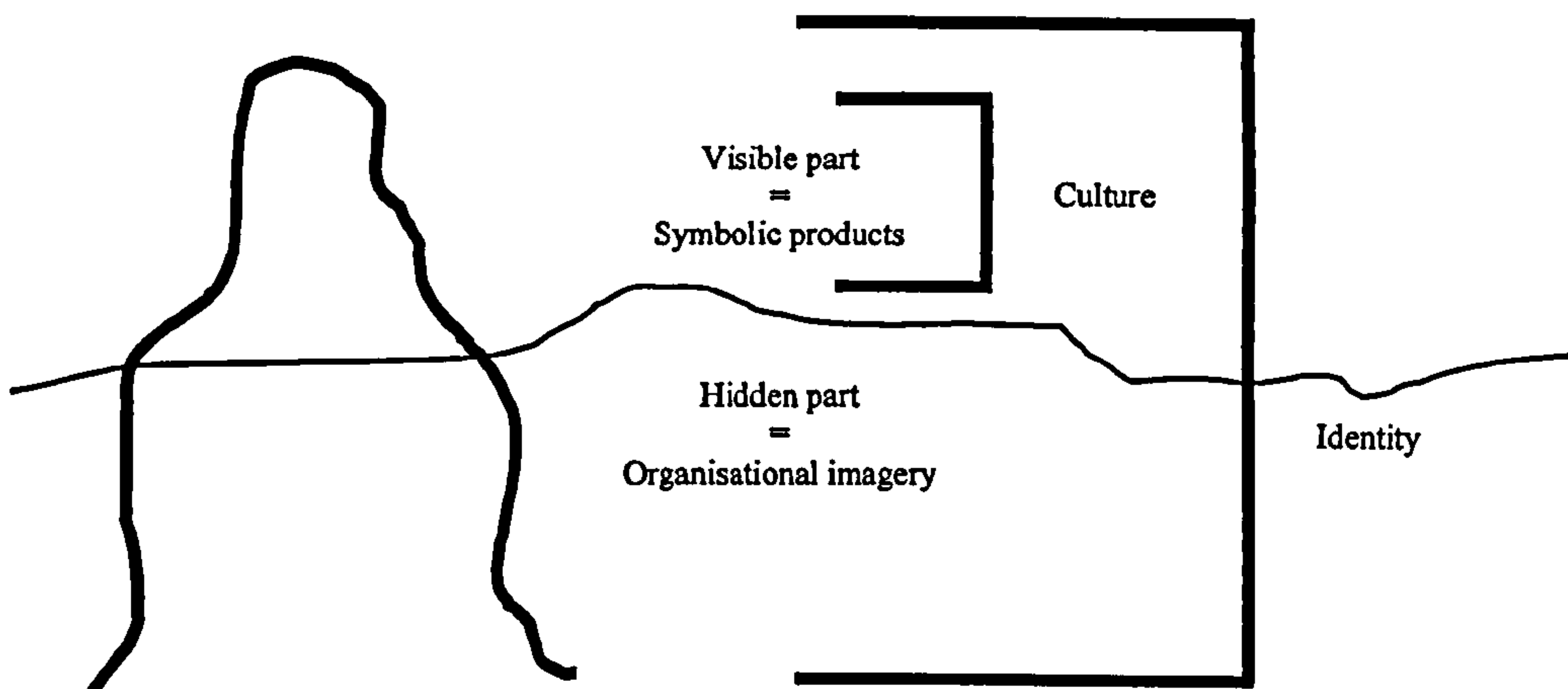
The interdisciplinary paradigm brings together views that recognise the interdisciplinary nature of the characteristics of corporate identity. It is deeply rooted in employee behaviour (Balmer 1995b, Ramanantsoa, 1989), symbolism, behaviour, organisational imagery, history, market conditions (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002b), visuals, strategy (Alessandri, 2001; Shultz, Hatch Holten-Larsen, 2000). For van Riel and Balmer (1997), authors belonging to this scholarship argue that corporate identity is a borderless discipline reflecting not just one branch of management but several interdisciplinary scholarships (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Balmer, 1995b). This philosophy is also hugely reflective of the Strathclyde statement, which according to van Riel and Balmer (1997, p.

341) “articulates the multidisciplinary nature of the area and its difference from brand management”.

3.3.3 Moingeon and Ramanantsoa’s (1997) French school of thought

Moingeon and Ramanantsoa’s (1997) French school of thought brings together views that position corporate personality (see Olins 1978; Topalian, 1984) and corporate culture (see Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Schein, 1992; Smircich, 1983) as corporate identity. The French philosophy extends beyond the notions of internal images or organisational images (see Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Kennedy, 1977).

Figure 3.5: Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) perspective on corporate identity



Source: Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997, p. 386)

Quoting Larcon and Reitter (1979), Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) contend that the French school conceives identity as a “set of interdependent characteristics of the organisation that give it specificity, stability and coherence” thus making it identifiable,

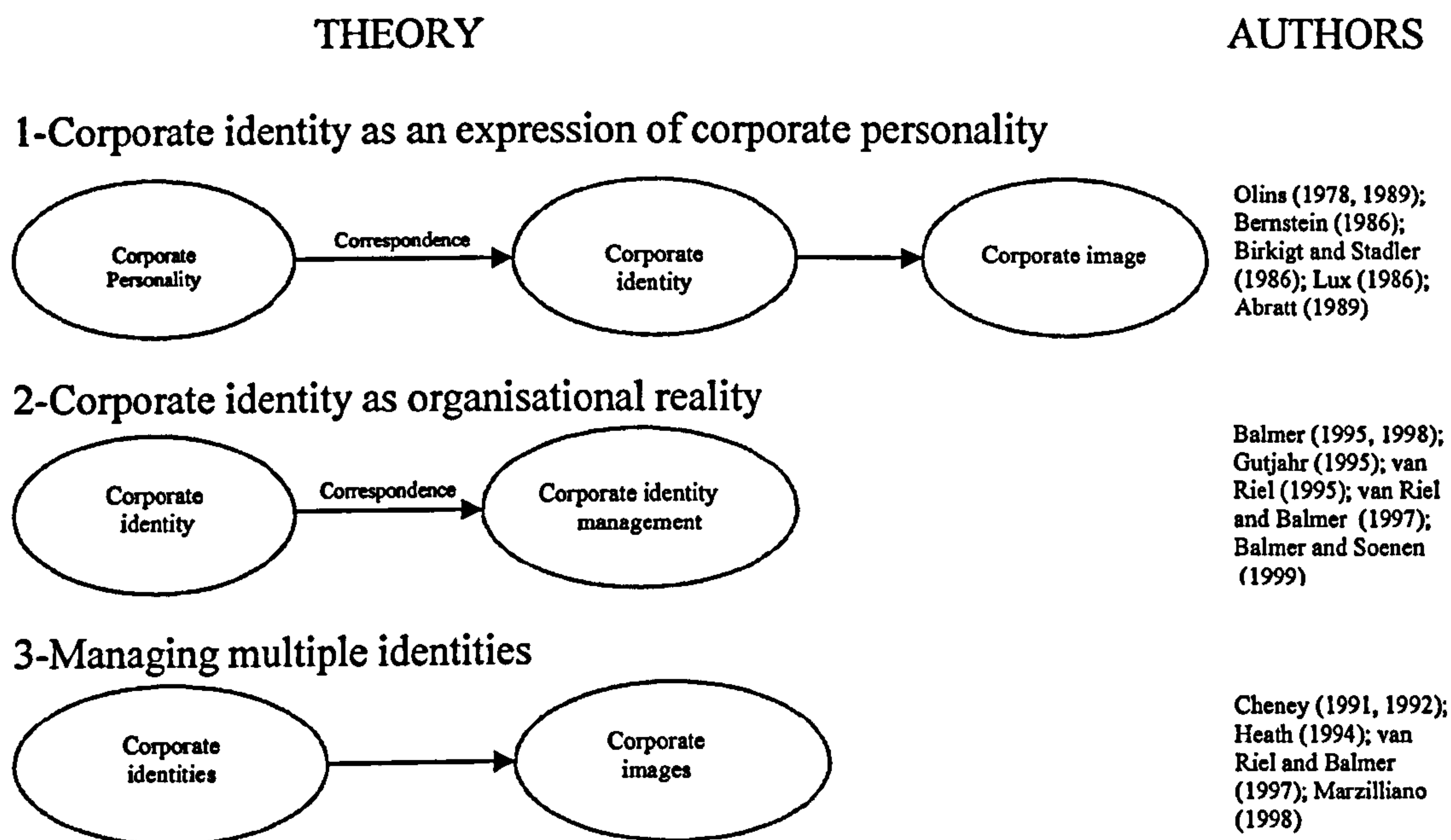
distinct and unique. Besides its interdisciplinary nature, the French scholarship advocates the need to move beyond the descriptive level of corporate identity, to arrive at the level of explanation. Moving beyond this level of description allows advancement in corporate culture and encourages an in-depth analysis of corporate identity (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997). (See Figure 3.5 for the French school of thought model)

3.3.4 Cornelissen and Harris's (2001) three metaphorical perspectives to corporate identity

Cornelissen and Harris (2001) grouped the theoretical construction of corporate identity into three metaphorical perspectives notably, 'corporate identity as an expression of corporate personality'; 'corporate identity as organisational reality'; and 'corporate identity as all the expressions of a company'. The first metaphorical theory credited conceptual definitions, which positioned corporate identity mainly in the light of corporate personality (see Bernstein, 1986; Lux, 1886; Topalian, 1984; Baker and Balmer, 1997; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Markkanen, 1998). It also defines it as a representation of organisational characteristics (see Olins, 1978; Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000; Abratt, 1989; Dolphin, 1999; Baker and Balmer, 1997) which reside at the heart of an organisation's corporate identity (see Markham, 1972; Olins, 1978, 1989; Bernstein, 1986; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986) and viewed by stakeholders. Cornelissen and Harris (2001) broadened this framework by incorporating definitions confining corporate identity to the manifestation of perceptions, corporate image and reputation formed in the

minds of stakeholders (see Carls, 1989; Abratt 1989; Hawn, 1998; Carter, 1982; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Hatch and Schultz, 1997).

Figure 3.6: Metaphorical perspectives to corporate identity



Source: Cornelissen and Harris (2001, p. 64)

The second perspective of corporate identity as ‘organisational reality’ brings life to the views in the first perspective with the addition of an intentional aspect, embodying and epitomising the ‘factual’ identity or the internal organisational characteristics. As Cornelissen and Harris (2001) argue, authors belonging to this scholarship (see Balmer 1995b, 1998; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Larçon and Reitter, 1979; Kennedy, 1977; Balmer and Soenen, 1999; Gutjahr, 1995; Birkigt, et al. 1995) contend that organisations have a factual identity (Smythe et al. 1992; Blauw, 1994; Olins, 1995; van Riel, 1995; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Gray and Balmer, 1998; Hawn, 1998) or an internal personality or characteristic akin to an actual organism similar to a

real-life person. The internalities in this regard include corporate strategy (Portugal and Halloran, 1986; Leuthesser and Kohli, 1997; Alessandri 2001; Balmer, 1995b; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986), philosophy (Topalian, 1984; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Leuthesser and Kohli, 1997) and ownership history (Downey, 1986). It also includes scope of business (Downey, 1986), types of products and services offered, corporate and product performance (Portugal and Halloran, 1986), internal systems and structures, core values (Balmer and Soenen, 1997), and a firm's formal and informal communications (Downey, 1986; Ind, 1992; van Rekom 1997; Balmer 1998; Balmer and Soenen, 1999).

For Cornelissen and Harris (2001) the semantic shift in theoretical construction of corporate identity might have been triggered by changes in usage of the term identity from 'sameness' in expressions to 'essences' and 'properties'. Authors belonging to this thought constructed corporate identity as a set of interdependent characteristics that gives the firm specificity, stability and coherence (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Larçon and Reitter, 1979). (Figure 3.6 gives a graphic description of Cornelissen and Harris's 2001 model).

Cornelissen and Harris's (2001) third viewpoint on corporate identity (all expressions of a company) anticipates the challenges of dualistic conceptions of corporate image and reality. This viewpoint conceives corporate identity as a phenomenon that emerges through self expressiveness and sustained social interaction. As Cornelissen and Harris's (2001) observes stakeholders' associate organisations with specific identity through corporate self constructions (see Bernstein, 1986; Cohen and Basu, 1987) or

organisational appearance. A fundamental notion of corporate identity as corporate expressiveness or organisational appearance is that “a corporate identity can be created, transformed and restructured by management or specialist agencies and thus does not necessarily have to refer to inner values or organisational identities” (Cornelissen and Harris, 2001, p. 61). In essence organisations must strive to achieve a defined standard of consistency (see Leitch and Motion, 1997) to create desired impressions with stakeholders over a period of time in order to establish viable reputations and a high degree of credibility and trust (see Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Fombrun and van Riel, 1997).

3.3.5 He and Balmer (2007) four perspectives of corporate identity

He and Balmer (2007) itemised four identity constructs namely visual identity, corporate identity, organisation’s identity and organisational identity. Authors under the visual construct (Feldman, 1969; Selame and Selame, 1975; Margulies, 1977; Olins, 1978; 1989; King, 1982; Bernstein, 1986; Chajet, 1984; Perkins, 1995; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997) perceive visual identity as a technique enhancing recognition of organisations (see Baker and Balmer, 1997; Henderson and Cote, 1998; Melewar and Saunders, 1999; van Riel et al., 2001; van Riel et al., 2001; Olins, 1995; Olins, 1989). Organisation’s identity construct refers to all views that approach corporate identity from employee and social psychological standpoints (Gioia, 1998; Cornelissen, 2002a; Haslem et al., 2003; Albert and Whetten, 1985; Dutton and Duckerich, 1991; Dutton and Penner, 1993; Dutton et. al, 1994; Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996;

Gioia et al., 2000). Organisational identity perspective holds that employees have individual social identity in the organisation (Ashforth and Johnson, 2001; Tajfel and Turner, 1985; Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

Table 3.2: Four perspectives of corporate identity

	Conceptualisation	Locus of analysis	Key issues (exemplars)
Visual identity	Identity as the visual means of organisational self-presentation	Organisation's symbolism	How to keep VI fashionable, updated and appealing to audience
Corporate identity	Organisation's distinctive attributes addressing "what the organisation is"	Organisational characteristics/rationale	How CI can be communicated effectively to nurture positive corporate image and reputation, which in turn may lead to competitive advantage identity-image interplay multiple types of identity identity-strategy interplay
Organisation's identity	Defining characteristics of an organisation as perceived by beholders	Collectively perceived organisational characteristics	Interplay between identity and image. Interplay between identity and strategy. Multiplicity of identity. Identity dissonance among different stakeholders. How to define an Organisation
Organisational identity	Organisational Identity (OI) as a salient social identity (relating to the individual)	Individual employees	When and why OI is salient? Implication of OI for organisational behaviour

Source: He and Balmer (2007, p. 771)

He and Balmer's (2007) organisational identification construct draws together notions relating to the degree to which individuals define themselves in relation to attributes that they believe define the organisation (see Dutton et al., 1994; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Reade, 2001; Dukerich et al., 2002; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Dutton and Dukerich, 1994). Table 3.2 gives a representation of He and Balmer's (2007) model.

Although, the conceptualisation of a variety of social theory models (see Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) contributes towards an understanding of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity, however, it would appear as if these models have also contributed towards the confusion (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Melewar, 2003; Topalian, 2003; Balmer and Wilson, 1998; Wilkinson and Balmer 1996; van Rekom, 1997) surrounding the meaning of this concept.

For instance many concepts which are conceptually similar were fragmented and addressed (in these models) as if they were different. This further complicates the understanding of the meaning of corporate identity, causing ambiguity amongst scholars. In order to overcome this challenge therefore, a synthesis, which brings together common and unifying chords of arguments from these social theory models, is presented. By aligning and integrating related elements in these models, the complexities surrounding the meaning of corporate identity are minimised and a further understanding of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity is enhanced.

3.4 The social theory models of corporate identity: the development of a synthesis

In the most basic terms, the review of theoretical literature provide evidence to suggest that the elements constituting the social theory models drawn by corporate marketing authors (see Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) to explain the meaning of

corporate identity meets at two levels of convergence. First is at the level of the CI mix. Figure 3.7 gives a graphic description of the first level of convergence. Second is at the level of a firm's corporate personality. Similarly Figure 3.8 describes this convergence.

3.4.1 Level of convergence 1: The corporate identity mix (CI mix)

The corporate identity mix is a corporate marketing phenomenon composed of various approaches in which an organisation's corporate identity is presented to stakeholders. These approaches includes symbolism, behaviour, corporate communications (van Riel and Balmer, 1997), structure and multidisciplinary phenomenon (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). These approaches are discussed below:

Symbolism: visual behavioural, strategic visual, design schools of thought; graphic design paradigm; visual identity perspective

Symbolism or corporate symbol is an important element within the corporate identity mix. It is that aspect of the mix, which communicates a firm's corporate personality through visual means to stakeholders (Marwick and Fill, 1997). The notion of symbolism has been treated thoroughly under Balmer's (1995b) visual, strategic visual, behavioural visual, design as fashion schools of thought as well as under van Riel and Balmer's (1997) visual identity paradigm. It has also been addressed under He and Balmer's (2007) theory on the four perspectives of corporate identity.

The visual, strategic visual, visual behavioural, design as fashion schools of thought (Balmer, 1995b) provides a unifying focus on the functional aspect of visuals. These schools address the use of visuals as a veritable means of conveying strategic messages about an organisation's mission, vision (Balmer, 1995b) current and future activities (Van Den Bosch et al., 2006) and essential values of a corporate brand (Urde, 2003). In addition, the schools agree on the use of visual as a method of communicating ideas about how fashionable (Balmer, 1995b) the organisation is. Van Riel and Balmer's (1997) graphic design paradigm which is defined synonymously with visuals agrees with Balmer's (1995b) visual, strategic visual, visual behavioural, design as fashion schools, which advocate the functional use of visuals. Van Riel and Balmer's (1997) graphic design paradigm approaches the use of visuals as a veritable vehicle for conveying messages about the corporate mission, vision etc to stakeholders. Following Balmer (1995b) and Van Riel and Balmer (1997), He and Balmer's (2005) visual identity perspective conceptualised the role of visuals and its use. He and Balmer (2007) argued that among other things, visuals are used by organisation to help achieve identification, distinction and differentiation among stakeholders.

Following the consensual argument that visuals are commonly used to communicate mission, vision, change, fashion, current, future activities etc it is reasonable to submit that Balmer's (1995b) visual, strategic visual, behavioural visual, design as fashion schools of thought and van Riel and Balmer's (1997) visual identity paradigm as well as He and Balmer's (2007) visual identity perspective are converging. Figure 3.7 gives a graphic description of this relationship.

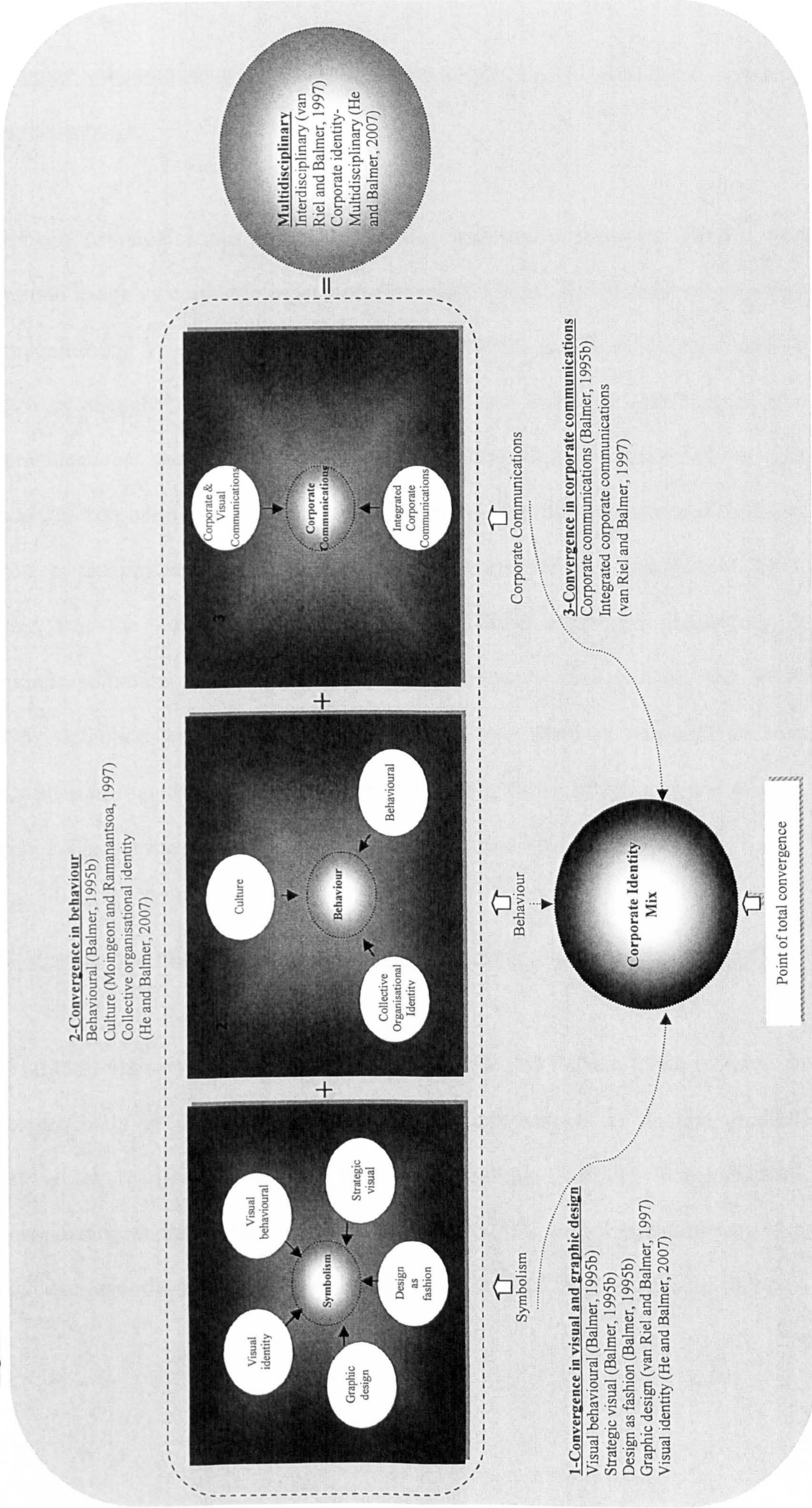
Behaviour: behavioural, culture and collective organisational identity

Behaviour relates to activities, actions, mannerisms etc of the internal members of an organisation. It is a key element in the corporate identity mix. It has been thoroughly addressed under Balmer (1995b) behavioural school of thought, Moingeon and Ramanantsoa's (1997) French school of thought and He and Balmer's (2007) organisational identity perspective.

The behavioural school focuses on issues pertaining to organisational activities, actions, mannerisms and more importantly culture (Balmer, 1995b, p. 33). Culture from Moingeon and Ramanantsoa's (1997) 'French school of thought' provides a description of the way organisational members behave (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997), act and conduct themselves either formally or spontaneously (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). Similarly, He and Balmer's (2007) collective organisational perspective refers to the core features that characterise an organisation, particularly in relation to the ways that its members behave, act or conduct themselves.

Given the common relationship unifying these theoretical conceptions, it can be argued that Balmer's (1995b) behavioural phenomenon and Moingeon and Ramanantsoa's (1997) notion of culture together with He and Balmer's (2007) collective organisational identity perspective are not only related but in fact converging. Figure 3.7 provides a graphic description of this relationship.

Figure 3.7: Points of literary convergence: corporate identity mix



Source: developed by author

Corporate communications: corporate communications and integrated corporate communications

Corporate communications are activities that translate a corporate identity into corporate image or corporate reputation (Dowling, 2001). The concept of corporate communications is addressed under Balmer's (1995b) corporate communications school of thought as well as under van Riel and Balmer's (1997) integrated communications paradigm. The corporate communication school of thought conceived corporate communication as an expression of organisational mission, vision, philosophy and essence in a multitude of ways. van Riel and Balmer (1997) agreed that the notion of integrated communication advocates consistency in corporate communication of mission, vision, philosophy and essence. van Riel's (1995) definition emphasises consistency. The two theories converge in their description of organisational construction of mission, vision, philosophy and essence. Figure 3.7 presents a graphic description of this relationship.

Multidisciplinary: multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary corporate identity paradigm

The multidisciplinary aspect of corporate identity (He and Balmer, 2007) refers to the emergent body of literature dominated by multiple schools of thought, multiple versions of corporate identity mix and multiple identity categorisations. Corresponding to this is van Riel and Balmer's (1997) interdisciplinary paradigm, which expresses the extension of corporate identity beyond the corporate identity mix.

The key thesis here is that the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary theories agree on the expansion of the constituents of the corporate identity concept beyond the traditional corporate identity mix or framework. The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary theories are a conglomeration of numerous views on the meaning of corporate identity. It encapsulates different schools of thoughts, paradigms and perspectives of corporate identity. This argument creates a convergence between van Riel and Balmer's (1997) interdisciplinary paradigm and He and Balmer (2007) organisation's identity perspective, which gives insight into the multiple nature of an organisation's identity.

3.4.2 Level of convergence 2: Corporate personality

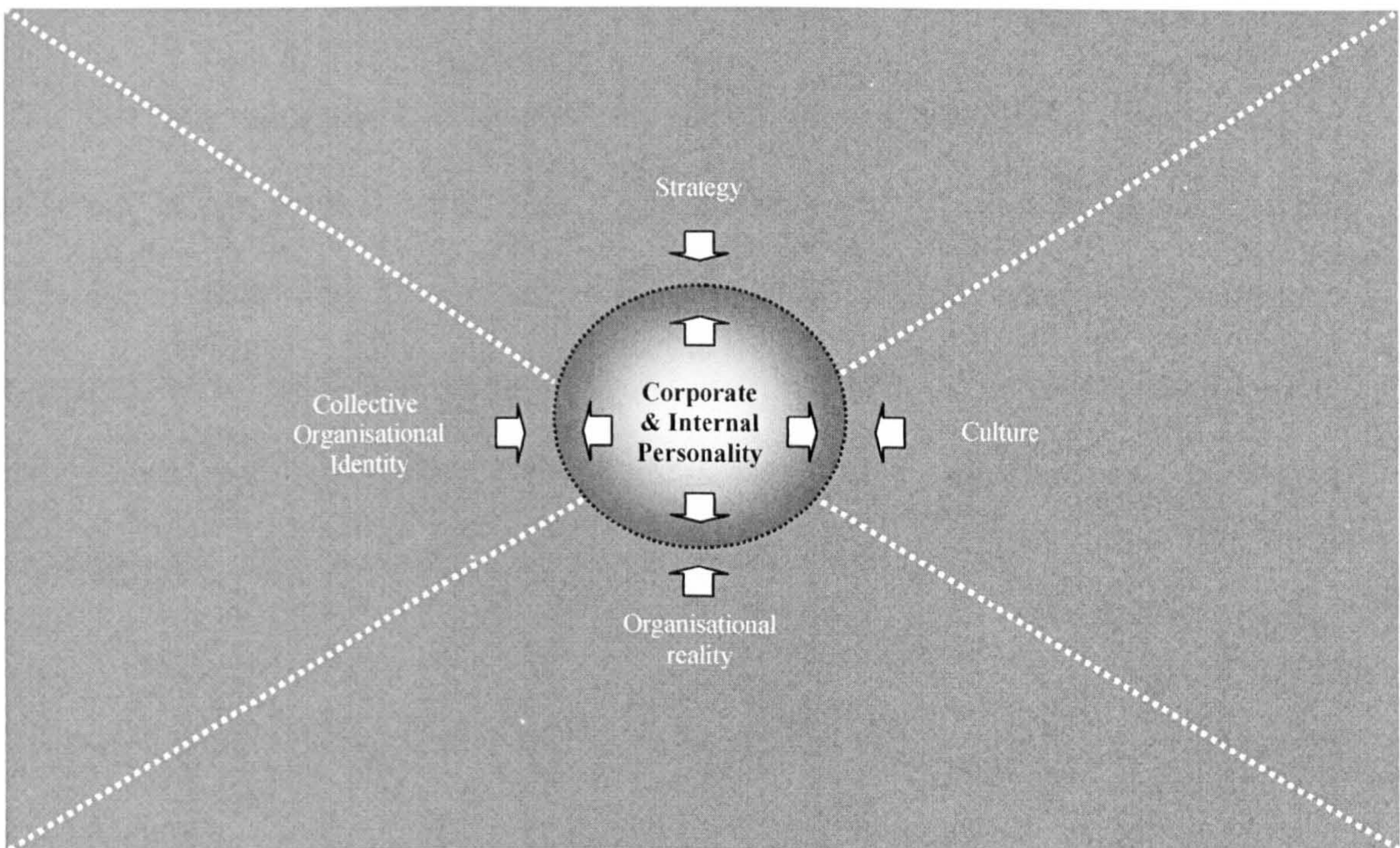
Corporate and internal personality: culture, organisational reality, collective organisational identity, strategy

According to Olins (1978, p. 212), corporate personality "is the soul, the persona, the spirit, the culture of the firm manifested in some way". It is determined before the formation of the organisation (Abratt, 1989). Following Olins (1978) it may be argued that internal personality reflects the development of internal workings and characteristics of the firm. It begins with the resolve by the promoters of an organisation to define what the firm is to do, what it is to believe in and how the firm will operate (Abratt, 1989).

Internal personality is constituted by what culture (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997) the organisation seeks to adopt, what would be real about the organisation

(Cornelissen and Harris, 2001) or what is described as the internal characteristics or factual identity (van Riel and Balmer, 1997) or a firm's internal personality (Cornelissen and Harris, 2001). It is also constituted by the strategy (Balmer, 1995b) deployed by the firm.

Figure 3.8: Corporate and internal personality: point of convergence



Source: developed by author

These notions are converging at the point of internal collective organisational identity (He and Balmer, 2005). This was later reconstructed implicitly under He and Balmer's (2007) theory of organisation's identity. This has also been denoted as the internal characteristics, which define the essence of a firm. It is constituted by internal factors such as corporate strategy (Balmer, 1995b) and philosophy (Topalian, 1984) which personify the internalities of a firm. Internal and corporate personality reflects who or what the organisation is (Gioia et al, 2000; Topalian, 1984); where it is going (Downey, 1986); how it is different (Gioia et al., 2000); what it does (Topalian,

1984); how it carries out its business; what it stands for (Topalian, 1984). These equally represent corporate personality or what Cornelissen and Harris (2001) describe as ‘all the expression of the firm’. This argument provides evidence to argue that the notions of culture, organisational reality, organisation’s identity, which have been used in different contexts in various studies, are converging. Figure 3.8 gives a description of this argument.

The last few paragraphs attempted to clarify the complexities surrounding the meaning of corporate identity from a conceptual point of view. It argued that the elements constituting the social theory models, which encapsulate common assumptions in theoretical perceptions of the meaning of corporate identity, are interrelated and converging. By establishing these relationships, a deeper understanding of the meaning of corporate identity is established.


Following the development of a synthesis that unified and brought together fragments of discourses, the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity becomes clearer. Thus, it is reasonable (at this stage) to examine the contributions and weaknesses of these models. Consequently, in the paragraphs that follow, the weaknesses and contribution of these models issues are addressed.

3.5 Contributions, weaknesses of models and the development of a research question

The use of schools of thought, paradigms, metaphors, perspectives, which constitute the bulk of social theory models, is a common phenomenon (Coleman, 1990) in social

science literature. Social theory models are commonly used in the analysis of a given social phenomenon. Similarly social theory models have been used in marketing and business management to explain and analyse patterns of customer behaviour and complex business issues. The review of five social theory models (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) in paragraph 3.3 provides a comprehensive insight into how most of the definitions of corporate identity, which was reviewed under paragraph 3.2, were compartmentalised, reconstructed and reconceptualised.

Figure 3.9: Authors' construction of the meaning of corporate identity (CI)

Social theory models on authors' construction of CI	How firms construct the meaning of CI
Seven Schools of thought Balmer (1995b) Three paradigms (van Riel and Balmer 1997) French school (Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997) Three perspectives (Cornelissen and Harris, 2001) Four perspectives (He and Balmer, 2007)	

Source: developed by author

The review of conceptual literature in paragraph 3.3 indicate that although social theory models (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) together with the construction of the definitions reviewed under paragraph 3.2 explained the meaning of the concept, amplified conceptual literature and galvanized attention to corporate identity, however, these definitions and models took no cognizance of how firms construct the meaning of this concept (see figure 3.9). These constructions, which are often concealed in corporate communication or corporate advertising texts,

are capable of generating a meaning (Phillips and Brown, 1993). More importantly, these models are weak at addressing one simple but important question, which is, *how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity over time?* This question, which forms the focus of this research, will be addressed conceptually in chapter four.

3.6 Summary

This chapter sought to examine how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed theoretically between 1970 and 2008. It approached this objective by drawing on Berger and Luckmann's notion of 'ongoing', which was further explicated by the researcher (in the preceding chapter) as a representation of how human and corporate actions and interactions develop, change and move cohesively, logically and sequentially; step by step; from a simple to a more complex state, with no cease. This chapter built on this notion by arguing that *theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity is an ongoing phenomenon that changes and stabilises over time.*

Thus, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of ongoing was drawn as a basis for conceptualising the sequential progression of the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity over a period of 38 years. Consequently, it was argued that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity was confined to corporate personality and corporate identity mix over a stable period of 15 years (1970 to 1985) but changed to a combination of corporate personality, corporate identity mix and distinctiveness over a stable period of nine years (1985 and 1995).

The review of literature also indicated that by 1995, the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a change towards corporate personality, corporate identity mix, central enduring, distinctiveness (CED) and image. This construction was stable for a period of 13 years (i.e. 1995 to 2008). The chapter made a review of existing social theory models drawn to explain the meaning of corporate identity and demonstrated how the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a paradigmatic shift from the search for a universal definition to an attempt to develop an understanding of the meaning of this concept.

The ongoing stabilities and changes witnessed in the review of literature on the theoretical construction of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity over a 38 year period indicates the development of an analytical framework of accords (i.e. corporate personality; corporate identity (CI) mix; distinctiveness; CED, image) and divisions (i.e. dichotometric, trichotometric and quartochotometric divisions).

Following the recognition that differences in authors' approaches to concepts highlighted under the social theory models of corporate identity (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) may further complicate or hinder a better understanding of the meaning of this concept, all related discourses conceptualized under these models were unified and integrated at two levels of convergence. While the first synthesis attempts to bring together interrelated discourses fundamentally connected to the CI mix, the second synthesis addressed discourses that unify issues that constitute a firm's corporate personality. These syntheses were drawn for two reasons.

First is to reduce the complexities may arise from these models. Second is to provide a platform through which the meaning of corporate identity can be better understood.

Finally, the contributions and weaknesses of existing social theory models (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) were highlighted and a research question (i.e. how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity over time) was developed.

In conclusion, the review of literature provides an evidence to argue that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity is trapped in an ongoing process of change and stability. These changes and stabilities triggered the emergence of divisions and accords within the meaning of corporate identity. In addition, the failure to arrive at a universal definition for the concept triggered a paradigmatic shift towards use of social theory models. Unfortunately these discourses (put together) are limited to the theoretical construction of the meaning of this concept. The social theory models that were drawn by various authors (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) failed to consider how firms construct the meaning of this concept over time. Consequently, chapter four seeks to fill this gap by tracing the ways that firms (especially those operating in the Nigerian banking industry) construct the meaning of corporate identity over time.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING
OF CORPORATE IDENTITY IN THE NIGERIAN
BANKING SERVICES SECTOR, 1970-2005

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter laid a theoretical foundation relative to the ongoing stabilities and changes in the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity over time. However, the major objective of this thesis addresses how firms in the Nigerian banking industry constructed the meaning of corporate identity over time. The focus of the previous chapter was in evaluating in a broad sense how the ongoing construction of the meaning of corporate identity stabilised and changed over time.

Specifically, it gave a comprehensive analysis of how the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity, which stabilised as corporate identity (CI) mix and corporate personality between 1970 and 1985 changed to corporate distinctiveness between 1985 and 1995. Evidence was also drawn to illustrate how the theoretical construction of corporate identity witnessed a changed and stabilised as ‘central’, ‘enduring’, ‘distinctiveness’ (CED) and image between 1995 and 2008. Theoretical construction of this concept as corporate identity mix and corporate personality remained stable throughout this period (i.e. 1970-2008).

In addition, evidence was provided to demonstrate that the theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a paradigmatic shift from the search for a

universal definition towards an attempt to construct an understanding of its meaning through social theory models (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007).

Importantly, the unifying chords of arguments concerning the theoretical approaches to the concepts highlighted under the social theory models of corporate identity (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007) were highlighted and integrated at two levels of convergence (i.e. corporate identity mix and corporate personality) to create a better understanding of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity.

Consequently, the review of the contributions and weaknesses of these models led to the conceptualisation of the core question under investigation in this research, which is, *how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity over time?*

An attempt is made to address this question (conceptually) in this chapter by drawing (once again) on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of 'ongoing', which was further conceptualised in chapter two of this thesis as a representation of how human and corporate actions and interactions develop, change and move logically, cohesively and sequentially from a simple to a more complex state, with no cease; by arguing that the *theoretical construction of the meaning of corporate identity is an ongoing phenomenon that changes and stabilises over time*. Importantly, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of ongoing will be drawn as evidence (in this chapter) to argue that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in the Nigerian banking industry has been on an ongoing flow of stability and change over time.

Because little or nothing is known about how the Nigerian banking industry constructed the meaning of corporate identity between the period of 1970 and 2005, a number of internal and external environmental factors, which might have influenced policy making and implementation in this industry (during the said) will be presented as factors driving the construction of the meaning of corporate identity.

Importantly, the review of these factors provides a good indication to propose in this chapter that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in the Nigerian banking industry might have witnessed a movement through a series of stable but changing constructs namely generic corporate personality, distinctive corporate personality, transformative corporate personality and innovative corporate personality. Consequently, these propositions, which will be strengthened with the deconstruction of corporate advertisements under the critical hermeneutic and the interpretive interview chapters will give a conceptual insight into how the meaning of corporate identity has been constructed in the Nigerian banking industry during the said period.

This chapter opens with a conceptual insight into the industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity in the Nigerian banking industry between 1970 and 1986. In the section that follows, an attempt is made to examine how corporate identity was constructed between 1986 and 1995. The same exercise is carried out between 1995 and 2005 in the third section. The study is thereafter concluded.

4.2 Regulation of the Nigerian banking industry and stability in industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity as generic corporate personality, 1970-1985

The Nigerian banking industry was regulated by several legal and policy regulations from 1970 until 1986. Specifically, three regulatory decrees were enacted during this period to regulate the activities of this sector.

First is the promulgation of the Nigerian Banking Decree of 1969, which empowered the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (Nigeria's apex regulatory financial institution) to authorise and license the provision of comprehensive commercial banking services and set the structure of bank interest rates. This decree also empowered the Central Bank of Nigeria to specify the minimum and maximum lending and deposit rates and give preferential credit incentives to businesses in the real sectors of the Nigerian economy (Brownbridge, 1996). The decree empowered all commercial banks in Nigeria to provide comprehensive banking services (Oloyede, 1975) including international money transfer, money drawing facilities, foreign exchange services, standing orders, investment and insurance services, letters of credits, valuable protection and so on to customers. Also this decree forced all commercial banks in Nigeria to offer preferential credits (in the form of low interest credit support services) to assist in the development of businesses operating in industry, commerce and agricultural sectors of the Nigerian economy (Brownbridge, 1996).

Second is the ratification of the indigenisation decree of 1972, which authorised successive governments to acquire controlling shares in all multinational banks (Ikhide, 1998). The change in the ownership structure encouraged some of the dominant banks to frequently construct their history to promote understanding and stakeholder confidence.

Third is the amended indigenisation decree of 1977. This decree limited foreign participation in banking to 40 percent equity and directed banks to expand services to rural areas throughout Nigeria (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001). Although the promulgation of this decree was meant to encourage savings and ensure distribution of banking services to the rural populace, nevertheless, this decree forced all commercial banks to expand and increase their branch network by establishing branches throughout the country (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001).

The promulgation of these decrees together with the consequences of pursuing these decrees exerted unified forces of pressure (Lieberman and Asaba, 2006) on the Nigerian banking industry and affected many aspects of corporate behaviour, processes and structure. For instance, the directive given to banks to provide comprehensive banking services to customers together with the regulation of interest rates (Oloyede, 1975) by the Central Bank of Nigeria put a huge constraint on financial innovation. Also, the prohibition of banks from specialising in the provision of specific banking services meant that banks could not carve a niche. Similarly, the directives given to banks to provide preferential credit incentives to agriculture, commerce and industry limited banks' business and financial ingenuity. Importantly, these limitations spawned the development and display of similar and common

characteristics throughout the Nigerian banking industry. This made all banks operating in the Nigerian banking industry to appear similar. Consequently, a generic corporate personality emerged.

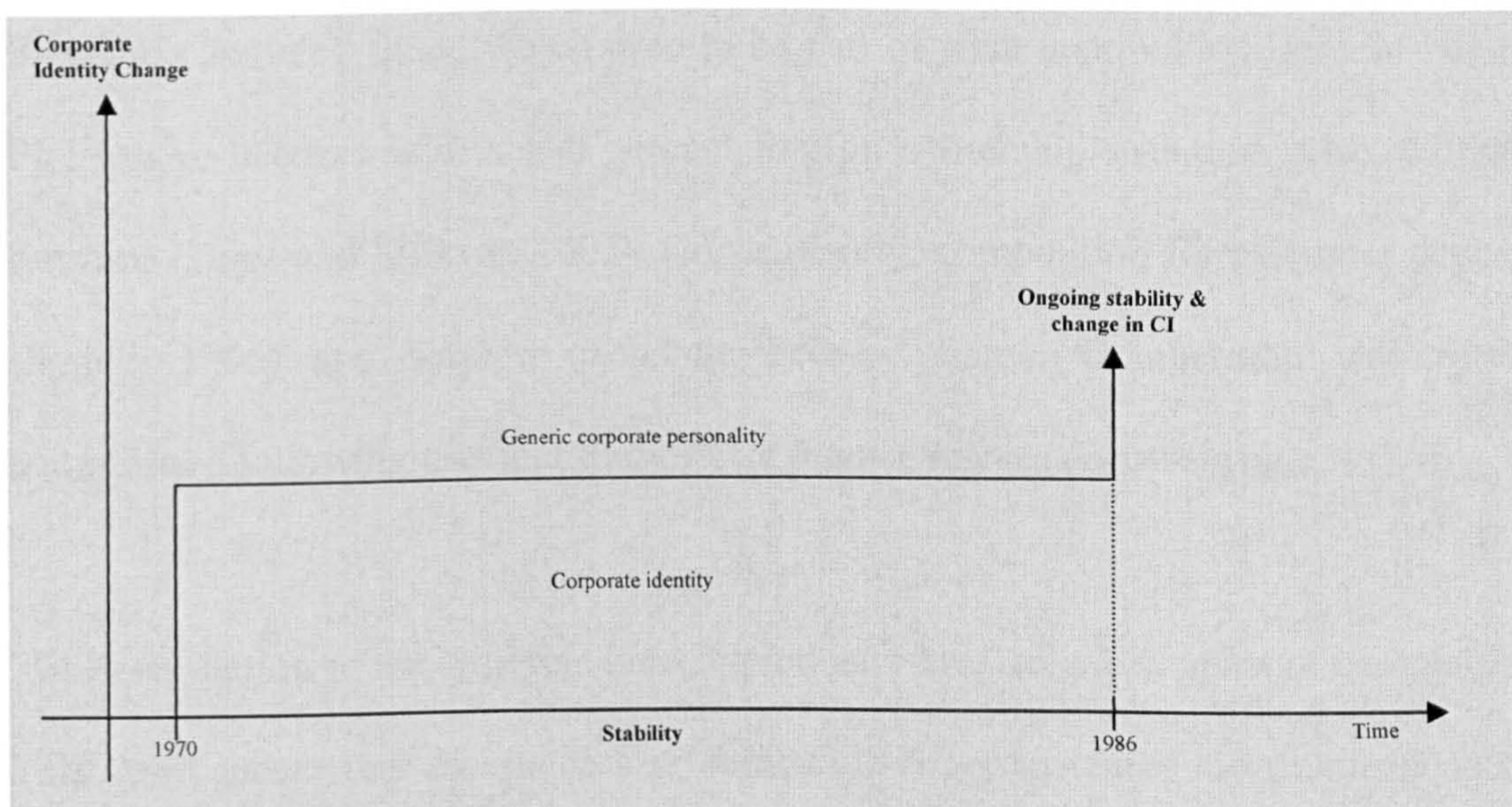
Similarly, the Nigerian indigenisation decree of 1972 and the amended indigenisation decree of 1977, which empowered the Federal Government to acquire controlling shares in all foreign owned banks (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001) put severe pressure on the nature and composition of the boards of directors that govern these banks. Throughout this period, the majority of the members of boards of directors in Nigerian banks were composed of government nominees (Oloyede, 1975), military apologists and senior civil servants who sympathize with government's socio economic and political philosophy. The boards of these banks were constituted with people that could be entrusted with the mandate of protecting government interests and philosophies (see Oloyede, 1975). Again, this made Nigerian banks to appear similar.

In effect, these factors (put together) forced Nigerian banks to display similar corporate personalities in relation to who and what they were (Gioia et al., 2000; Topalian, 1984); where they were and why they were there (Melewar, 2003); where they were going (Downey, 1986); what they did (Topalian, 1984); how they ran their business, what they stood for (Topalian, 1984); what they believed in and how they operated (Abratt, 1989). Inadvertently, these triggered the emergence of a strong industry-wide generic corporate personality. These common characteristics dominated the ways that operators constructed the meaning of corporate identity between 1970 and 1986. Figure 4.1 below gives a graphic description of this occurrence.

4.3 Deregulation and its impact on the stability and the change from industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity as generic corporate personality towards distinctive corporate personality, 1986 - 1994

Following a sixteen year period of regulation, the Nigerian banking industry was deregulated (Lewis and Stein, 1997). In the simplest terms, deregulation refers to the removal of controls and the loosening of restrictions on the entry or exit from a market and on the setting of prices (Rubsamen, 1989) to allow a ‘free and efficient’ market. The deregulation of this industry was firmly grounded in a number of policy measures.

Figure 4.1: The change from corporate identity as corporate personality



Source: developed by author

These included the elimination of fixed interest rate regime (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001); the adoption of a market based economy (Ikhide, 1996); liberalisation of the foreign exchange market (Heiko Hesse, 2007); transfer of public sector accounts from banks

to the CBN (Ikhide, 1996); deregulation of entry barriers; relaxation of laws gagging the licensing of banks (Brownbridge, 1996); repealing of the 1972 and 1977 indigenisation decrees; and the prohibition of banks from accepting guarantee deposits (Ikhide, 1996). In effect, the implementation of these policies undermined the stability that characterized the construction of the meaning of corporate identity. Consequently, the industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity began to change. See Figure 4.1.

Shortly after the deregulation of the Nigerian banking industry, evidence of competitive banking started to emerge. This industry which was static (Heiko Hesse, 2007) throughout the 1970s and up until the mid 1980s began to witness some form of competition. By 1992, over one hundred privately owned banks were established (Heiko Hesse, 2007). Many banks which left the industry returned. For instance Standard Chartered Bank, which used to be part of what is now First Bank of Nigeria Plc, was re-licensed with a 100 percent foreign ownership structure. Also, Citibank returned (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001). Consequently, competition for customer deposits (Ikhide, 1996) and foreign exchange became fierce. Competition was further complicated following the licensing of 662 finance houses (Brownbridge, 1996).

The deregulation of the Nigerian banking industry created a new spirit of competition. This spirit meant that the success or failure of Nigerian banks lay primarily in the hands of the interplay of the forces of demand and supply (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001). New entrants challenged the three largest banks in Nigeria (Standard Bank, now First Bank Plc; Barclays Bank, now Union Bank Plc and UBA Plc). These banks controlled 67 percent of total assets, 70 percent of total deposit, more than 50 percent of total

loans and advances as well as 52 percent of total number of bank branches (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001). Arguably, these banks had (by this period) become the most successful banks and a force with which to reckon.

New banks challenged the three largest banks by initiating fiercely competitive marketing strategies in order to compete favourably for bank deposits. Majority of these strategies were founded on the banks' desire to distinguish themselves through the construction of distinct and inimitable capabilities (see Prahalad and Hamel, 1990) which differentiate firms from competitors. The Nigerian banking industry was dominated by the construction of distinct characteristics. See Figure 4.3 below.

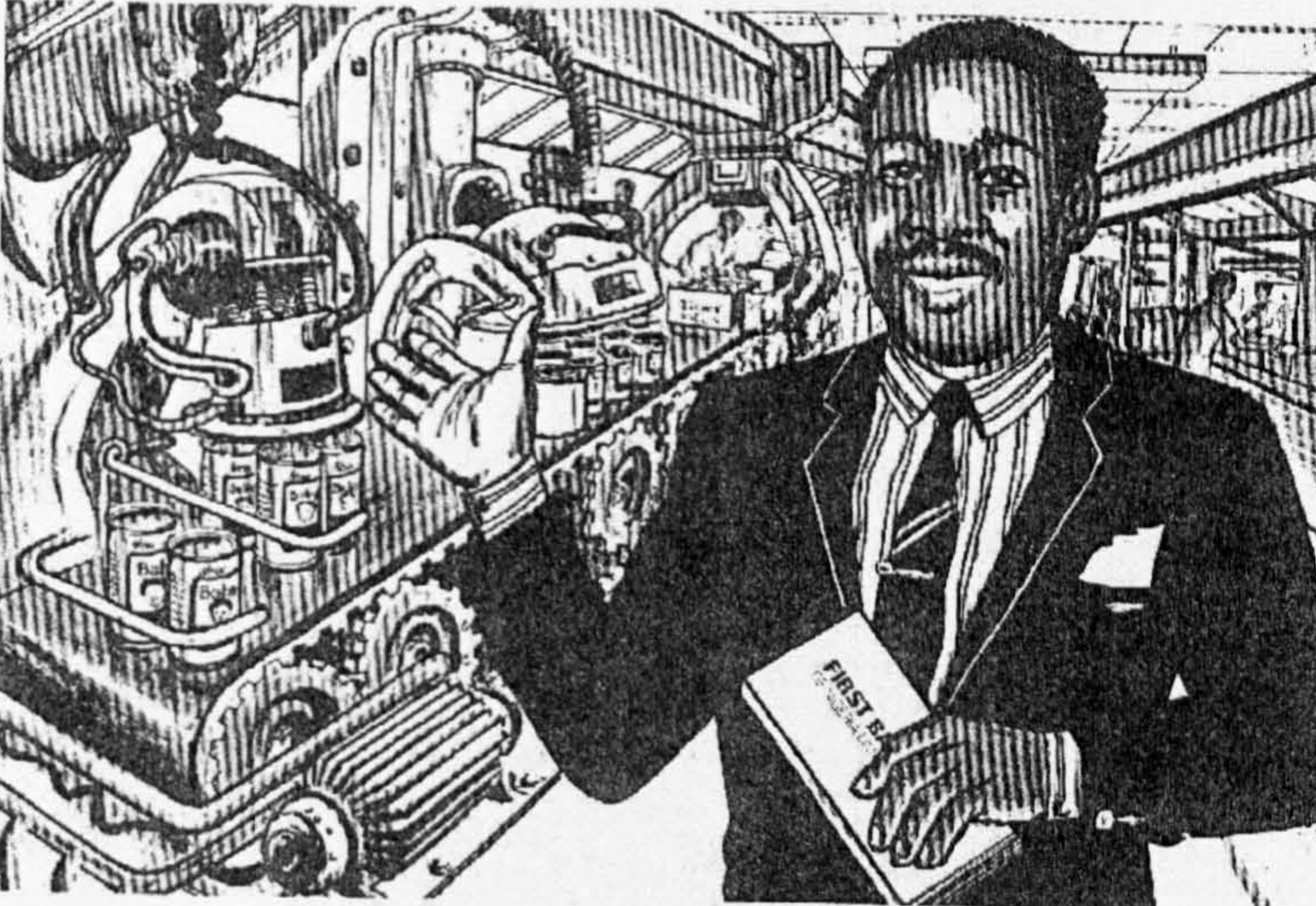
Many new entrants constructed and displayed unique service capabilities, which older banks found difficult to imitate (see Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). New banks challenged the status quo by offering higher interest rates on deposits, which the three largest banks found difficult to provide. The new banks offered faster, speedy and high quality and more efficient services (Brownbridge, 1996) that the three largest banks could not offer. The new entrants attempted to break the generic (Balmer and Stotvig, 1997; Morison, 1997; Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996; Olins, 1978; Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991; Bernstein, 1984; Dowling, 1994) corporate personality of the banking industry by investing heavily into the development of 'state of the art' corporate visual designs (see Carl, 1989). This was to attract new customers and snatch customers from the largest banks.

The three largest banks responded by constructing issues that are exclusive about their personalities in their corporate communications. Some these exclusive issues include

the banks' large but unique size and branch network, their unbeatable asset base, their rich but unique history as well as their exceptional spirit of innovation. The construction of these unique, inimitable, matchless, exceptional, exclusive characteristics positioned the banks with a distinctive personality in relation to who and what a firm was (Gioia et al., 2000; Topalian, 1984); where the firm was and why it was there (Melewar, 2003); where the firm was going (Downey, 1986); what the firm does (Topalian, 1984); how it was run, what the firm stood for (Topalian, 1984); what it believed and how it operated (Abratt, 1989).

Figure 4.2: Story telling through corporate advertisement

6 - THE PUNCH, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 26, 1989



Spreading prosperity nationwide

Since 1894 First Bank has been committed to spreading prosperity nationwide.


A lot of our customers have been with us since our humble beginning.

This is because at First Bank we understand the needs of our customers better and respond with despatch and professionalism.

You can depend on First Bank with its massive asset and resource base.

Moreover, First Bank has more branches than any other bank in Nigeria, and it is also associated with Standard Chartered Bank, a major British Banking Group, with representation in over 50 countries world-wide.

Let us back you up with all our might.

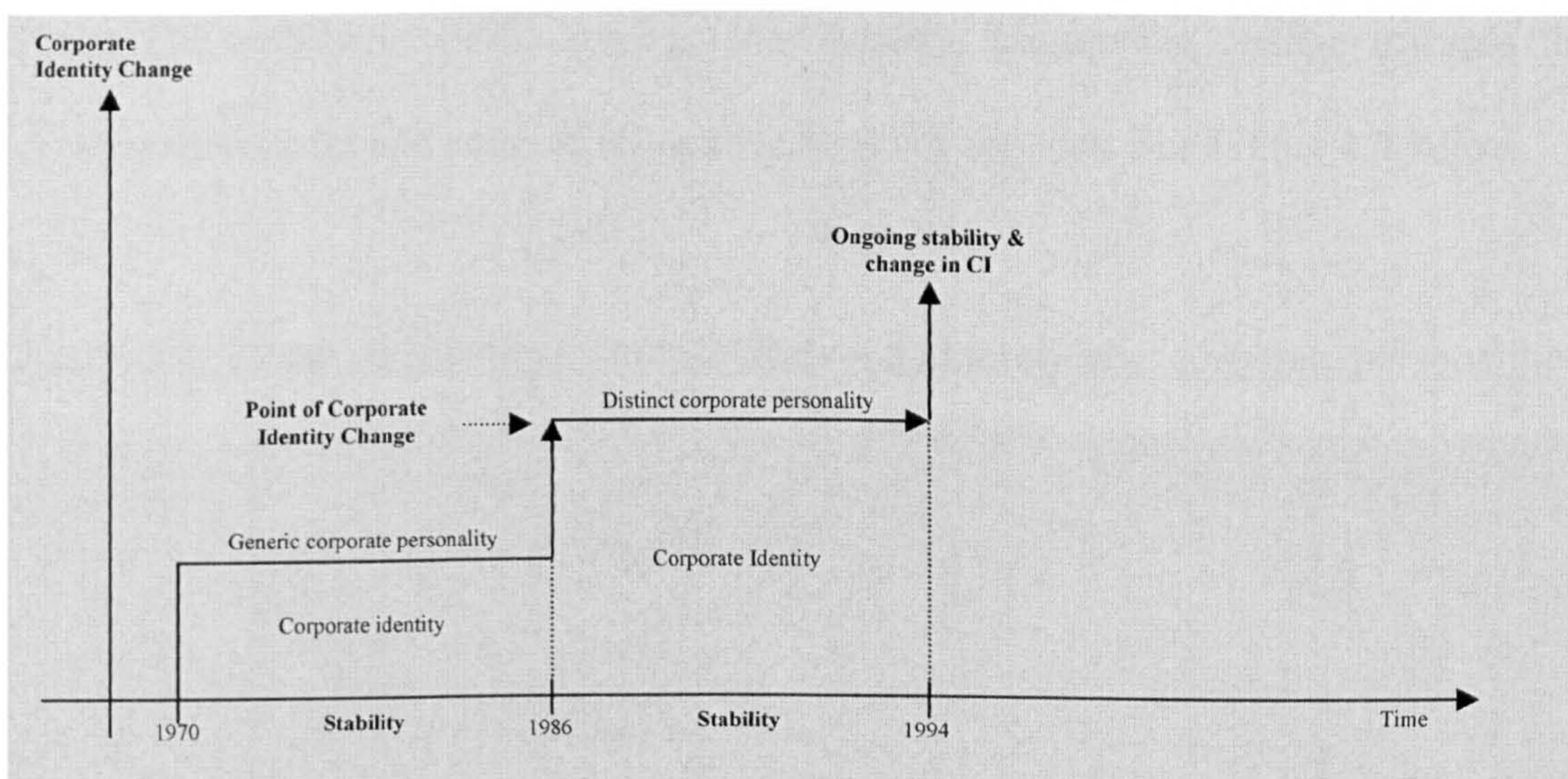

First Bank ...truly the first.

Head Office: 35, Marina, F.O. Box 5218, Lagos. Tel: 01-465300-30. London Branch Office: 29-30, Long Street, London, E.C. 2V 9EH. Tel: 01-401-6411.

Source: The Punch Newspaper, September 26, 1989

The banks told stories about their distinct history; unique achievements; unmatched asset base; employee experiences (which cannot be surpassed); commitment to customer service through various elements of the corporate identity mix (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar and Saunders, 2000; Baker and Balmer, 1997; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Leitch and Motion, 1999; Balmer and Stotvick, 1997). Figure 4.2 gives a good example of how the largest banks in Nigeria drew on corporate advertising to respond to the competitive challenges through storytelling.

Figure 4.3: corporate identity as distinct corporate personality



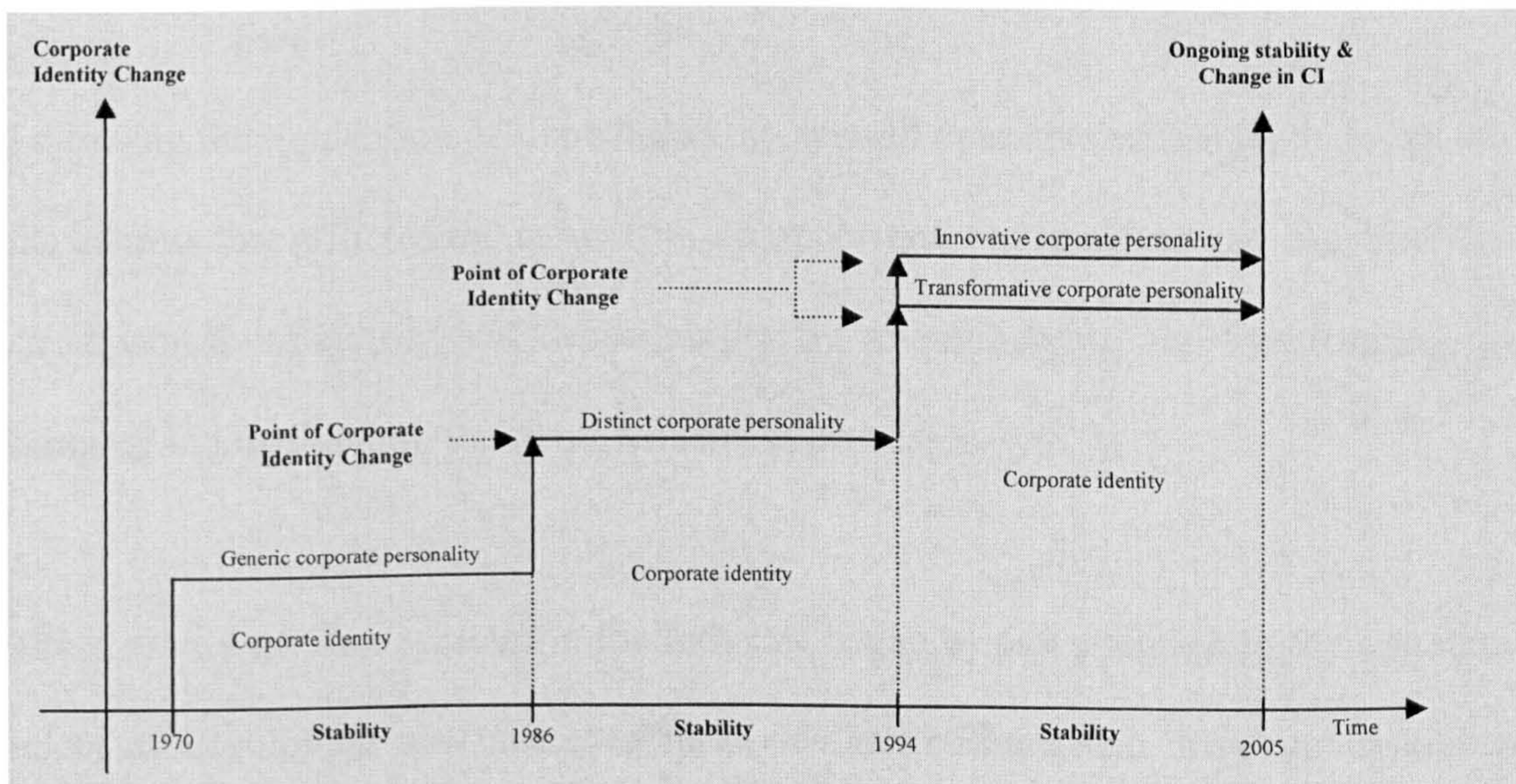
Source: developed by author

Inadvertently, the fierce competition that emerged between new entrants and the three largest banks triggered the emergence of a distinct corporate personality construct. This dominated the ways that operators within the industry constructed the meaning of corporate identity between 1986 and 1994. See Figure 4.3.

4.4 Industry distress, stability and the change from industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity as distinct corporate personality towards transformative and innovative corporate personality, 1994-2005

The review of literature in the paragraph above is indicative that the meaning of corporate identity was dominantly constructed by the Nigerian banking industry as distinct corporate personality over a period of eight years (1986-1994). See Figure 4.3 above. The construction of the meaning of corporate identity as distinctive corporate personality remained stable throughout this period, however, industry distress or the collapse of many banks in 1994, which equally exposed the inadequacies of new banks (Brownbridge, 1996) among other factors, triggered a change towards the desire to transform and provide innovative banking services. See Figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4: corporate identity as transformative and innovative corporate personalities



Source: developed by author

During this period, financial distress affected many of the new banks that entered the banking industry following the deregulatory policy of 1986. Thus, many of the new

entrants were closed down, restructured or had their licenses revoked. For instance in 1994, four banks were liquidated and another had its license suspended. Thirteen banks were taken over by the CBN because of insolvency. A good number of the new banks were distressed and made subject to “holding action” by the CBN (Brownbridge, 1998).

In short by 1995, a total of 57 banks, were regarded as distressed or potentially distressed by the CBN (Brownbridge, 1996). The factors responsible for distress in this industry can be adduced to several issues namely loss of monetary control triggered by the provision of liquidity to support banks, the rising rate of inflation, bad debts, adverse incentives on banks owners to adopt imprudent lending approaches, insider lending and lending at high interest rates in the most risky credit market segments (Brownbridge, 1998). However, the distress that afflicted majority of the new banks did not affect the three largest banks.

Following the liquidation of some banks, successful operators within the industry took the distress that afflicted the industry as an opportunity to re-affirm and construct their steadfastness, reliability and dependability by re-engineering and transforming and bringing innovation into their entire business processes.

The majority of the operators in the industry began to pay attention to their strategic intent by developing new management styles and cultures that drive and encourage employees to win at all levels, regardless of the proportionality of organisational resources to its capabilities. The industry developed working statements that envisioned market leadership position founded on a code of behaviour that aided the

successful achievement of set business goals. New management styles and winning cultures were achieved (mainly) through increased staff salaries and the development of better welfare packages. Heavy investments were sunk into the redesign of office interiors, work spaces and house styles to express innovative and transformative character of the banks.

The largest banks 'broke-away' from obsolete policies, philosophies and cumbersome and inefficient business operations and processes that impinged smoother and more efficient business operations. They re-engineered their businesses through cross functional perspective by investing heavily in information technology (Uche and Ehikwe, 2001) and also by putting together core functional units of teams and charging them with the responsibility of analysing existing processes as well as determine steps that added real value to business operations. These teams were also charged with responsibility of proposing new ways of achieving results. Many banks adopted cross-functional teams to deliver development projects and then disbanded to form new teams for new projects.

Although there are different types of product innovation approaches (Nord and Tucker, 1987), the most notable ones in Nigeria are the routine and radical innovation systems. Under the routine innovation system, banks introduced products that are new but similar to products previously developed by the bank. Radical innovation has been pursued through changes in technologies that facilitate significant improvements in the delivery of products. Nigerian banks like their counterparts all over the world embraced all forms of technology namely information technology, computers and automated teller machines.

The adoption of information technology in the Nigerian banking industry resulted in the introduction of the e-money fund transfer mechanism by six financial institutions in Nigeria in the later period of the mid 1980s. The e-money was introduced to facilitate the payment and transfer of money more efficiently. The e-money was later extended to 19 other banks (Johnson, 2005). In order to keep up with the competitive nature of the banking system, some banks introduced the e-money system to enable the transfer of money from one location to another in seconds. For instance in 1997, the defunct All States Trust Bank of Nigeria Limited introduced the closed system electronic package called ESCA smart card. Similarly, Diamond Bank Plc followed suit with the introduction of a similar e-money system called “Diamond Pay Card” (Johnson, 2005).

The e-money system received a boost in 1998 when a consortium of 19 banks worked collaboratively to introduce the “valucard” (Johnson, 2005). By 1999, another consortium of 20 banks introduced and promoted the “Smartpay” Scheme (Johnson, 2005). In the same period, some banks notably Union Bank Nigeria Plc, First Bank of Nigeria Plc, UBA Plc and Wema Bank introduced the international money transfer system. Notable amongst these are Western Union Money Transfer and Money Gram.

Between the late 1990s and 2003, several banks introduced telephone banking and the online banking transaction system and the provision of electronic cash dispenser networks in 2003 via Automatic Teller Machines (ATM). This further encouraged the use of cards (Johnson, 2005). Consequently, many customers stopped carrying cash around. Customers started to withdraw cash using the Automatic Teller Machines

(ATM) which was strategically installed at various locations round the country. Thus, ATMs is now a part of life of Nigerians (The Anonymous, 2007). Another major technological innovation that emerged towards the end of this period is online and telephone banking. Innovative technology triggered the development of telephone banking systems.

The pursuit of transformation and innovation activities in the Nigerian banking industry conveyed very strong signals to stakeholders. By obliterating old products and processes and developing new ones, Nigerian banks projected strong transformative and innovative corporate personalities with regards to who and what they were (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000; Topalian, 1984); where there were and why they were there (Melewar, 2003); where they were going (Downey, 1986); what they did (Topalian, 1984); how they were run, what they stood for (Topalian, 1984); what they believe and how they operated (Abratt, 1989).

The review made so far reveals that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity, though stable for a period of fifteen years (1986-1994), witnessed a changed from distinct corporate personality to corporate identity as transformative and innovative corporate personality between 1994 and 2005. See Figure 4.4 above. In addition, there is evidence to demonstrate that industry construction of the meaning of corporate identity might also be witnessing a change following the implementation of the recapitalisation policy of the CBN, which pruned the number of Nigerian banks down from eighty nine to twenty five by December 31, 2005. The meaning of corporate identity following this recapitalisation exercise is currently evolving.

4.5 Summary

This chapter addressed how the Nigerian banking industry constructed the meaning of corporate identity between 1970 and 2005. Two issues became apparent in this chapter. The first issue relates to the notion that the meaning of corporate identity (in the Nigerian banking industry) has been on an ongoing flow of change and stability; triggered by a myriad of regulatory and deregulatory policies together with an untimely outbreak of financial distress. The outcome of this study reveals that the meaning of this concept was dominantly constructed as generic corporate personality between 1970 and 1986 and remained stable throughout this period. This has been so given the regulatory nature of business activities of the key operators of the Nigerian banking industry. Following the deregulation of this industry in 1986, this construction made a shift towards distinct corporate personality between 1986 and 1994 and maintained stability during this period. The meaning of corporate identity also witnessed a movement from distinct corporate personality between 1986 and 1994 towards a combination of transformative and innovative corporate personalities and remained stable between 1994 and 2005. This is so given the liquidation of many banks by the CBN and the recognition by the key operators that such a liquidation exercise provides a unique opportunity to be innovative, reenergize, re-engineer and transform their entire business processes.

The second issue that was made apparent in this study addresses four new conceptualisations. These are generic, distinct, transformative and innovative corporate personalities. Generic corporate personality refers to the display of similar,

homogeneous and unified corporate characteristics throughout the banking industry. Distinct corporate personality came about in view of the desire by key industry operators to distinguish themselves by expressing who and what they are, following the rise in the use of competitive marketing strategies in the banking. Transformative and innovative corporate personalities are interconnected. Both refer to the display of signals of change and renewal in business processes. The concepts signify how the introduction of new products, the development of new business ideas and the installation of efficient business processes enhances a firm's corporate character.

The two issues that emerged from the review of literature in this chapter represent an attempt to address the research question that was raised in chapters one and three of this thesis conceptually. However, the findings from this chapter cannot be seen as the answer to the question being investigated in this study. What can be utilised in this chapter is the theoretical framework enjoined by the literature review, which prescribes a theoretical model or a schema that can be used in facilitating methodological and data analytical objectives in the chapters that follow. Thus, chapter six provides a pivotal turning point in this thesis as it identifies and develops a suitable methodology and research design that could enhance the generation of insights into the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in the Nigerian banking industry between 1970 and 2005.

Before a methodological and data analytical framework can be developed, there is a need to summarise and synthesise all literatures and the strands of arguments presented in this chapter as well as in the last two chapters. The need to summarise and synthesise these arguments is grounded on the recognition of the need to develop

a cohesive summary of the arguments put together throughout the review of theoretical literature. Consequently, the summary of existing literature and its synthesis will be the bane of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: A SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS OF KEY ARGUMENTS IN THE THEORETICAL LITERATURE

5.1 Introduction

Chapters two, three and four (of this thesis) presented a review of theoretical literature concerning three important issues namely 1- the rationale for the adoption of social constructionism; 2- theoretical construction of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity and 3- industry construction of the meaning of the concept of corporate identity.

This chapter aims to present a summary of these literatures and provide a synthesis that integrates the strands of arguments that were presented in these chapters. In addition, this chapter aims to highlight the problem that emanated from the review of conceptual literature; draw attention to how the problem came about and emphasise why it is important to address this problem in this thesis. More importantly, this chapter will serve as a bridge between the review of theoretical literature and the methodological chapter.

This chapter has been divided into four main sections– and this section constitutes the first. Section two provides an analysis of the key arguments presented in the last three chapters together with the problem or question under investigation in this thesis. This is followed (in the third section) by the development of a synthesis, which brings together the various strands of arguments presented thus far. The fourth paragraph

makes an analysis of the reasons why it is important to address this problem and the chapter ends with a summary of the issues discussed in this thesis.

5.2 Literature review: a summary of previous strands of literature

The review of theoretical literature in the last three chapters indicated that work on the meaning of corporate identity which has been approached (in previous studies) from a positivistic epistemological dimension can also be viewed from a social constructionist perspective. For instance, findings from the review of literature in chapter two highlighted four ontologically grounded arguments on the reasons why work on the meaning of corporate identity can also be approached from a social constructionist perspective. These arguments include 1- the conceptualisation of meaning through social interaction; 2- the creation of meaning through habituation; 3- the generation of meaning through institutionalisation and 4- the development of meaning through history. In addition, this chapter theorised the notion of ongoing (i.e. a phenomenon representing how human and corporate actions develop, stabilises, changes and moves cohesively from one state to another, without an end) as a dominant factor running through the synthesis emerging from the points of linkages between Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ontological arguments and the new social constructionist based corporate identity model.

The review of theoretical literature in chapter three built on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of ongoing by arguing that the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in theoretical literature (between 1970 and 2008) has witnessed an ongoing flow of changes and stabilities. Specifically, two arguments were presented to

substantiate this viewpoint. First, it was conceived that the meaning of corporate identity was dominantly constructed as corporate personality and CI mix between 1970 and 1985. This construction which continued unabated for a stable period of fifteen years changed dramatically towards corporate distinctiveness between 1985 and 1995, with the previous constructs remaining stable throughout this period. Following this stable period, the meaning of corporate identity, which was dominantly constructed as corporate distinctiveness for a stable period of ten years (i.e. 1985-1995) changed towards the notions of 'central', 'enduring', 'distinctiveness' (CED) and image during the 1995 – 2008 period. Importantly, the construction of corporate identity as corporate personality and corporate identity (CI) mix remained stable during this period. The second, theoretical evidence was given to argue that work on the construction of the meaning of corporate identity witnessed a paradigmatic shift from an attempt to establish a universal definition towards the development of social theory models (see Balmer 1995a; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 1997), which provide an 'understanding' of the meaning of the concept. However, findings from chapter three demonstrated that there is a limited literature emphasising and addressing how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed in the Nigerian banking industry between 1970 and 2005. Consequently, this limitation was conceptualised as the gap that needs to be addressed in this thesis.

Chapter four attempted to fill the gap that was conceptualised in chapter three by providing a broad evaluation of how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed in the Nigerian banking industry. Consequently, it was argued that the meaning of corporate identity had undergone a trajectory flow of stabilities and

changes between the period of 1970 and 2005. Specifically, it was argued that the meaning of corporate identity in the Nigerian industry was constructed as generic corporate personality between 1970 and 1986. The stability witnessed during this period (i.e. 1970-1986) ended with the construction of corporate identity as distinctive corporate personality between 1986 and 1994. Following the construction of corporate identity as distinctive corporate personality between 1986 and 1994, firms constructed its meaning as a combination of transformative and innovative corporate personalities between 1994 and 2005.

5.3 Literature review: a synthesis of previous strands of literature

The review of literature in chapters two, three and four indicates that a series of interrelated but different arguments were put forward in this thesis. Thus, in order to avoid ambiguity and establish greater clarity, a synthesis that brings together important strands of arguments that were developed in these chapters is presented. The aim of this synthesis is to provide a clearer and cohesive picture of the arguments presented thus far. The strands of arguments in chapters two, three and four can be integrated at two levels. First is at the level of the notion of 'ongoing' and second is at corporate personality. These points of integration are discussed in the following paragraphs.

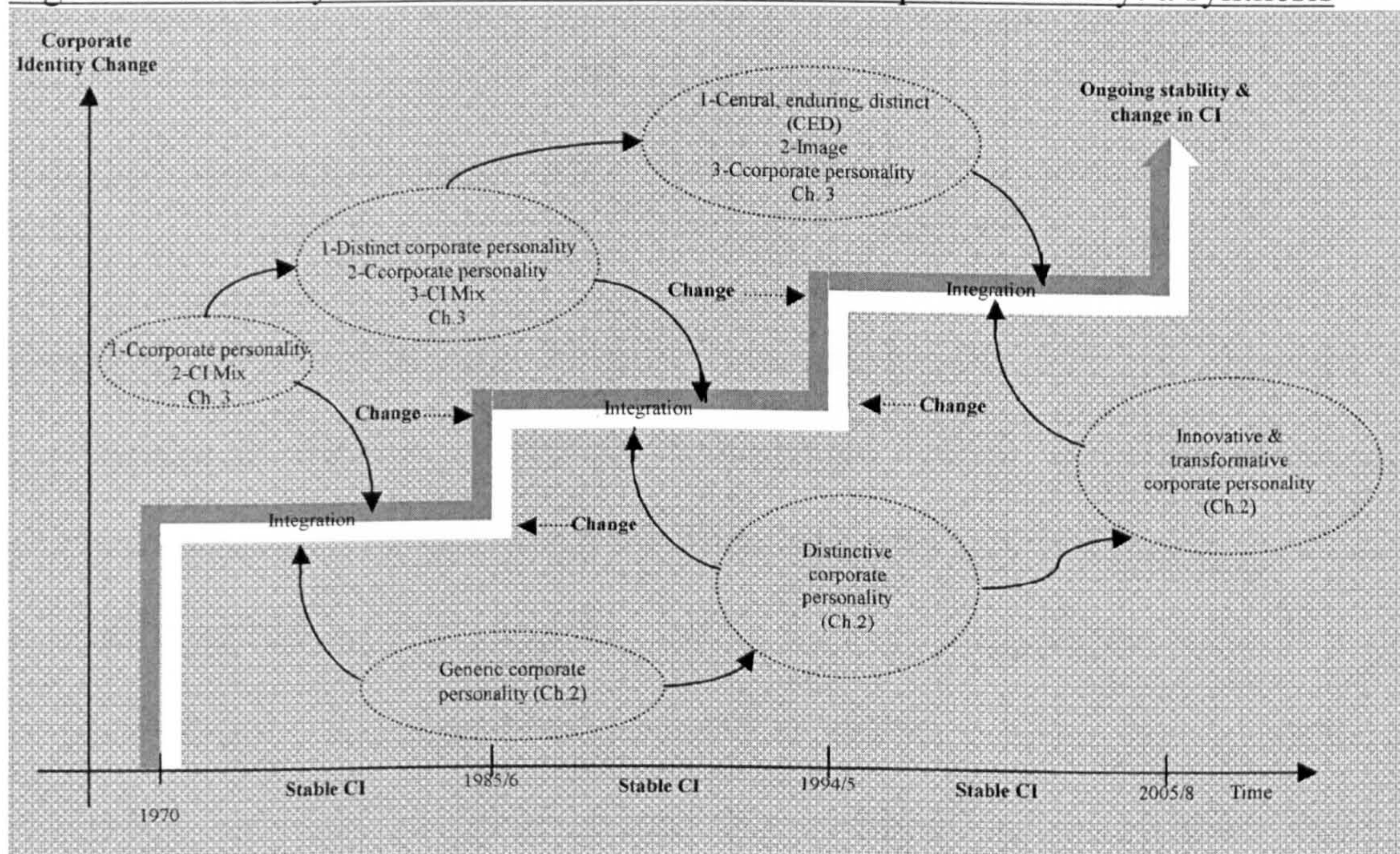
First point of integration: notion of ongoing: The notion of ongoing emerged in chapter two as a phenomenon, which runs through the critical points of integration between social constructionism and the concept of corporate identity. In addition, this phenomenon reverberated across the four points of arguments rationalising the

adoption of social constructionism in this thesis. Essentially, the notion of ongoing was theorised as a phenomenon representative of how human and corporate actions and interactions develop, stabilise, change and move logically, cohesively and sequentially from a simple to a more complex state, with no cease. Interestingly, two of the key concepts (i.e. stability and change), which constitute this phenomenon were drawn to analyse the continuous modifications and consistencies witnessed in the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in theoretical literature as well as in industry. Hence, the notion of ongoing in this thesis, serves as the key integrant linking social constructionism (in chapter two) to other strands of arguments (i.e. changes and stabilities in the construction of the meaning of corporate identity in theoretical literature as well as in industry) in chapters three and four. Thus, the relationship between the notion of ongoing and the constant changes and stabilities in the theoretical and industrial construction of the meaning of corporate identity, serves as the first point of integration in this chapter.

Second point of integration: corporate personality: Corporate personality was recognised in chapter three as a concept reflective of who and what a firm is (Gioia et al., 2000; Topalian, 1984); where the firm is and why it is there (Melewar, 2003); where the firm is going (Downey, 1986); what it does (Topalian, 1984); how the firm runs its business, what the firm stands for (Topalian, 1984); what it believes in and how it operates (Abratt, 1989). Similarly, in chapter four, the concept of corporate personality was theorised in a similar way with the notions of generic, distinctive, innovative and transformative corporate personalities added onto it. Specifically, it was argued in chapter four that generic corporate personality (an emerging form of corporate personality) accentuates similar characteristics constructed by firms in

relation to who they were, what they were and so on. Similarly, distinctive corporate personality (which was theorised in chapter four) emerged as a phenomenon highlighting the unique, inimitable, exceptional, exclusive characteristics of the firm with reference to who and what they were and so on. Also, the notions of innovative and transformative corporate personalities were defined in similar ways. It was thought that innovative and transformative corporate personalities were concepts highlighting a firm's change management, pioneering and groundbreaking activities and how these are exhibited through business deeds and actions.

Figure 5.1: Industry and theoretical construction of corporate identity: a synthesis



Source: developed by author

Given the linkages between the general concept of corporate personality (on the one hand) and the emergent forms of corporate personality (i.e. generic, distinctive, innovative and transformation) (on the other), it is reasonable to argue that the point of integration between the strands of arguments in chapters three and four of this thesis is corporate personality. Also, the notion of distinctiveness highlighted in

chapters three and four provides yet another evidence of the linkages between both chapters. It strengthens the view that the strand of arguments in chapters three and four is linked at the point of corporate personality. Figure 5.1 gives a description of this point of integration.

5.4 Points of divergence in theoretical literature

Although, the discussion in paragraph 5.3 provided evidence of strings of connections in the strands of arguments in chapters two, three and four, however, it appears there are a number of issues in chapter three (for instance), which cannot be linked to other strands of arguments in chapter four. These issues, which appear to be unconnected with the mainstream arguments in this thesis, are discussed in the paragraphs below.

Corporate identity (CI) mix: Initially, corporate identity mix was theorised as combination of elements or media (i.e. corporate symbol, corporate advertising, corporate behaviour) through which the corporate personality of a firm is constructed (van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Melewar, 2003). Recently however, the elements in the corporate identity mix have been expanded to include non-conventional media of expression including, corporate events and environmentalism (Balmer, 2002b). Although the CI mix resonated throughout the literature, it however does not correlate with the key arguments (i.e. ongoingness; stability and change) presented in chapters two three and four of this thesis.

The notions of “Central” and “Enduring” of the CED concept: The notions of central and enduring, which emerges from Albert and Whetten’s (1985) influential

concept called “central, enduring, distinctive” (and abbreviated as CED) was highlighted in the third chapter of this thesis. However these influential constructs does not fall within the key strands of arguments presented in chapter three; neither does it correlate with the key arguments (i.e. ongoingness; stability and change) in chapters two, three and four.

Image: The concept of image emerged in chapter three following the conceptualisation of corporate identity or organisational identity as an image (see Hatch and Schultz, 1997) or a corporate image. While the notion of image play a role in the argument presented in chapter, it however does not correlate with the dominant arguments put forward (i.e. ongoingness; stability and change) in chapters two, three and four of this thesis.

5.5 A re-examination of the development of gap in literature

It has been argued that the concept of corporate identity attracted immense attention amongst corporate marketing authors (see Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006) since the publication of Pilditch’s (1970) influential text on corporate identity. In spite of this however, authors are yet to agree on a universal definition (Topalian, 2003). The failure to resolve the confusion (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002) on the meaning of CI might have influenced some authors to give up the search for a universal definition (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). Consequently, there is now a movement from the search for a universal definition towards the adoption of social theory models (Balmer, 1995b; van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; He and Balmer, 2007; Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, 1997) which compartmentalize and

describe common assumptions in theoretical construction of the concept (Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007). Although these works explained the concept, amplified theoretical literature and galvanized attention to the discipline in general, they however took no cognisance of how firms (the sponsor and users of corporate identity) construct the meaning of this concept especially since the publication of Pilditch's (1970) definition of corporate identity. This gap reconceptualised and represented in the form of a research question (i.e. *how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity*) in chapter three. This is the gap that needs to be filled empirically and this constitutes the main aim and objective of this thesis.

5.6 The importance of addressing the gap empirically

It is important to address the gap highlighted in paragraph 5.5 empirically for several reasons. First, empirical insights into the construction of the meaning of corporate identity will provide a broad, comprehensive and longitudinal analysis of how the meaning of corporate identity was constructed for nearly four decades and it highlights the ongoing changes and stabilities witnessed in the construction of the meaning of corporate by key operators in the industry. Such an empirical study will broaden the scholarly understanding of the meaning of corporate identity within a non familiar context (i.e. the Nigerian banking industry). Importantly, empirical insights into the scope and boundaries of the meaning of the concept will provide the basis on which other conceptual issues (i.e. communication, planning, management, measurement of corporate identity etc) that depend on a clear understand the meaning of corporate identity can advance. Second, this study is valuable because it demystifies, draws the lines, pinpoints and makes precise the issues that constitute the

meaning of corporate identity in theoretical literature. Third, this empirical provides scholars with a clarification of and insight into what the concept of corporate identity is and what it is not. In essence, by making a review of this subject, academics are provided with an analysis that squarely distinguishes corporate identity from other related concepts and provides a means of confining the meaning of the concept, which might otherwise allow it to claim more territory and importance for itself than is legitimate.

5.7 Bridging the gap within the literature of the meaning of corporate identity: an empirical approach

In order to fully address the research question (i.e. *how do firms construct the meaning of corporate identity*) conceptualised in this study, an interpretive research methodology supported by critical hermeneutic analysis of corporate advertisements published in the Nigerian banking industry between 1970 and 2005. This is also supported by interpretive interviews with senior managers working for the three largest banks in Nigeria (i.e. First Bank of Nigeria Plc, Union Bank of Nigeria Plc and UBA Plc) is proposed.

Interpretive research methodology is often used to develop meaningful interpretations of social and cultural issues. It is founded on the assumption that access to reality be it given or socially constructed, can only be developed through language, consciousness and shared meanings. Critical hermeneutics is provide researchers with an opportunity to view and understand the importance of the construction of symbolic phenomenon

(Phillips and Brown, 1993; Pfeffer, 1981) and it gives insight into the socially constructed systems of meanings (Smircich, 1983; Baudrillard, 2005).

Interpretive interview is a reflexive approach that exhibits the socio-cultural system of society through stories and texts (Dempsey, 1997). It is drawn to unearth interviewee views, opinions and interpretation (Potrac et al., 2002) of texts, videos and pictures. Details of how interpretive research methodology cum critical hermeneutic method and interpretive interview method is approached are discussed fully in the following chapter.

5.8 Summary

This chapter made a summary of the theoretical literatures presented in chapters two three and four and provided a synthesis that integrates the strands of arguments that were presented in these chapters. In addition, this chapter highlighted the problem that emanated from the review of conceptual literature and drew attention to how it came about. It emphasised why it is important to address this problem and attempted to bridge the theoretical literature and the methodological chapter. The next chapter attempts to identify the most suitable and most effective research methodology and methods that can be drawn to address the question under investigation in this.