

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY



D. BICKERTON

BUILDING AN EMPIRICALLY ROBUST FRAMEWORK
FOR CORPORATE BRAND COMMUNICATIONS
USING ACTION RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

PhD THESIS

Volume One (of two)

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Thesis overview and researcher activity

This research aims to develop an empirically robust framework for the management of Corporate Brand Communications. The research has been conducted using a Participatory Action Research approach and includes a pilot study and three full intervention studies.

Researcher activity update

Since beginning this thesis, the researcher has looked to validate his work through dialogue with other academics in the field. To date this activity has resulted in the following publishing milestones:

- 1999 Published paper in International Centre for Corporate Identity Studies Working Papers (University of Strathclyde) 'Corporate marketing–Re-discovering Drucker's lost agenda for marketing'
- 1999 Working paper entitled 'Corporate Reputation and Annual Reports – what's the link?', presented at the 5th International Corporate Identity Conference, Templeton College, Oxford
- 1999 Participated in one-day Action Research workshop run by Professor Peter Reason, University of Bath
- 2000 Published paper in Corporate Communications Journal (Volume 5 Number 1) 'Corporate reputation versus corporate branding: the Realist debate'
- 2000 Research methodology working paper presented at the doctoral research workshop at the 4th International Conference on Corporate Reputation, Identity and Competitiveness in Copenhagen (Chaired by Professor Mary Jo Hatch and Professor Cees Van Riel)

- 2000 Presented a paper entitled ‘The Six Conventions of Corporate Branding’ at the 7th International Corporate Identity Symposium at Bradford University Management Centre. A revised version of the paper has subsequently been accepted for a corporate branding special edition of the European Journal of Marketing (scheduled for publication Spring 2003)
- 2001 Presented a paper entitled ‘An alternative approach to the study of Corporate Brand Management’ at the Corporate Branding Symposium, organised by Bradford University School of Management in London in November 2001
- 2002 Presented research methodology paper at a Cranfield Doctoral Symposium in March 2002. The full paper has been submitted to the Cranfield Working Paper Series.

These milestones are reported to demonstrate that the researcher has been actively engaged in the academic debate within his field of interest and has been using external peer review to test and validate his research in terms of literature review, research methodology and initial research findings.

Personal development and dedications

This thesis reflects the efforts of over five years of the researcher’s life. Not surprisingly, over that time a number of people have both influenced and been impacted by this process of discovery and enlightenment.

In terms of influence I am in debt to a number of people. These include my work colleagues at Pauffley, Interbrand, and latterly BP, for their patience and support, both moral and financial, throughout the process. Balancing a full-time career with part-time research involves some difficult trade-offs and I acknowledge their role in helping me walk that line.

I would also like to record my gratitude to the management teams from the organisations that contributed to this thesis. Conducting intervention studies is both taxing and time-consuming for the research participants as well as the researcher. This thesis would not have been possible without the goodwill, enthusiasm and support of these people.

Academically I have gained great benefit and support from my many academic encounters, the guidance and input of fellow students Lynette Ryals and Stan Maklan and the wisdom, inspiration and encouragement of Professor Simon Knox throughout the journey.

And finally, to those whose lives have been impacted by this obsession. To my wife, who still sees this as a last desperate attempt to gain academic superiority over her, and my children, Jordan and Rosie, who have shown extraordinary patience and good humour while their father 'went back to school'. Throughout my seeking of wisdom I remain rich beyond measure in their love and support.

Abstract

This thesis aims to develop a more robust framework for understanding the management processes involved in Corporate Brand Communications.

A review of the literature on corporate branding shows a growing body of conceptual work, but also highlights that much of the recent work in the field has not focused on the underlying processes involved in managing a corporate brand. There is, therefore, a clear need to understand how a corporate brand is defined, developed and communicated.

This international study adopts a Participatory Action Research approach, grounded in Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973), to develop an intervention framework based on the concept of *'privileged access'* (Torbet, 1991). This methodological framework is tested on a pilot study and then adopted for the study of three separate organisations in the UK, France and the Netherlands to answer three distinct, but related Research Questions.

Based upon the findings emerging from these studies, the researcher identifies a series of 'emergent management stages', and uses this empirical evidence to develop a new 'Six Conventions' framework for understanding the processes of nurturing and managing a corporate brand. The study makes an explicit contribution to the field by helping to 'join up' many of the existing, disparate conceptual models. It makes a further significant contribution by grounding the 'Six Conventions' framework in rich empirical data in a way that operationalizes the inherent management processes in a new and more robust manner than previous studies.

These findings offer both new insight to academics, and a set of guiding principles and practices for managers engaged in managing brands at an organisational level, fulfilling the requirements of Participatory Action Research to generate both Propositional and Practical knowledge.

A further methodological contribution is provided by demonstration of the potential that participatory approaches, utilising the concept of this *'privileged access'*, offer in contrast to traditional case research. This leads to the development of a new process to guide effective intervention studies of management processes.

Chapter One: Research Profile

Introduction

A survey on the literature on corporate branding shows a growing body of conceptual work. The literature also highlights a number of inherent difficulties created by a variety of terminology and definitions, which stem from the entry into the field of a number of authors from different academic fields (strategy, organisational behaviour, psychology) to what was once the traditional domain of marketing.

To date, much of this debate has centred on the validity of alternative conceptual models and definitions of key variables. Much of the recent work has highlighted the importance of communications but not focused on the underlying systems or mechanisms involved in the process of managing the communication of a brand at an organisational level. There is, therefore, a clear need to understand how a corporate brand is defined, developed and communicated and it is the researcher's opinion that this constitutes a gap in the literature.

It is also the researcher's contention that the more general emerging field of Corporate Brand Management is being limited by the application of traditional positivist and constructivist methods of inquiry. In this thesis the researcher highlights the limitations of looking at the phenomenon through these lenses and advocates the adoption of a new participatory lens to the study of the field. Further, by focusing on communication of the corporate brand the researcher aims to develop a more robust framework for understanding the management processes involved in the concept defined as Corporate Brand Communications.

Research objective

The objective of this research is to build an empirically robust framework for Corporate Brand Communications. The study adopts a participatory perspective and builds an

intervention approach from the body of work known as Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973).

The conduct of the study, with reference to an initial pilot and three separate intervention studies, adopts a Participatory Action Research approach to examine the process by which organisations attempt to establish and control the consistency of their Corporate Brand Communications. It also uses content analysis to measure '*system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973) in terms of Corporate Brand Communications consistency as an output, both before and after the researcher's intervention.

The aim of this research is, therefore, to assist in the building of theory and to provide further insight into the emerging field of Corporate Brand Management, in line with the views of Balmer (1998), who states that further empirical research should focus on this developing field.

Research questions

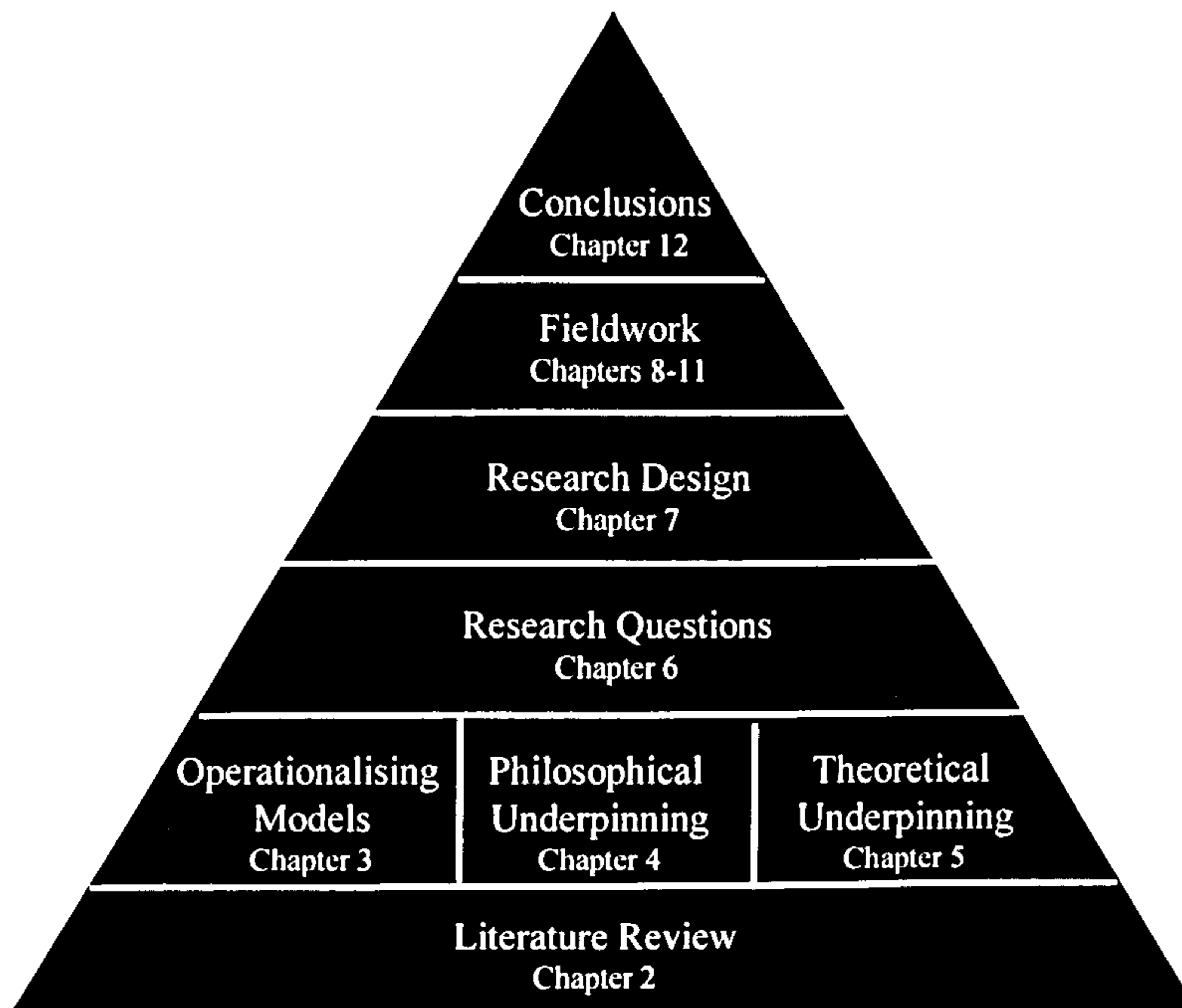
The thesis poses three distinct, but related questions:

1. Can a participatory, action-oriented approach to the study of Corporate Brand Management systems aid the development of a more empirically robust framework for Corporate Brand Communications?
2. Can the improved understanding of research participants in contributing to the development of such a framework also lead to '*improved system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973) in terms of the projection of more consistent Corporate Brand Communications by an organisation?
3. Can a methodological approach based upon participation and active researcher involvement, extend the potential of case study approaches in studying management processes?

Thesis structure

To facilitate a clear understanding of what is a relatively new approach to studying an emerging field, the thesis is structured as a series of chapters, which trace the development path of the research (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Thesis structure in outline



Chapter Two (pages 9-27)

The review of the literature defines the term corporate branding and traces the marketing roots of product branding and the growing body of literature pointing to the importance of branding at the level of the organisation. It then examines the evolution of branding from an organisation perspective and the field of corporate identity, highlighting the more recent congruence of both fields resulting in the recent focus on the concept of corporate branding.

The researcher then develops a point of view that the debate between the marketing and organisation fields, which is essentially one of starting point (A 'bottom-up' customer market focus versus a 'top-down' organisation focus), is inhibiting the further development of knowledge in the field.

Chapter Three (pages 28-50)

The researcher examines some of the recent models that attempt to operationalise the broader concept of Corporate Brand Management. This chapter also highlights some of the limitations of these frameworks and identifies the lack of empirically grounded data to support the development of a robust model. This points to the need for considering new ways to study the field.

Chapter Four (pages 51-57)

The researcher introduces the participatory paradigm and discusses how this differs from positivist and constructivist viewpoints and what this paradigm can offer to the study of this field. The chapter also describes knowledge creation in the participatory paradigm, and provides a detailed review of the participatory principles that underpin the study.

Chapter Five (pages 58-68)

The chapter discusses the theoretical underpinning for the study with a description of Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973) and review of the typology of intervention approaches. The chapter explains how this theoretical framework is used as a basis for the development of the research design and guide for the selection of suitable organisations to study.

Chapter Six (pages 69-72)

The gap in the literature and limitations of current methods of studying the field are discussed and used as a basis for the development of Research Objectives. Three separate, but related, Research Questions are explained and the chapter finishes with a discussion of the contribution to knowledge that the study aims to make.

Chapter Seven (pages 73-86)

The operationalisation of the three Research Questions is explained in detail, with particular emphasis on the development of an intervention framework for the study. This framework is constructed from the philosophical and theoretical base established in Chapters Four and Five. The chapter also explains the approach to conducting multiple intervention studies and considers issues of validity and quality as they relate to the three Research Questions.

Chapter Eight (pages 87-100)

The chapter provides a detailed description of the conduct of an initial pilot study with a leading UK law firm. It reviews the findings of this pilot and discusses the key learning gained from the process and how this informed subsequent intervention studies.

Chapter Nine (pages 101-138)

This chapter provides details of the intervention study conducted with the European Science Foundation, in Strasbourg, between 1998-1999. It includes a detailed description of the study in terms of negotiation of access, suitability of the organisation for conducting the study, research objectives, process of data collection and analysis and review of the main findings.

Chapter Ten (pages 139-176)

This chapter provides details of the second intervention study conducted with Logistics Consulting Partners (LCP) between 1999-2001. It follows the format of the previous chapter and includes a detailed write up of negotiation of access, suitability of the organisation for study, research objectives, the process of data collection and analysis and review of the main findings.

Chapter Eleven (pages 177-216)

This chapter provides details the final intervention study conducted with the AEGON Group nv, The Hague, between 2001-2002. Its structure follows that of the previous two chapters, and includes a detailed review of the conduct of the study in terms of negotiation of access, suitability of the organisation for study, research objectives, the process of data collection and analysis and review of the main findings.

Chapter Twelve (pages 217-283)

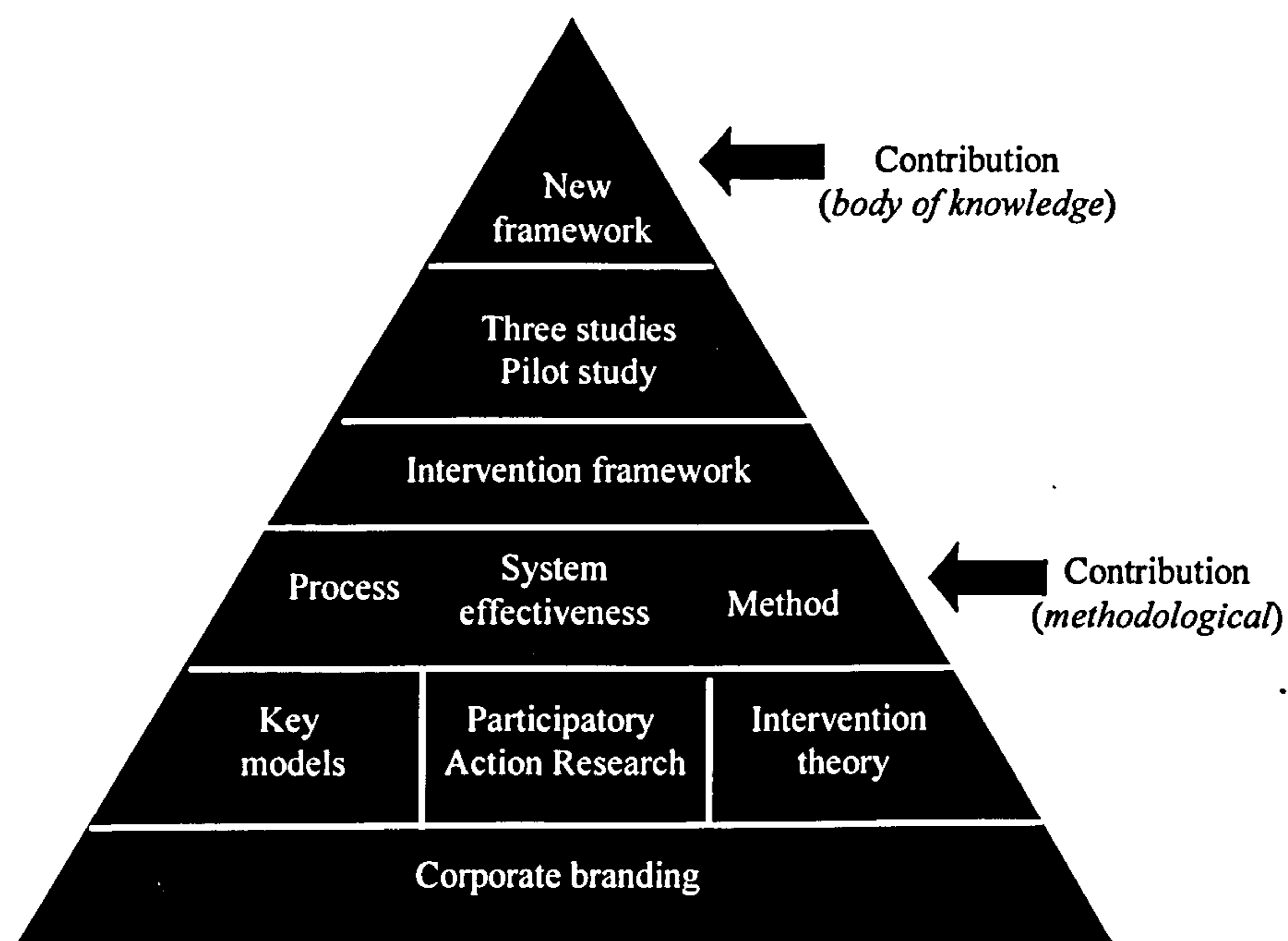
The final chapter details the approach to Cross-Case analysis and reviews the main findings from all three studies. These tabulations are displayed and findings are discussed and related back to the literature. The chapter also draws conclusions from the study and discusses its limitations, identifying areas for future research, and assessing the contribution of the study to the field.

The thesis also contains details and evidence from each study in the Appendix section.

Contribution to knowledge

It is the researcher's contention that the three Research Questions provide a clear indication of the purpose of the study and the contribution that it will make to the field (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 Thesis structure and contribution to knowledge



The first Research Question identifies the essence of the study and its attempt to understand a process, whilst the second Question considers the implications of this increased understanding of participants and the potential of this enhanced level of knowledge to influence the output of Corporate Brand Communications. The third Research Question makes a methodological contribution by considering how a participatory approach to the study of a management process adds to the body of methodological knowledge around the conduct and effectiveness of intervention-based methods.

The key to this contribution comes from the ability of the study to build to existing knowledge by gaining '*privileged access*' (Clark, 1972) to data and situations which would not be as easily accessible through more traditional research methods which have been used, to date, in the study of this field. This is in line with the views of Balmer (1998), among others, who state that further empirical research should focus on this emerging field.

Further clarity around the researcher's contribution surrounds the complexity of definitions in the emerging body of literature. This is deemed to be indicative of the formative nature of the field, indicating complexity rather than confusion (Balmer, 2001a). To ensure that this complexity does not impair the understanding of this thesis the researcher has made explicit the key definitions and terms adopted by the researcher (Table 1.3) throughout the development of this thesis.

Table 1.3 Key definitions adopted in thesis

Concept	Definition
Corporate Brand	An expression and representation of an organisation's characteristics that is not solely ascribed to the products of the organisation
Corporate Brand Management	The process of controlling, guiding and developing an organisation's projection of itself to internal and external audiences, through a broader mix than traditional product marketing to create a favourable corporate image and reputation for the organisation. Includes management of visual identity, communication and brand architecture or structure
Corporate Image	The net result of the interactions of all the experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that audiences have about an organisation
Corporate Reputation	The collective representation of an organisation's past actions and results that describes its ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders as perceived by all its audiences as a whole
Corporate Brand Communications	Process and practices by which an organization manages and controls its organisational communications with internal and external audiences
Corporate Identity	The fundamental mix of elements that define what an organisation is (Balmer, 1997)

Chapter Two: Literature Review. The changing focus of brand management: from product brand to corporate brand

This chapter introduces the concept of the corporate brand and reviews its emergence in the literature from the fields of marketing and multidisciplinary organisation studies. Its purpose is to understand how thinking has developed in these fields over the past 40 years and highlight the convergence that is now occurring between the two fields. It also considers the current uncertainty over how the field of Corporate Brand Management should be understood and developed.

The concept of the product brand

The concept of the brand can be traced back to product marketing where the role of branding and brand management has been primarily to create differentiation and preference for a product or service in the mind of the customer.

Within this field, there are a number of generally accepted definitions. These variously refer to the brand as *'a product or service, which a customer perceives to have distinctive benefits beyond price and functional performance'* (Knox, 2000), *'a symbol serving to distinguish the products and services of one company from another'* (Kapferer, 1997) and as *'Multi-dimensional entities, whose success requires matching a firm's functional and emotional values with consumers' performance and psychological needs.'* (de Chernatonay and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998).

The development of product branding over the past 30 years is characterised in the literature by layers of added value built around the core functionality of the product or service to create and maintain distinction in a particular market. The increasing sophistication of product brand management techniques can be tracked over this period by the emergence of concepts such as brand image (Boulding, 1956, Balmer, 1998) and brand positioning (Ries and Trout, 1982), through to brand identity (Kapferer, 1997).

A further stage in this evolutionary development of traditional product brand management has been the increasing influence of the organisation behind the brand and an increasing acceptance of its role in the creation of economic value (Worcester, 1986, Lane Keller and Aaker, 1992).

The concept of the corporate brand

Corporate branding draws on the traditions of product branding in that it shares the same objective of creating differentiation and preference. However, this activity is rendered more complex by managers conducting these practices at the level of the organisation, rather than the individual product or service, and the requirement to manage interactions with multiple stakeholder audiences. King (1991) highlights the differences between a corporate brand and a product brand. These are that the audiences go beyond a primary focus on customers to include all other stakeholders, the points of contact with these stakeholders are more diverse, and stakeholder audiences' discriminators are more complex, extending beyond products and services to include intangibles such as people and policies.

Ind (1997) supports this distinction between product and corporate brands by highlighting three core, distinguishing attributes:

Intangibility – whilst a product or service is tangible, an organisation is intangible to all audiences except employees. An individual's perception of an organisation is therefore based upon his/her experiences of its communications, symbolism and behaviour (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986), and from these signals an image is constructed.

Complexity – with a product or service brand continuity of experience is achievable. For a corporate brand this is made harder by the variety of audiences and points of contact, or interfaces.

Responsibility – A corporate brand has a broader social responsibility or '*ethical imperative*'.

Whilst these characteristics make the corporate brand more difficult to model and manage, a number of authors have noted the potential for harnessing this asset. Balmer

(1995) asserts that a strong and favourable corporate brand offers an organisation a number of distinct benefits. As well as being an important discriminator in increasingly competitive markets, it creates consistency in consumer demand; offers added value to products and services; contributes to a company's financial margins; affords protection from competitors; attracts high quality personnel to the organisation. Hatch and Schultz (2001) support this view claiming that corporate brands offer managers the potential to reduce costs, give customers a sense of security, provide a corporate seal of approval for products and create common ground inside organisations.

To further support these claims Balmer cites research by Worcester (1986), which showed a strong correlation between company familiarity and favourability, and research by Lane Keller and Aaker (1992) which highlighted the positive impact of the corporate brand to new product introductions and brand extensions.

A marketing perspective: from brand image to corporate associations

Over the past 40 years much of the focus of debate in the marketing field has been on the mix of elements that not only delineate marketing as a discipline, but also help to operationalise the role and function of marketing for the purposes of both practitioners and academics.

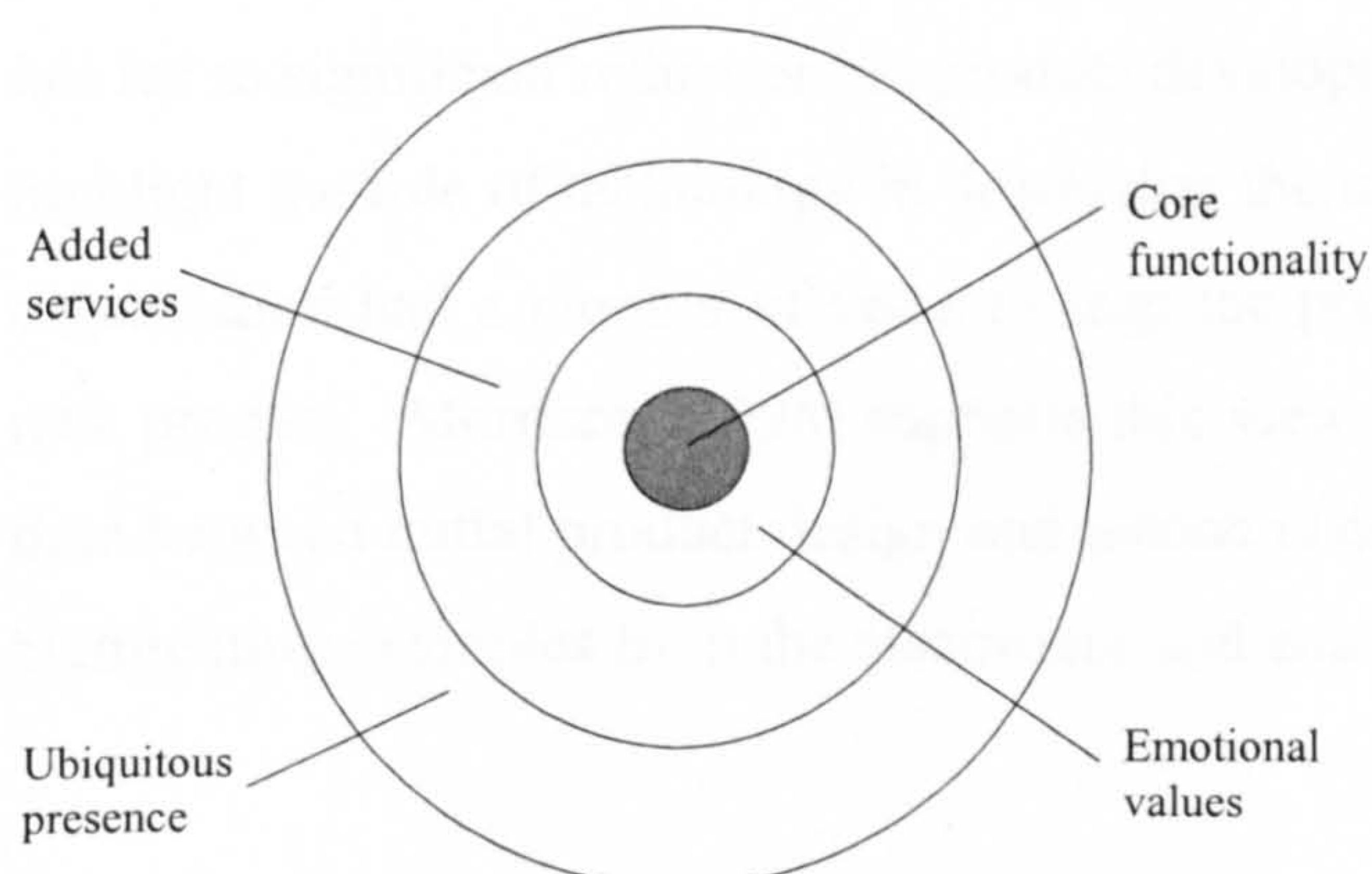
The goal of product brand management, as it has evolved over this period, has been to explore ways to add value to the basic product or service and thus create customer preference and loyalty. As the previous section explained, the concept of the brand was developed not to describe the product but to distinguish it. In helping create this differentiation the term 'marketing mix' was first introduced by Neil Borden in 1953. Balmer (1997) describes his identification of 12 elements that make up this mix: advertising; branding; distribution channels; display; marketing research; merchandising; packaging; personal selling; promotion; pricing; physical handling; servicing.

However, an alternative and simpler mix was widely adopted by marketers based upon McCarthy's 4 Ps: product; price; place and promotion. The role of managing the marketing mix in this period had the objective of creating a positive **brand image** in the mind of the customer. This, as Kapferer (1997) and others have subsequently noted, was a relatively simplistic concept as it is seen from the receiver's side only. This theme was developed by Balmer (1997) who pointed to inherent weaknesses in a model of brand management that concentrated almost exclusively on creating an appealing image. Such images were deemed to both lack substance and be open to imitation.

These weaknesses led to the development of the concept of **brand positioning** by authors such as Ries and Trout (Knox and Maklan, 1998). This recognised the fact that customer choices are made on the basis of comparison and led marketing activity to focus on creating the optimal location in the minds of existing and potential customers (Lane Keller, 1998). This concept of positioning also linked with the term Unique Selling Proposition (USP), and together with the 4 Ps, have been the main building blocks of product brand management practice since the early 1960s.

Knox and Maklan (1998), among others, model this development of claims around the product's core functionality as a series of concentric layers, which comprise the '*Augmented Brand*' (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 'The Augmented Brand'



This 'Augmented Brand' only becomes a powerful asset when it is differentiated from competing brands through the development of a USP, which is defined as '*a succinct statement about the brand's most important customer benefit together with the supporting evidence, either psychological or functional*'.

Recent literature in the marketing field has seen a growing body of work, which points to the inability of these tools to cope with the substantially changed environment that organisations face today. Both Christopher (1996) and Mitchell (1999) argue that these changes demand new approaches to branding, even if the basic principle of marketing, to focus businesses on satisfying customer needs, still remains.

Macrae (1999) goes further and asserts that the marketer's toolkit associated with brand image and brand positioning was only relevant to brands developed in an era of geographic and market segmentation, where customers had imperfect knowledge and access only to local standards of quality and value.

A number of authors have produced authoritative lists of these environmental factors driving this change. From the researcher's perspective, these are best encapsulated by Morrison (1996), who refers to the need for organisations to manage a 'second curve' based upon changes in technology, market dynamics and customer behaviour. These factors are reviewed in the following section.

The influence of technology

The increased application of technology through all elements of the production process has led to significant reductions in product development lead times. Schultz et al (1993) highlight the role of technology in destroying the old manufacturing driven idea that an organisation had a number of years to reap the profits from the launch of a successful new product. Morrison (1996) supports this view pointing to the fact that the average time between initial product design and launch is down by half in a range of industries, highlighting examples from the electronics and automotive sectors.

This means that even products and markets with high rates of innovation will inevitably be forced towards a position of commoditisation where consumers perceive little difference in quality terms between competing offers. This condition has been described as a new era of '*marketing similarities*' (Kapferer, 1997).

A second impact of technology is the improved levels of information now available to consumers. Whilst this technology does not alone change consumption patterns, it does give consumers greater access to tools they can use for making more informed purchase decisions. These technological developments are not exclusively benefiting customers. They have also presented opportunities to organisations. One example is the growth in IT, which now allows companies greater levels of information about and insight into customers' behaviour than previously.

In communication terms, technological advances have also driven the increase in media fragmentation as mass media channels, such as advertising, have been supplemented by an array of 'routes to customer' including direct marketing, electronic commerce and sponsorship. The implications of these new channels have been the enhanced ability to target individuals and specific categories of consumer - a process variously described as '*de-massification*' (Toffler, 1970) or the '*customer of one*' (Peppers and Rogers, 1993).

New market conditions

A number of macro-economic and political trends have resulted in a marked increase in competition across markets. These factors include deregulation, privatisation and globalisation.

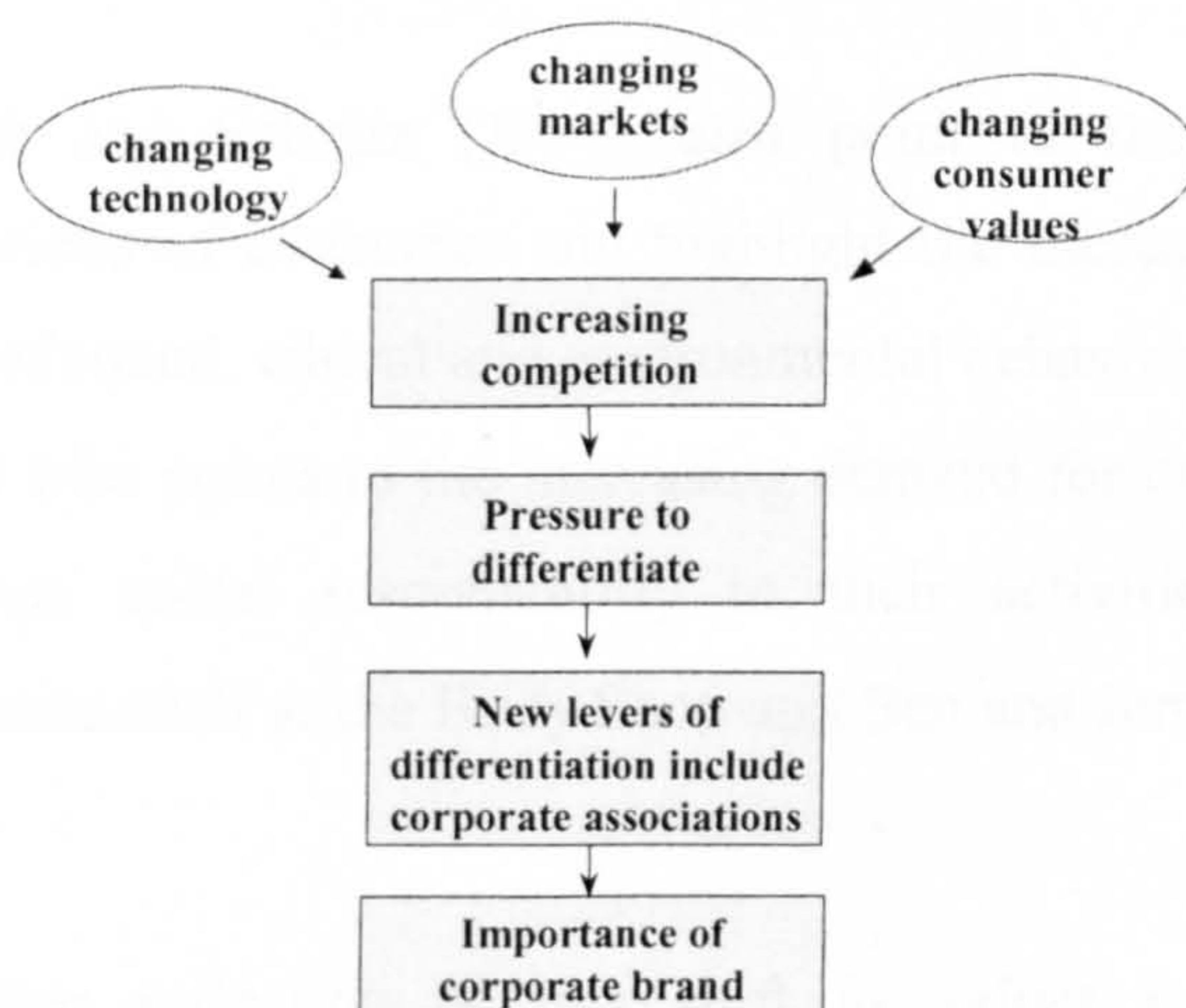
The **deregulation** of certain industries such as power generation, financial services and telecommunications in the UK, and increasingly across Europe, has radically altered the competitive nature of these sectors by lowering barriers to entry in previously 'protected' markets. Changes in the competitive landscape mean that organisations now

face competition from new entrants into markets that were previously protected either by statute or the prohibitively high costs of entry (Balmer, 1998).

Privatisation is a growing trend in the UK and Continental Europe. The high profile privatisation of a number of public utilities in the UK in the past 15 years has set an example now being followed in Europe where a number of major French, German and Spanish companies are in the process of conversion. These major programmes are leading to conditions of heightened competition in domestic markets and forcing organisations to communicate for the first time to new financial audiences, including both institutional and private investors (Ind, 1998).

These changes in domestic market conditions are further accentuated by the increasing **globalisation** of a number of sectors where organisations are forced to compete globally for not just customers, but also the recruitment of high calibre personnel and financing from international capital markets (Hatch, Schultz et al, 1998).

Figure 2.2 Changing nature of brand management – a marketing perspective



These fundamental changes in technology, markets and customer values are creating an environment characterised by increased levels of competition (Figure 2.2). In such a market the organisation comes under increasing pressure to differentiate not just its product and service offer to consumers but also its corporate brand proposition to other stakeholder audiences, particularly in recruitment and financial markets.

The rise of the new consumer

A number of authors have recently pointed to the rise of a new type of consumer. Morrison (1996) describes this new consumer as better educated, more discriminating, better informed, more individual and with a new set of values. Christopher (1996), in turn, considers the increasing body of literature on the nature of brand loyalty and proposes that brand 'values' may not be as strong to the consumer as they once were. To support this claim he points to the continued rise of own-label products where consumer perceptions of quality, price and service are increasingly related to the retailer, which signals a fundamental shift in the value proposition away from the manufacturer. However, this view can be contrasted with recent examples where consumers are willing to support entirely new brands (for example, Starbucks, Egg) or new product lines (First Direct, Virgin Financial Services) where they can identify with the values represented by these brands.

Schultz and Schultz (1998) also point to these changing values of succeeding generations of consumer and highlight the increased expectations of organisations in terms of social, ethical and environmental behaviour. This view is supported by Balmer (1997) who points to the increasing demand for organisations to show higher levels of corporate social responsibility in their activities, highlighting the emergence of companies such as the Body Shop and Ben and Jerry's.

A further reflection of this shift in values is evidence of the wider sense of accountability among UK business leaders. In a recent MORI Captains of Industry survey for the Centre for Tomorrow's Company, over 40% of business leaders indicated

their belief that a publicly listed organisation cannot succeed unless its accountability goes beyond shareholders.

Schultz and Schultz (1998) have summarised this position by claiming that marketing and marketing communications are in transition, highlighting the fact that the traditional marketing tools no longer work as they were developed for a marketplace and a consumer that no longer exists. In their view the critical challenge facing organisations is to make the transition from the orderly, clearly defined approaches of the 1950s and 1960s to the more dynamic marketplace of the 21st Century.

In this emerging, hyper-competitive environment (shown in Figure 2.2) where consumers are more knowledgeable and discriminating, the market has greater access to information, traditional barriers to entry are lowering and channels are changing and fragmenting, the concept of sustainable product brand loyalty is increasingly being questioned.

King (1991) has noted that in an era of rapid change it is increasingly the organisation behind the brand that becomes the main discriminator. This view is supported by Macrae (1999) who views the brand's relationship with the customer as moving from the management of risk to one that is more fundamentally based on trust. The focus of this trust has shifted from the integrity of the product brand to the organisation and the people behind the brand.

In response to these views Kapferer (1997) claims that we have now entered a new age of **brand identity**, where conditions of increased competition mean that brands today need to be more durable, consistent in their presentation and realistic. To support this view, Kapferer proposes a new model of brand identity, configured as a hexagonal prism model with six variables: physique; personality; culture; relationship; reflection; self image. The author claims that these six variables define the brand and delineate the boundaries within which brand managers can operate.

Kapferer's prism model represents a profound change in marketing attitudes towards the brand as it demonstrates, through its hexagonal metaphor, the interrelationships of these variables, and the introduction of variables such as culture and relationships. This acknowledges stronger links to the organisation and recognition of a wider audience beyond the customer (Urde, 1999). This recognition has been developed further by Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne (1991, 2002) who have charted the evolution of consumer and industrial marketing through to the concept of Relationship Marketing, with its emphasis on managing an organisation's internal and multiple external stakeholder groups. Work in the Relationship Marketing fields through the 1990's signalled a shift in emphasis from short-term transactional goals to longer-term relationship-building goals (Kotler, 1992), and has encouraged managers to move beyond the traditional customer-centric marketing role to embrace a wider stakeholder perspective.

This thinking has been consolidated into a six markets framework (Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2002) that highlights five separate stakeholder groups or '*market domains*', in addition to customers. The framework has led these authors, among others including Kotler (1992) and Morgan and Hunt (1994) to highlight that this represents a significant challenge for senior managers and a recognition that stakeholder groups are '*frequently managed in an uncoordinated and disparate manner.*' (Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 2002).

Further support for this wider mix of variables also comes from Ind (1998) who points to the growing importance of **corporate associations**. Ind cites the work of Maathuis, Van Riel and Van Bruggen (1998), which indicates that corporate brand associations influence product credibility. This viewpoint is supported by empirical work by Lane Keller and Aaker (1992) on the effects of corporate image on new product evaluations. This research found that corporate image enhanced both credibility and attractiveness leading to more favourable new product evaluations.

Recognition in the marketing field of the increasing importance of corporate associations mean that future marketing success, as defined by King (1991), depends

upon developing skills in brand building that harness all organisational assets and competencies to create unique products and services. This, as Tilley (1999) observes, moves branding from a position of a functional activity, as described by the Augmented Brand, to a more fundamental strategic asset that helps to link up the diverse activities of the organisation.

Recognition of the emergence of **corporate branding** as a potent marketing tool is supported by Mitchell (1999), who envisages the brand as an organising proposition that helps to shape an organisation's values and culture, and by Urde (1999) who views the brand as a strategic tool of management which can guide the organisational processes that generate and support value creation.

An organisation perspective: from corporate image to corporate branding

A number of authoritative literature reviews of the organisational field have been published (Abratt, 1989; Grunig, 1993; Van Riel, 1995; Balmer, 1997, 2001b). The purpose of this review is to build on these by demonstrating how the conceptual development in this field has mirrored that of the marketing field. These similarities exist in both the evolution of definitions, response to environmental changes and the development of deeper insights. This has led both fields to a growing recognition of the importance of the corporate brand.

Corporate image and the customer

Balmer (1997) notes that the main influences on the field in the 1950s and 1960s were from three disciplines: psychology, marketing and graphic design, highlighting the influence of work by Boulding (1956) and Martineau (1958) in developing the concept of **corporate image**. This led to Bernstein's (1984) widely-cited definition of corporate image as *'the net result of the interactions of all the experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that people have about a company'*.

A number of authors in the organisational field have subsequently pointed out weaknesses with this concept. Grunig (1993) notes that the term has been used as a synonym for concepts such as message, perception, attitude, and belief, and the fact that marketers often fail to distinguish between images produced by the organisation and an image formed in the mind of the individual or 'receiver'.

Other authors are stronger critics, claiming that the concept of image has negative associations with manipulation (Olins, 1979) and the ability to actively manage corporate image has been challenged (Kennedy, 1977). Abratt (1989), in turn, questioned the notion that an organisation's various stakeholders all held similar perceptions of that organisation, claiming that an optimum corporate image management process must focus on the needs of individual stakeholders.

Corporate personality and the employee

The next phase of development in the field was fuelled by the introduction of an organisational behaviourist viewpoint, which emphasised the need to understand the values and beliefs of personnel within the organisation. This shift of focus had been signalled by the previous empirical research of Kennedy (1977), who concluded that employees play an important role in image formation and was later developed to include the concept of corporate personality (Olins, 1991).

A number of authors have also highlighted links with the concept of corporate culture, which is defined by Barney (1986) as '*a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions and symbols that define the way in which a firm conducts its business*'. Barney developed this definition to explain how an organisation's culture can, under certain circumstances, be a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

This broadening of the scope to include both consumers and employees led to the consideration of the implications of an organisation's interaction with all stakeholder audiences.

Corporate identity and the stakeholder

The next stage of development in the field was the recognition of the need to create favourable perceptions beyond customers and employees to include all stakeholder audiences. This led to the emergence of the concept of **corporate identity** in both the North American and European academic literature.

Much like corporate image, the concept of corporate identity has been beset with problems of definition with authors such as Abratt (1989) commenting that the concepts of corporate image and corporate identity have been used interchangeably and imprecisely. Balmer (1997), in turn, contrasts two alternative viewpoints: the linguistic definition, which emphasises consistency, and the description of the distinct attributes of an organisation. It is the latter that has been adopted as the more common definition of corporate identity as '*what an organisation is*' (Balmer, 1997)

This interpretation means that an organisation can have one identity, many identities (in the case of an organisational structure with a number of distinct subsidiary companies) or be influenced by the presence of a strong generic or industry identity (Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991).

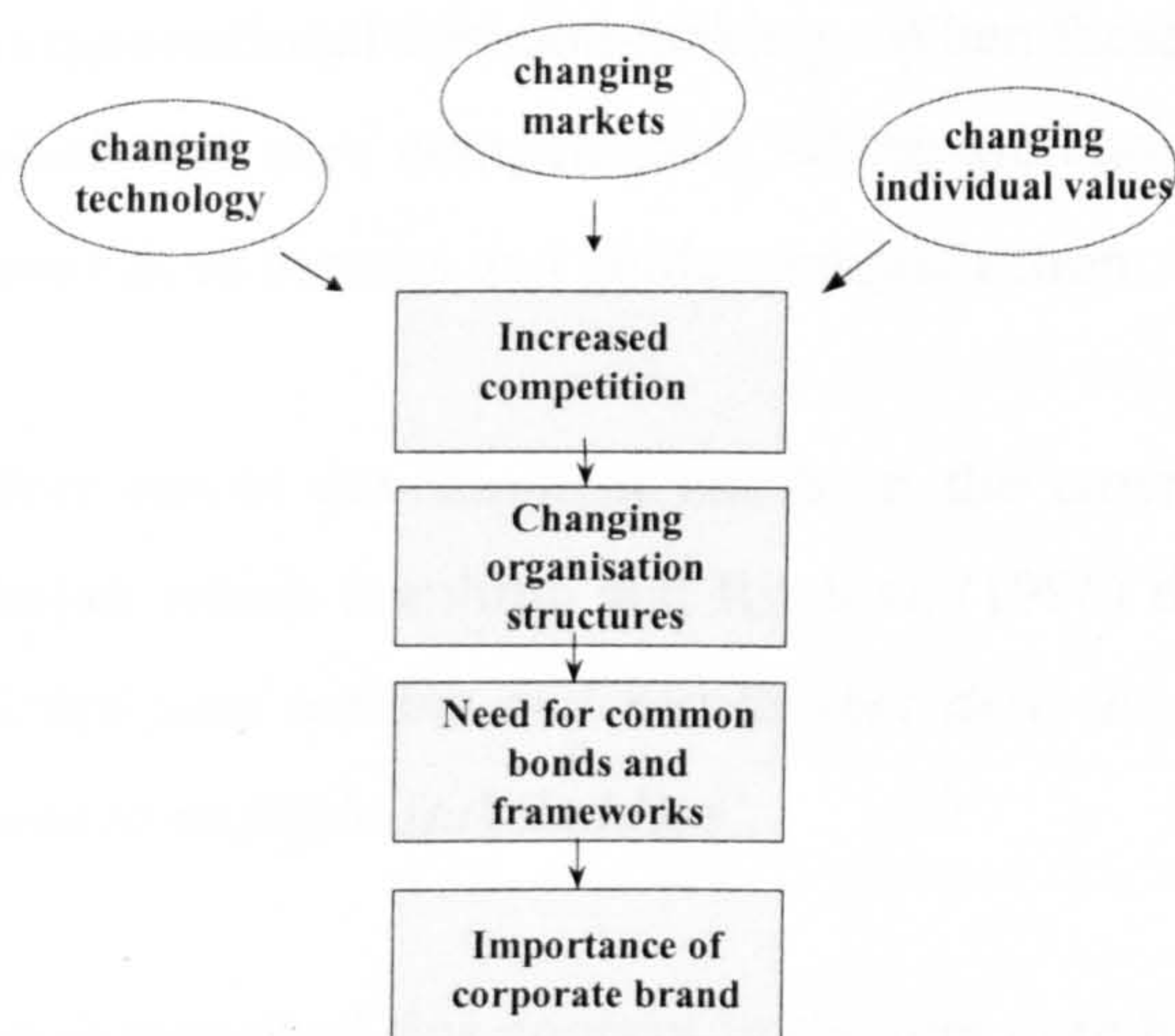
Balmer (1997) goes on to list three distinguishing features of corporate identity. First, the concept is fundamentally concerned with reality and describes what an organisation is: its products, strategy, history and philosophy. Second, corporate identity is multi-faceted and draws on a number of disciplines, highlighted by the work of Schmidt and Ludlow (1995) who state that the corporate identity mix comprises five elements: corporate culture; corporate behaviour; products and services; communication and design; market conditions and strategies. Third, corporate identity is based upon corporate personality.

In an echo of the marketing literature, the development of these deeper insights into the nature of the organisation brand has been prompted by changes in the external business environment, represented in Figure 2.3. Gray and Balmer (1997) noted that changes in

technology have caused a reduction in the product life cycle. This means that companies need to raise their visibility and corporate image when launching new products to reduce uncertainty in the minds of customers.

Hatch et al (1998), in turn, highlight the breaking down of geographic and market barriers, which are forcing organisations to find more holistic means of branding. Collins and Porras (1996) also point to environmental factors and explain how these trends are changing the structures of organisations, which are becoming flatter, more decentralized, geographically diverse and autonomous in order to remain competitive.

Figure 2.3 Changing nature of brand management - organisational perspective



This creates a broader role for the corporate brand to create alignment by acting as a ‘bond’ for internal and external audiences (Figure 2.3).

These conditions, when combined with a continuing media-driven trend towards demanding greater transparency from organisations (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000), mean that it is vital for organisations to align their external brand claims with internal practices. This creates a broader role for corporate identity to act as a bond that

enhances the likelihood of identification and 'bonding' with the organisation by its various internal and external audiences.

Recognition of these changing environmental and organisation conditions led to the development of a further concept of **organisational identity**, which Albert and Whetten (1985) defined as being those elements within an organisation that are '*central, enduring and distinctive*'. Larson and Reitter (1979) offer a further definition, which highlights the need for creating common bonds and frameworks within an organisation. This describes organisational identity as '*a set of interdependent characteristics which give an organisation specificity, stability and coherence*'.

The concept of organisational identity (OI) has more recently been advocated as a key source of competitive advantage (Barney and Stewart, 2000). Here the authors point to the cognitive component, defining this as shared organisational schema, which can help guide organisational decision-making. When these OI schema, which are values based, are linked with core competencies, which are knowledge based they offer management a framework to harness and guide strategic action.

A further recent development has been the emergence of the concept of **corporate reputation** which Fombrun and Rindova (1996) define as '*a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders*'.

The development of this concept in the literature has emerged from the contrasting and complementary viewpoints of different disciplines. Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) review the contributions of six fields (economic, strategic, marketing, organisational, sociological, accounting) and identify four key characteristics of corporate reputations. First, they are derivative, second-order characteristics. Second, they act as an external reflection of an organisation's internal identity. Third, they derive from multiple, but related images of the organisation among all its stakeholders. And finally, reputations play an important role in signalling an organisation's overall attractiveness to employees, customers, investors and other audiences. This final point is supported by a

recent empirical study by Fombrun and Rindova (1998) with leading US/UK companies that pointed to a link between reputation and consistency of communication.

Recent evolution of thinking in the field has pointed to the role of branding as a potent tool for creating meaning and differentiation in competitive markets and consolidating corporate reputations. This led Olins (2000) to claim that '*brands are becoming fundamental to the way that a company operates*', as they have influence over all stakeholder audiences. The implication of this viewpoint, supported by Hatch and Schultz (2001), is that an organisation has to increasingly manage itself, for all its audiences, as a brand. This has led to the emergence of **corporate branding** as a key concept in the organisational literature (Balmer and Soenen, 1997; Hatch et al, 1998; Balmer, 2001a; Hatch and Schultz, 2001).

In summary, the researcher has shown how the organisational concept of corporate image started from a focus on the customer audience and that the development of greater insights into the nature of organisational branding through corporate personality and corporate identity, in response to organisational changes, have clear echoes in the evolution of brand knowledge in the marketing field.

Marketing and organisation perspectives compared

The convergence of academic thinking mapped in Figure 2.4 suggests a new challenge for future work in the field. Specifically, this points to the need to understand and harness the different perspectives of the two fields of inquiry and define a new set of variables and processes for managing the brand at an organisational level.

In understanding the different perspectives of these two fields, the major difference in viewpoint between the two perspectives is one of starting point. The marketing perspective is based upon the primacy of the customer and the view that the brand is a strategic resource that can be used as an architecture to guide the business processes that generate brand value (Macrae, 1999; Urde, 1999). The organisational perspective, in

contrast, views branding as an organisational tool that must be managed to create alignment between the internal culture and external image of the organisation (Hatch and Schultz, 1997, 2001), arguing that this must begin with the organisation's vision.

The crux of this debate is therefore the legitimacy of two different starting points: A 'bottom-up' customer focus versus a 'top-down' organisation focus. This led Lane Keller (2000) to speculate that *'successful corporate brands will be those that effectively blend top-down versus bottom-up and internal versus external brand management activities'*.

This latter viewpoint begins to clarify the gap in the literature. Despite a growing consensus about the benefits of Corporate Brand Management (Fombrun and Rindova, 1998; Greyser, 1999, Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999), there remains considerable uncertainty over what this means in terms of management practices and the study of this emerging phenomenon. Lane Keller (1999) comments that many organisations are unsure what they should do to manage their corporate brand, whilst Ind (1998a) and Balmer (1998, 2001b) both highlight the current confusion in the field and stress the need to understand the disciplines involved in managing and developing a corporate brand. Davidson (1999, 2002), in turn, calls for the macro management of the brand by senior management.

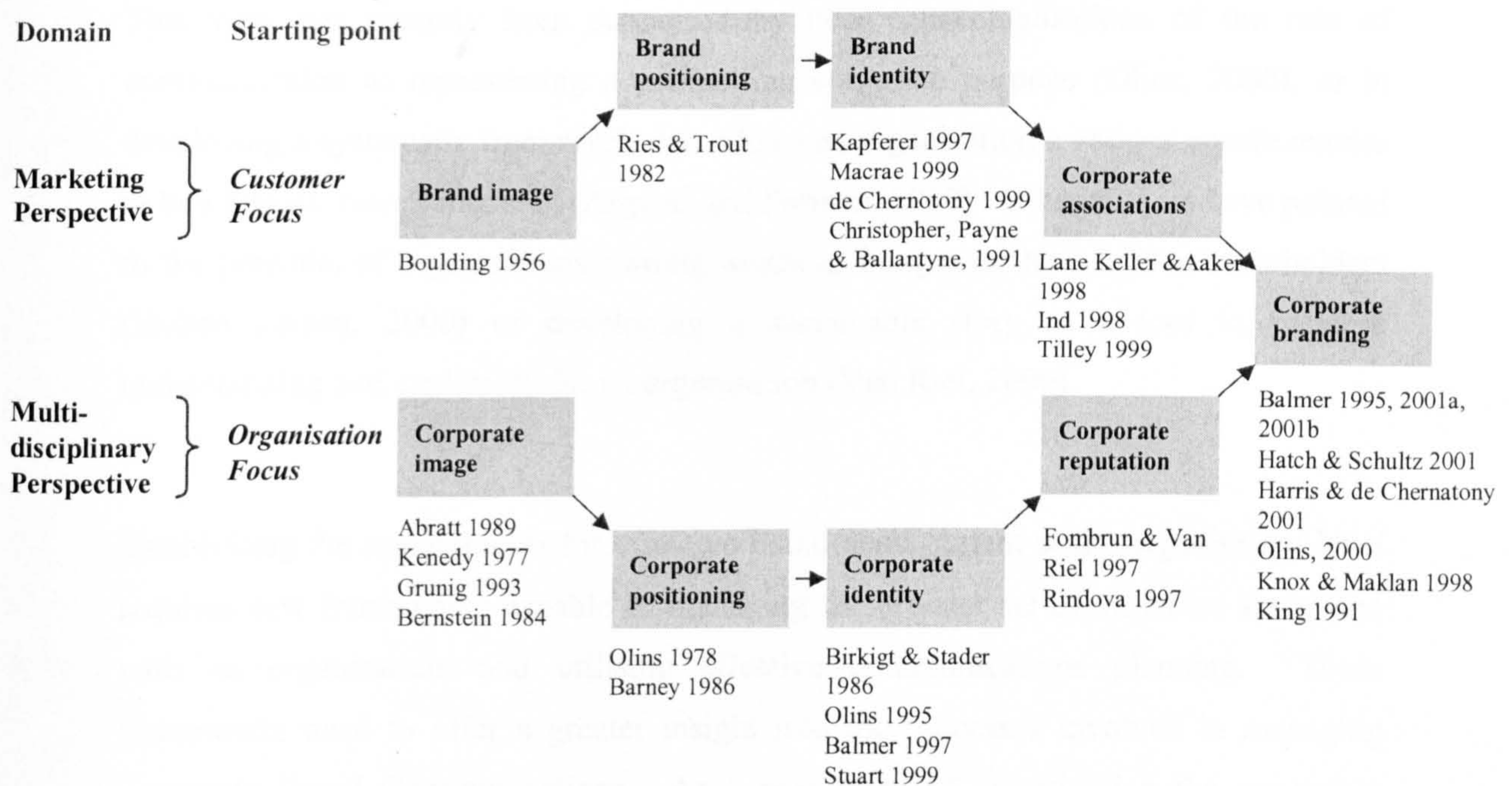
This suggests that there is a clear need to establish a new agenda and set of practices for brand management at an organisation level.

The new agenda for brand management at an organisation level

A review of the marketing and organisational literature points to a growing recognition of the corporate brand as a valuable asset, but confusion on what this means for the actual system of brand management in terms of principles and processes.

What both the marketing and organisational fields do agree on is the pivotal role of communication as a tool to create understanding, awareness and preference for and organisation and its products. Birkigt and Stadler (1986) conceptualise communication as one of the key elements used to project an organisation's identity. This view finds further support from Van Riel (1995) and Gray and Balmer (1997). Van Riel, in particular, champions the communications perspective, claiming that communication is increasingly gaining the status of a valuable management tool. The author cites the work of Aberg (1990) who states that communications fulfil four functions within an organisation: regulation; persuasion; information; integration.

Figure 2.4 Convergence of academic thinking



This leads to a definition of the process of corporate communications as *'an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonised as effectively and efficiently as possible so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upon which a company is dependent.'*

The role of corporate branding within this process is therefore to act as an adhesive enhancing the likelihood of identification and 'bonding' with the organisation by its various audiences. Van Riel models this relationship in terms of three variables: communications; behaviour; symbolism, which act as a bundle of characteristics, forming a shell around the organisation to display its personality. This leads to a definition of a corporate branding programme as *'a systematic, long-term approach to an organisation's total communication activities'* (Van Riel, 1995). Its aim is the achievement by the company of a positive starting position in relation to the groups with which the company has dependency relationships by improving familiarity with and appreciation of the organisation's intentions.

This view has recently been supported by new conceptualisations of the role of communication as representing a compelling corporate purpose (Olins, 2000), or in developing a systematic framework that allows an organisation's various constituencies to buy into its overall meaning (Argenti and Forman, 2000). Other authors have pointed to the potential of organisations owning words or images in the minds of stakeholders (Holten Larsen, 2000) or developing a sustainable story as a tool to increase understanding and credibility for an organisation (Van Riel, 2000).

Establishing the requirements for effective brand management at the organisation level requires new frameworks capable of managing the broader set of variables associated with an organisation, and utilising effective communications planning. These frameworks need to offer a greater insight into the processes involved in managing Corporate Brand Communications. As a next stage of investigation the researcher reviewed recent attempts in the literature, using a corporate branding lens, to operationalise the wider concept of Corporate Brand Management.

Chapter Three: Operationalising the concept of Corporate Brand Management: from macro conceptual models to more recent micro studies of brand management processes

A burgeoning field of inquiry

The previous chapter identified the recent congruence of marketing and organisation thinking on the concept of corporate branding. As a next stage of review, this chapter focuses on some of the key models that build our understanding of the Corporate Brand Management process. It then considers how these inform the current debate, and also highlights some weaknesses in terms of our understanding of the precise nature and practices of Corporate Brand Management. It finishes with the proposition that the literature still does not clearly explain what an organisation must do to effectively manage its corporate brand.

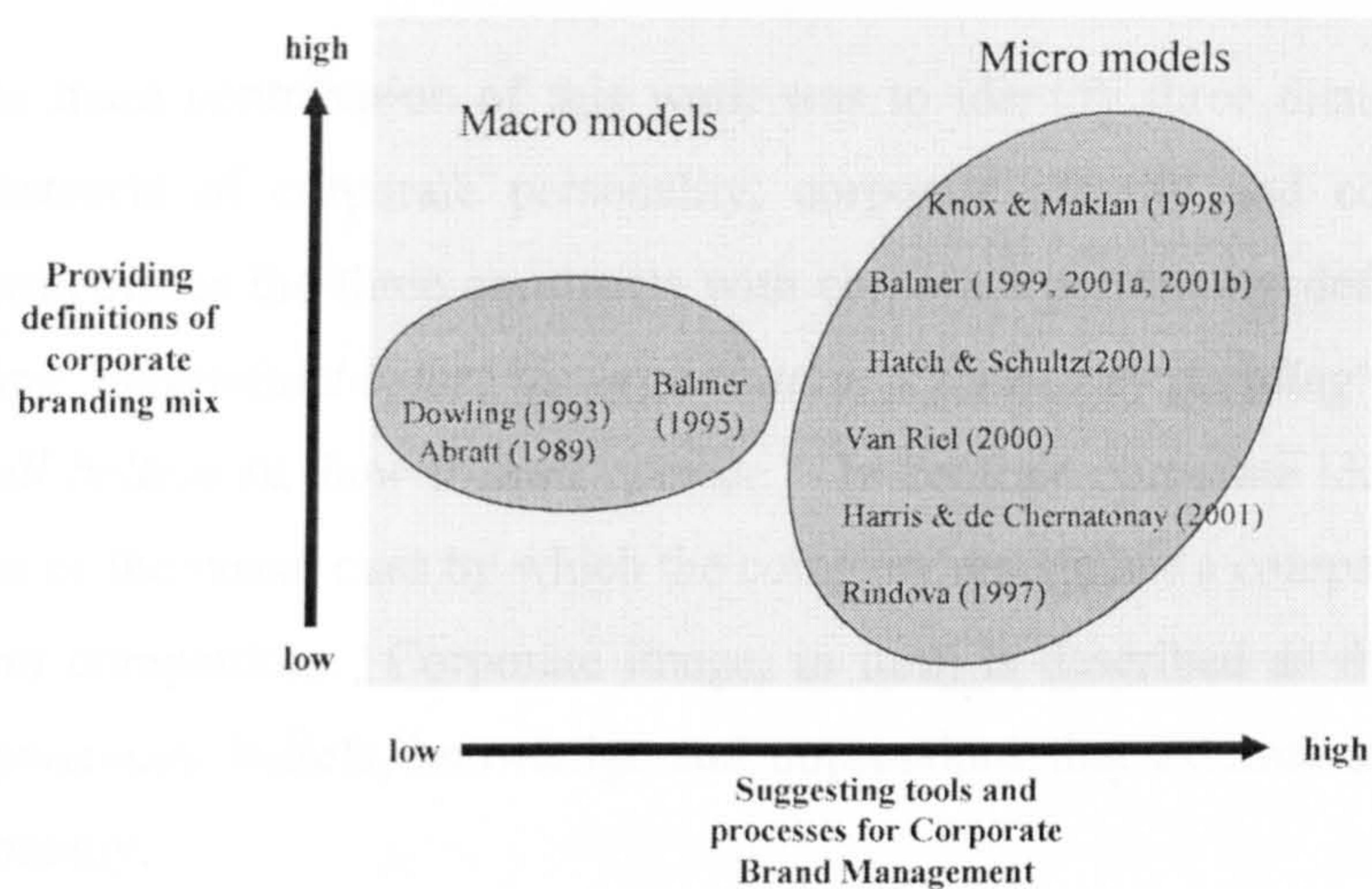
This critical review of eight key contemporary models of the wider Corporate Brand Management process indicates the need for a research focus to build more empirically robust models to explain the system of Corporate Brand Communication.

Tracing attempts to operationalise Corporate Brand Management

The development of models that attempt to operationalise the system of Corporate Brand Management has mirrored the evolution of descriptive terms and concepts within the organisation and marketing fields and reflects the inherent complexity of the phenomenon.

A number of excellent reviews of these models already exist in the literature (Stuart, 1999, Balmer, 2001). Based upon these reviews the researcher has concluded that these models can be divided into two distinct types: the macro models of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the more recent micro models from the organisation and marketing fields (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Mapping the field of operationalising frameworks



The macro models, developed by authors such as Abratt (1989) and Dowling (1993), have attempted to incorporate the various constructs, such as corporate personality, identity and image, within an overall framework. These early operationalising models focused more on the nature of the corporate branding mix. That is, those elements that make-up the corporate brand, and offered little insight into the management of the system itself.

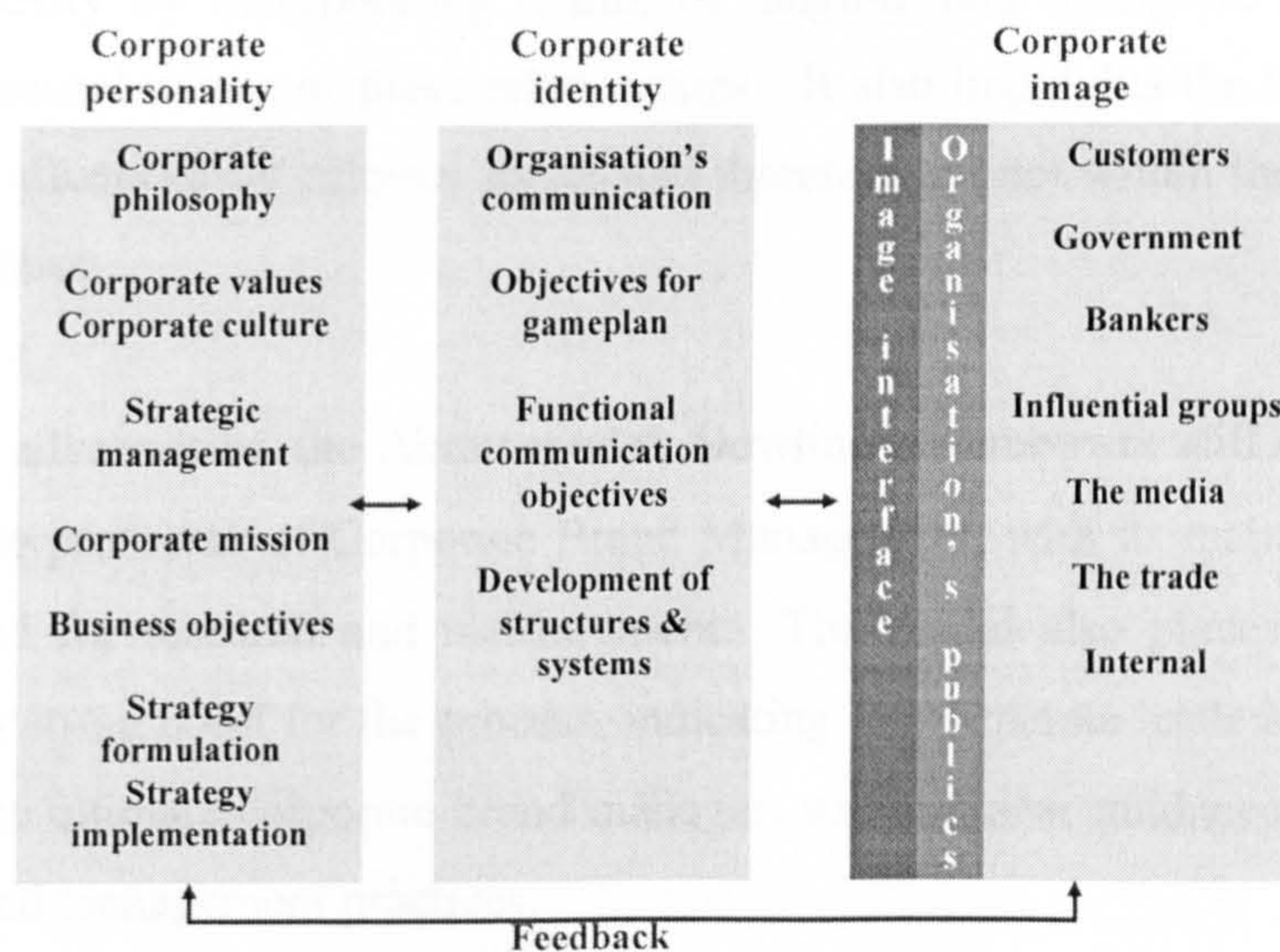
In response to these acknowledged limitations, authors have more recently begun to put forward micro models of the Corporate Brand Management process, which are more applicable for diagnostic purposes.

Defining corporate image management: Abratt's model (1989)

Abratt's model of the corporate image management process signalled a clear attempt to define the key elements of the corporate branding mix and also to link these elements into a management framework.

The main contribution of this work was to identify three distinct stages, linking the constructs of corporate personality, corporate identity and corporate image. This distinguishes the three constructs with corporate personality defined as the start point, being *'determined before the organisation is formed by deciding what it is to do, what it shall believe in, how it shall operate.'* In contrast corporate identity is defined as the sum of the visual cues by which the company recognises a company and differentiates it from competitors. Corporate image, in turn, is described as the net result of all the experiences, beliefs, knowledge and impressions that external audiences have about a company.

Figure 3.2 Abratt's model of corporate image management (1989)



This model, though significant in its time, is limited in the insight it offers in terms of management systems and processes, with 'broad band' definitions and no real attempt to describe the process as a cycle beyond a simple feedback loop between corporate image and corporate personality.

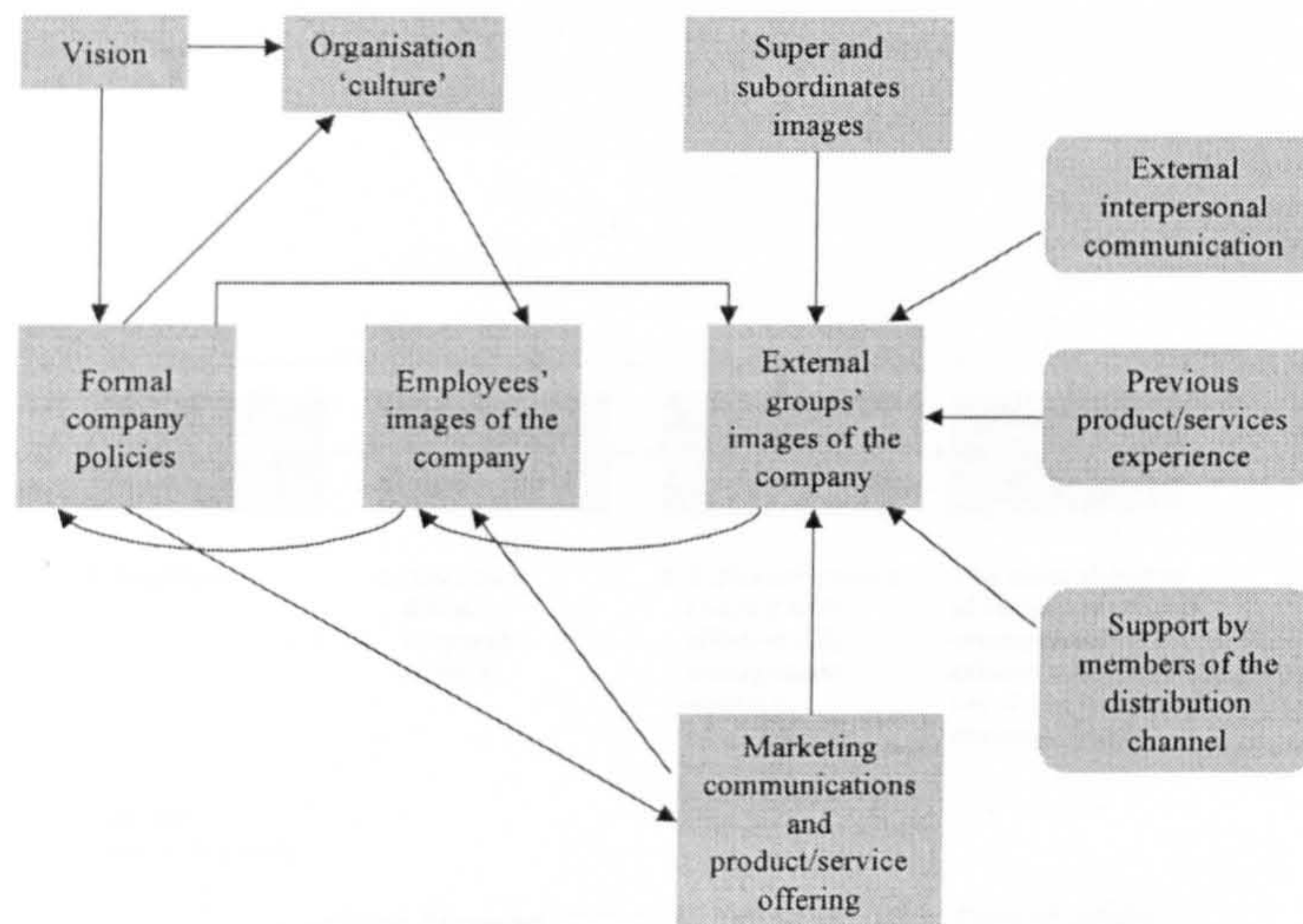
It should also be noted that a more recent empirical study, based upon this model (Abratt and Mofokeng, 2001) did find that sample South African companies studied did have an image plan and also identified that corporate personality is a key building block in the brand management process. The authors also found empirical support for the proposition that corporate image is a manageable resource, requiring a clear communications strategy as part of an on-going structured process. Despite this empirical support, the 2001 study did not provide further insight into what elements and processes needed to be incorporated within the brand management framework.

Co-ordinating tangible and intangible elements to manage corporate image for corporate advantage: Dowling's model (1993)

Dowling's 1993 model defines corporate image as a key marketing asset and demonstrates how the major elements under the organisation's control combine with factors outside its control to form corporate images. The model marks a clear attempt to reflect complexity by incorporating a mix of tangible and intangible elements and indicates the causal nature of these relationships. It also highlights the fact that some elements are influenced by external forces and therefore are not within the total control of the organisation.

Despite these advances on the Abratt model, Dowling's framework still offers limited insight into the processes of Corporate Brand Management, with its main implications being the need for research and measurement. The model also places organisation vision as the starting point for the process, indicating four separate leadership styles for the CEO as the ultimate corporate brand manager, without clear guidance on what this means for brand management practices.

Figure 3.3 Dowling's model (1993)



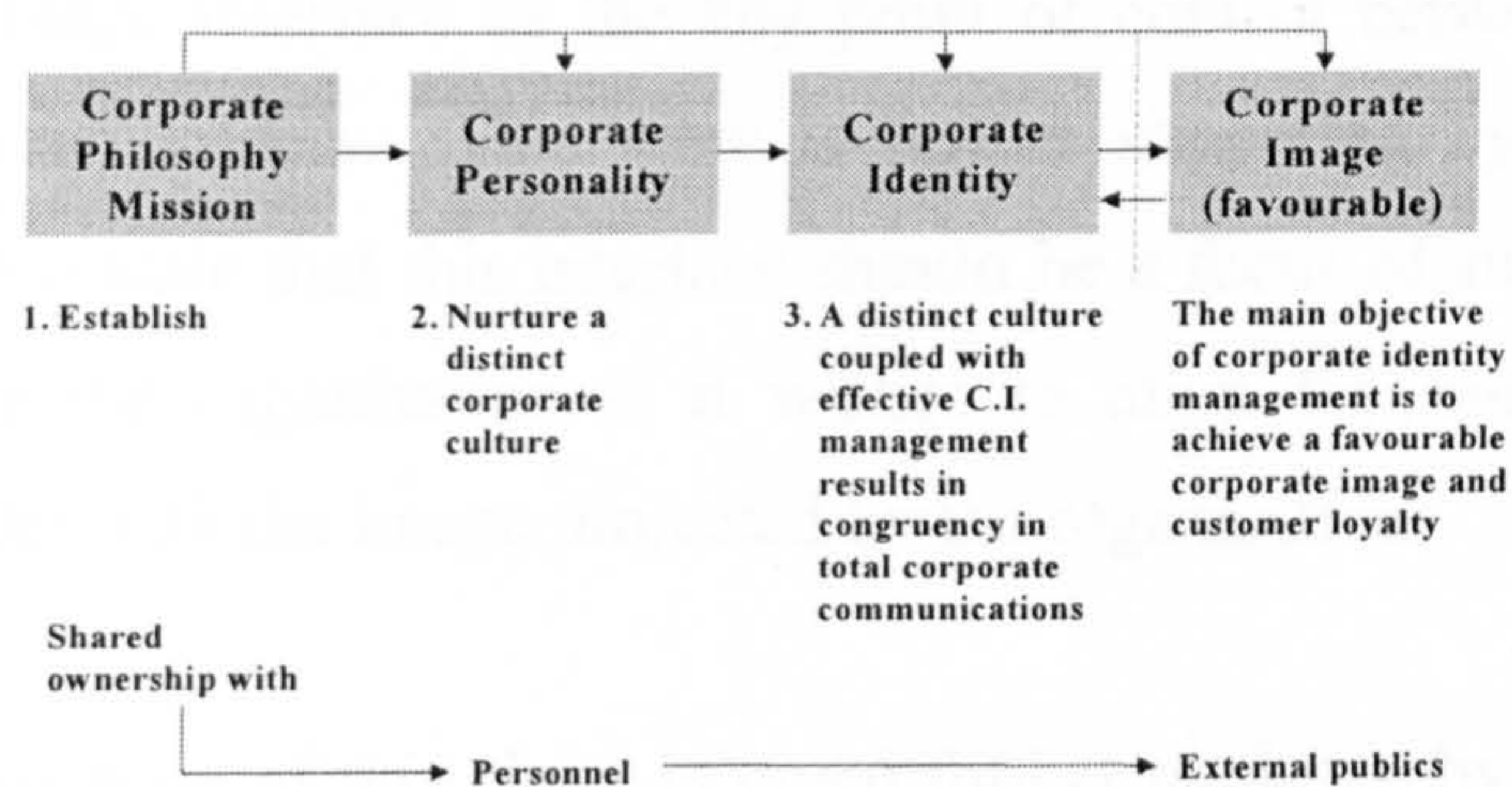
Providing initial benchmarks for managing the corporate brand: Balmer's raison d'être for Corporate Brand Management (1995)

Balmer's 1995 paper reflected a transition from the macro models represented by Abratt and Dowling to the more recent micro models. Its contribution lies in the clear distinction between key concepts in the field and the detailed review of approaches to Corporate Brand Management, identifying various schools of thought (from strategic to behavioural and graphic design). The other significant contribution is the emphasis on the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to the field and the importance of the corporate image/corporate identity interface.

The transitional nature of the model is that it signals the first clear articulation of the benchmarks needed to actively manage and corporate brand. These benchmarks were consolidated to form a checklist to audit the corporate identity (Figure 3.4).

Significantly, the author highlights that Corporate Brand Management is eclectic, encompassing corporate strategy, communications and organisational culture and states a clear purpose for Corporate Brand Management as *'securing loyalty from an organisation's diverse publics.'*

Figure 3.4 Balmer's framework (1995)



Balmer goes on to assert that corporate brand managers need to focus on the strengths and reality of the corporate brand, but does not go as far as to indicate what processes should be adopted to achieve this objective. Despite this weakness the model proposed in this paper does provide the bridge to the development of more recent micro models of the Corporate Brand Management process.

In summary, these macro models do seem to have triggered the development of more multi-disciplinary frameworks, but appear to be limited in terms of the insights they offer in explaining and connecting the various key constructs in a manner that guides active Corporate Brand Management. As Balmer (2001a) adroitly noted these early models over-emphasise linearity and simplicity and fail to recognise intricacy and complexity.

In response to these limitations a number of noted authors in the field have recently put forward more detailed models of the Corporate Brand Management system. The

common link between these models is an attempt to identify what managers must do if they are to effectively preserve and develop their corporate brand. These are critically reviewed in the rest of the chapter.

Linking brand communication to image and reputation formation:
Rindova's cascade model (1997) and empirical work (Fombrun and Rindova, 1998, 2000)

Abratt's (1989) and Balmer (1995) macro models had previously identified the identity/image interface as the key point of contact between the organisation and its various stakeholders. This view is further supported by Stuart (1995) and Balmer (1998) who state that this interface should be a focus of studies as it is the '*moment of truth*' for the organisation if it wishes to align the image held by the individual stakeholder with the image projected by the organisation.

The significance of this claim is given further credence by Rindova's (1997) model of the image and reputation formation process. Rindova cites the work of Fiske and Taylor (1990) in proposing that the development of corporate reputation involves social actors selecting, summarising and linking the various cues or images they receive while interacting with organisations.

Over time these processes produce cognitive structures of organised knowledge known as 'schemas', which serve as a framework for comprehension and action. These schemas originate from an individual's fragmented experience of an organisation's communications or behaviour and become more abstract, complex and organised the more an individual interacts with an organisation. As observers match new stimuli (encounters) to their pre-existing schemas (knowledge), they can make two types of processing errors. They can either distort available, but slightly inconsistent, information to fit the existing schema or infer additional information which is unobserved, but implied by the existing schemas.

In this way Rindova explains how reputations can stabilise observer's perceptions of organisations around these schemas. This stability makes reputation a valuable asset as it can serve to buffer organisations from immediate negative reactions when unfavourable events occur. The corollary of this is that reputations take time to build up and require consistency of cues over time.

Rindova uses this theoretical basis to show how corporate reputation develops in information-dense environments, defined as organisational fields. Within such a field, organisations and their audiences interact repeatedly, exchanging information. Rindova's model identifies three types of 'actors' who engage in this process of communicating information (Figure 3.5). Organisations seek to shape their environments; institutional intermediaries who specialise in collecting and transmitting information about these organisations; individuals who make assessments of organisations and decide about future transactions with them.

One of the model's main contributions is the identification of four distinct types of image generated within this framework:

Projected images - those communications that are created, controlled and communicated by the organisation.

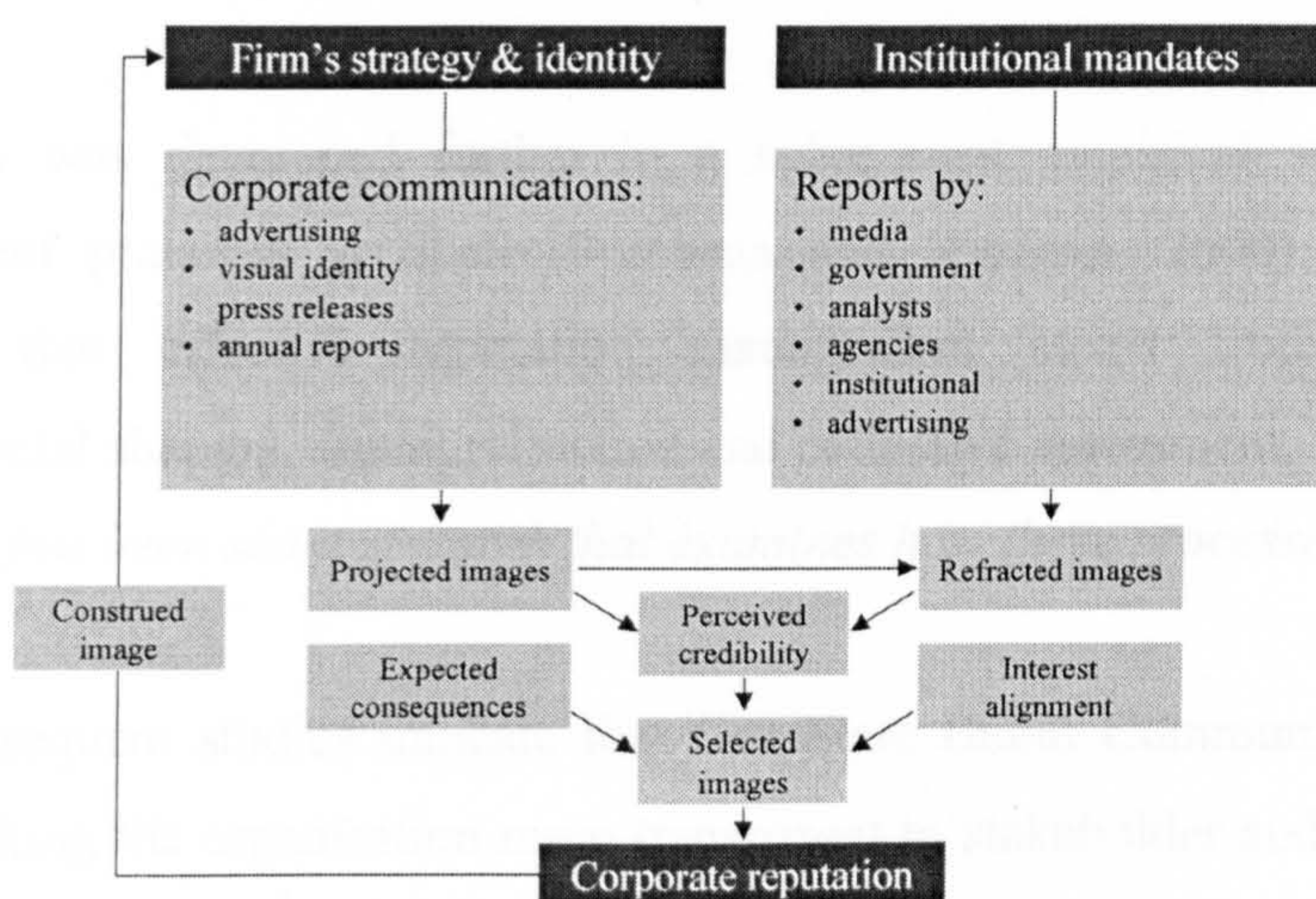
Refracted images - Images generated by intermediaries, who act as control nodes in these inter-organisational networks, transmitting and adding to information received from organisations. These actors can also create and disseminate a new set of images, defined as '*refracted*' because they derive from projected images, but acquire new content from the perspective of the intermediaries who interpret them.

Selected images - confronted with information and images from both organisation and intermediaries, individuals compare these images and select images based upon the individual's level of interaction with the firm, interest alignment and the perceived credibility of the communicator.

Construed images - a further definition arises from the perceptions of individuals within the organisation in terms of what they believe outside observers think of the

organisation. These images arise because organisations attend to reputations not only as valuable assets but also as reflections of themselves in institutional mirrors.

Figure 3.5 Image and Reputation formation process - Rindova (1997)



This complex model informs the researcher's understanding in a number of ways. First, it provides a process that identifies where Corporate Brand Management practices operate: the area of projected images and refracted images. Secondly, the model highlights important distinctions between the different types of images created by the organisation and other parties. And finally, it emphasises the crucial role of Corporate Communication in a complex interactive organisational field where consistency of cues is vital to establish a corporate reputation in stakeholders' minds.

Rindova's model suggests that organisations need to work towards creating corporate brand consistency in their activities and communications, but without indicating how this can be achieved. This view is also supported by empirical research conducted by the author with Fombrun (Fombrun and Rindova, 1998) on the reputation management strategies of leading US and UK companies. Their survey found that companies with a

more positive reputation appeared to project their core mission and identity in a more systematic and consistent fashion than companies with lower reputation rankings. Further, their analysis highlighted the fact that those companies also impart more information, not only about their products, but also about a range of issues relating to their operations, identity and history. These findings led the authors to conclude *'In sum these analyses indicate that communication benefits may result, not only from the amount and frequency of communications, but from a variety of issues about itself that a firm reveals through its communications'*.

This view was developed further in a subsequent empirical study of Reputation management practices at Shell (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000) where the authors conclude that effective reputation management stems from three processes; environmental shaping, signal refraction and collective assessment. They also conclude that *'there has been scant research that examines how these processes actually operate'*.

These subsequent studies indicate that Corporate Brand Communications play a key role in making the organisation more transparent to stakeholder audiences and that this increased familiarity can help audiences ascribe a better reputation to the organisation. The gap in this argument is the acknowledged lack of understanding of how an organisation actually manages such processes.

Narrowing the gap between brand identity and reputation: Harris and de Chernatonay's model (2001)

The recent model proposed by Harris and de Chernatonay (2001) represents a further evolution in the attempts to operationalise Corporate Brand Management. This evolution is marked by a widening of the mix of elements and clearer articulation of the process that links brand identity to corporate reputation.

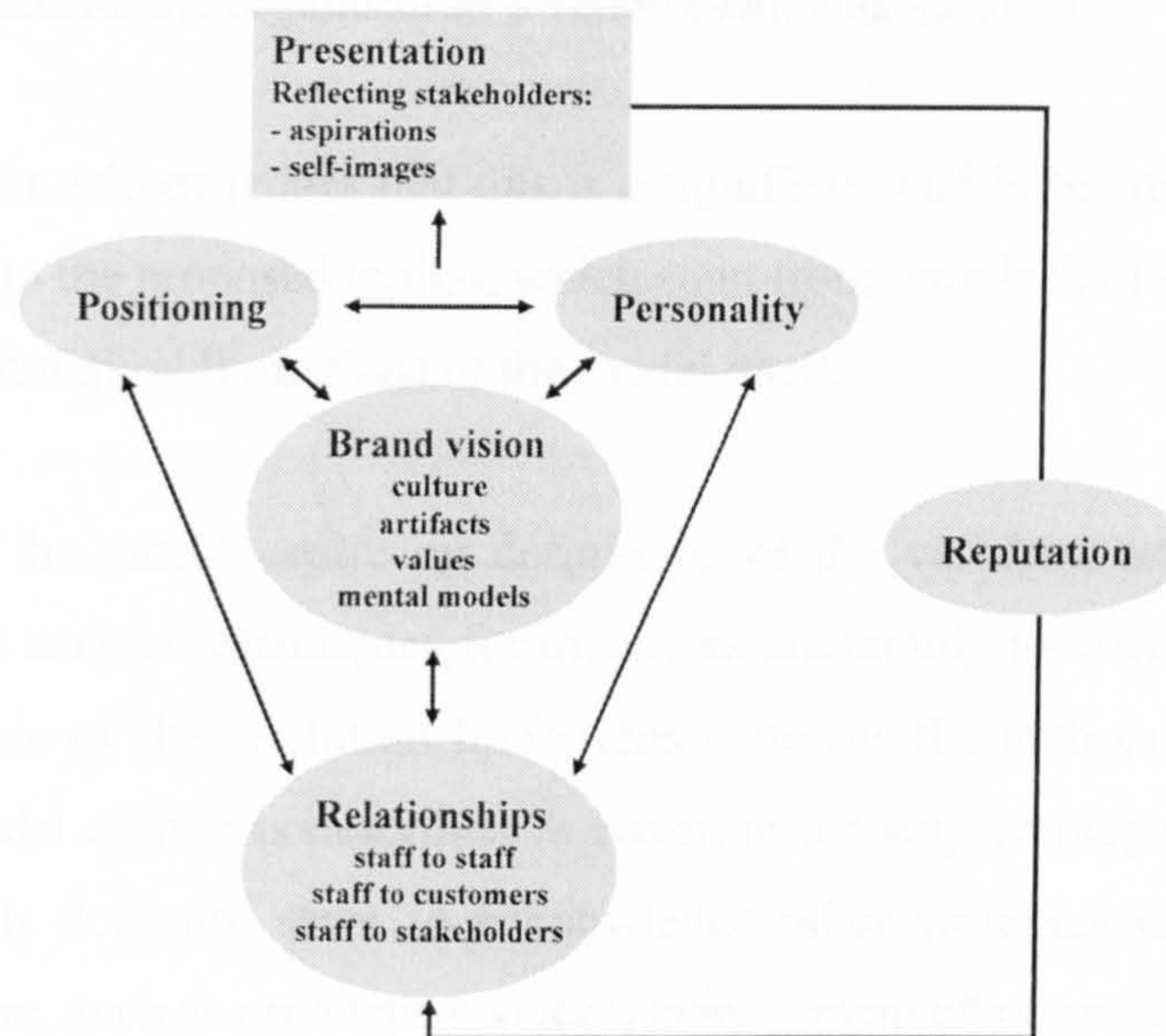
This paper also focuses on the implications of managing internal brand resources within a framework that envisages six main components: vision, culture, positioning, personality, relationships and presentation.

The main contribution of this model (Figure 3.6) is the clarification of a broader set of corporate brand variables and the conceptualisation of brand building as a process of narrowing the gap between brand identity and corporate reputation. The authors also extend brand management from the responsibility of the CEO to a team '*comprising those people responsible for designing and developing a brand strategy*'.

Despite these positive contributions, the Harris and de Chernatonay model still has significant limitations. First, as the authors acknowledge this model is not based on empirical data. Secondly, the broader definition of the corporate brand variables concentrates almost exclusively on the intangible elements of the brand. Thirdly, the authors present the model as a closed loop that can help to close the gap between current external reputation and existing brand identity. This appears to exclude the possibility of an organisation that wishes to reposition or evolve its existing corporate brand ahead of stakeholders' perceptions.

The paper is also unclear on the mechanisms that managers can adopt, referring to the use of independent facilitators and the use of dialectical inquiry (DI) and devil's advocacy (DA) as suitable mechanisms for brand management. Beyond these points the authors do not provide clear, practical insights on how managers should apply this model in terms of tools and techniques.

Figure 3.6 Harris and de Chernatonay model (2001)



Conducting gap analyses with three key variables: Hatch and Schultz's corporate branding toolkit (2001)

Hatch and Schultz (2001), in their most recently published work in this field, point to four key management benefits in managing the corporate brand. These are reduction in costs for advertising and marketing activity, providing a halo effect for products through corporate association, giving external customers a sense of community and creating common ground inside the organisation.

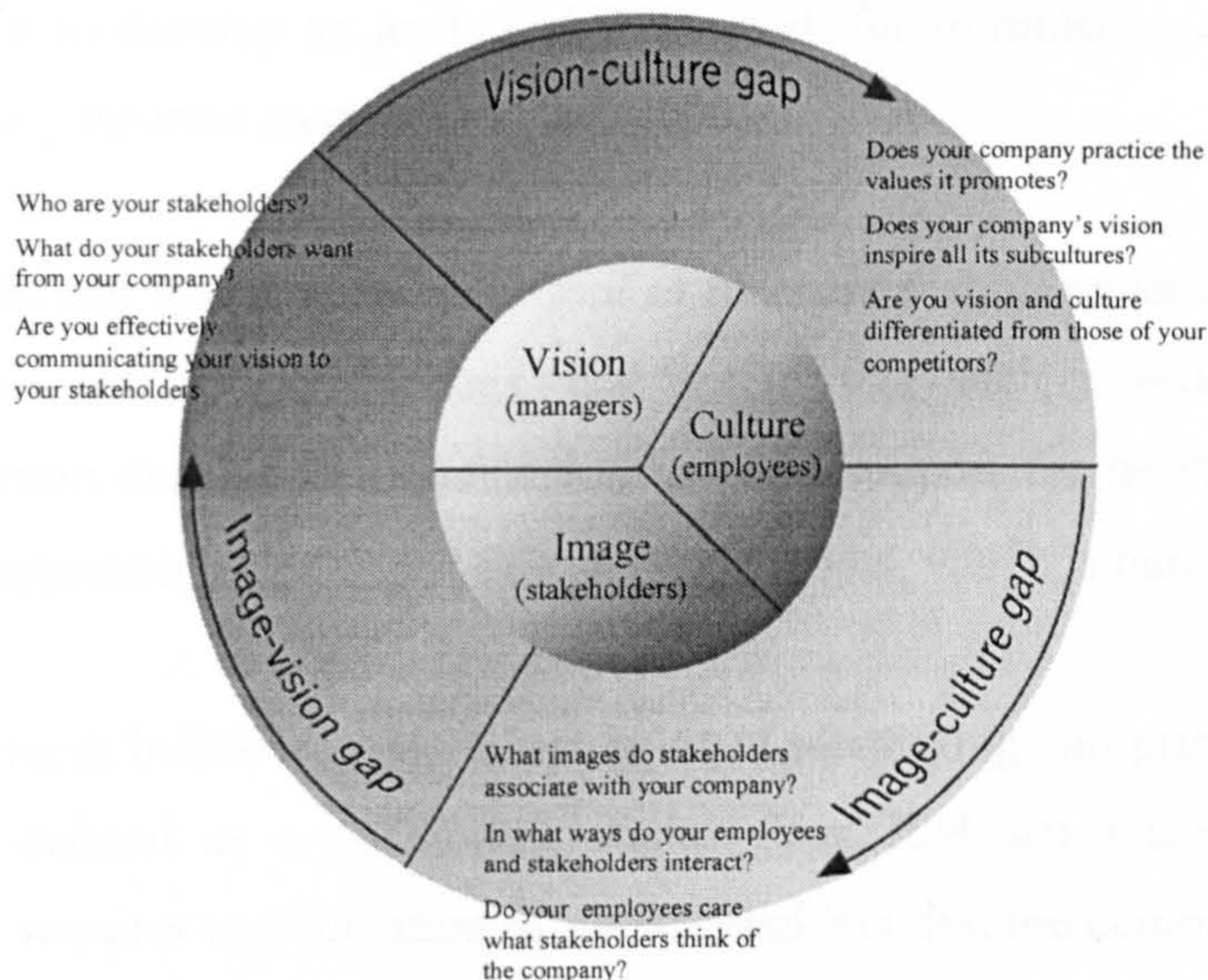
The authors point to the need to create a corporate brand strategy and highlight that *'creating a corporate brand is both complicated and nuanced'*. In offering a process to tackle this complexity Hatch and Schultz state that they have drawn on their work for over 100 companies in a 10-year period. The authors claim that effective Corporate Brand Management requires the alignment of three *'essential, independent'* elements. Each of these three elements (vision, culture and image) is driven by a different

constituency (management, employees and stakeholders). The argument then follows that managers need to identify where these three elements are mis-aligned, and a series of diagnostic questions are proposed within a framework to link these three variables (Figure 3.7). The authors also highlight the importance of integrated communications practices to communicate the organisation's vision to all stakeholders.

Whilst the researcher acknowledges that this is a significant and influential paper, there are still limitations to the proposed toolkit, which stem from both lack of clear empirical substantiation and structural limitations of the model itself.

The limitations of the model centre on definitions of the variables and the broader applicability of gap analysis techniques for managers attempting to evolve a corporate brand. One example of the definition limitations concerns the authors' definition of culture. In this model culture is described as covering the way employees *'feel about the company'*. This does not seem to acknowledge other variables that can define organisational culture, such as products, services, management ethos and networks.

Figure 3.7 Hatch and Schultz corporate branding tool kit (2001)



A further limitation is the focus on a cyclical process of gap analysis. Whilst this may indeed help managers identify mis-alignments it does not appear to provide guidance on what managers need to do to drive change to a corporate brand. This limitation is, in part, recognised by the authors who describe the model as a useful tool for identifying problem areas, but state that *'the hard work of developing specific solutions and implementing them belongs to you and your team'*.

In summary the Hatch and Schultz model does move us towards a greater understanding of the tools required to manage a corporate brand. It does however still fall short of offering a comprehensive picture of these tools, preferring to indicate what questions need to be asked rather than making explicit the processes for resolving Corporate Brand Management issues.

Identifying the crucial role of Corporate Brand Communications in developing a sustainable corporate story: Van Riel (1995, 2000)

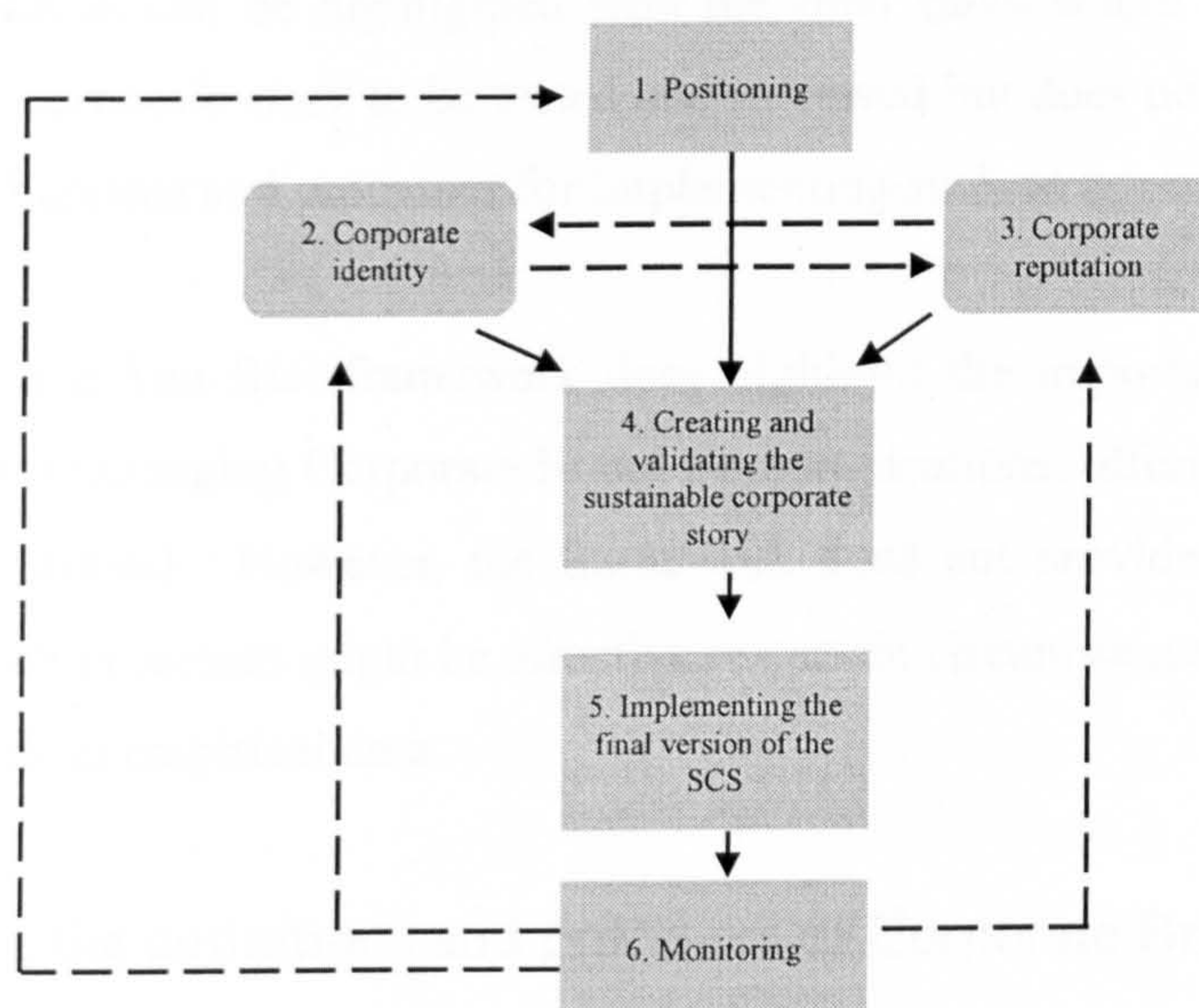
Chapter Two described how a number of authors have recently pointed to the crucial role played by the active management of Corporate Communications in effective Corporate Brand Management. A key figure in this debate is Van Riel who pioneered study in the area of Corporate Communication (1995) and has recently built on this earlier work to develop an analytical framework for formulating and implementing a *'sustainable corporate story'* (Van Riel, 2000).

Van Riel defines this concept as a *'tool to increase mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders'* and asserts that such a structured approach to communication enables an organisation to build support for its strategic goals. The structured approach is developed as a six-stage model, which is outlined in Figure 3.8.

This framework builds from an initial point of identifying and prioritising stakeholder audiences, defined as a positioning stage. Van Riel states that finding the right positioning requires consideration of all stakeholders that the company *'depends upon'* and that these can be assessed using power, legitimacy and urgency criteria developed

by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997). This approach to positioning creates some difficulties both in terms of treatment of cross-over stakeholders (those that interact with the organisation in more than one mode, for example, employee shareholders) and that the relative power and influence of different stakeholders can shift over time.

Figure 3.8 Van Riel framework for developing sustainable corporate story (2000)



The second stage in the model outlines methods for generating a view of actual and desired corporate identity with key individuals inside the organisation, through the use of focus groups and generation of key descriptive words that can be ascribed to the organisation.

A third stage of activity is identified outside the organisation via reviews of published reputation rankings and surveys to establish a point of reference for subsequent activity. This information would then be analysed with that generated in stage two to create a ‘promise statement’ generated by a select group within the organisation and validated via a process of internal discussion and external testing via survey methods. Whilst this

is acknowledged by the author as the crucial phase in the process, the methods outlined are cost and resource intensive and little empirical data is delivered to support the conceptual nature of the activities described.

An important contribution of the fifth stage described is the identification of the need for '*common starting points (CSP's)*' (Van Riel, 1995, 2000) as stepping-stones to developing the sustainable corporate story. However, the author limits the definition of these CSP's to central organisation values and does not consider other options, which could act as points of focus and alignment for individuals involved in this activity. A similar weakness can be highlighted with the final stage where the author states the need for the corporate story to be tested and reviewed but does not offer further insight into the mechanisms and processes for implementing such an approach.

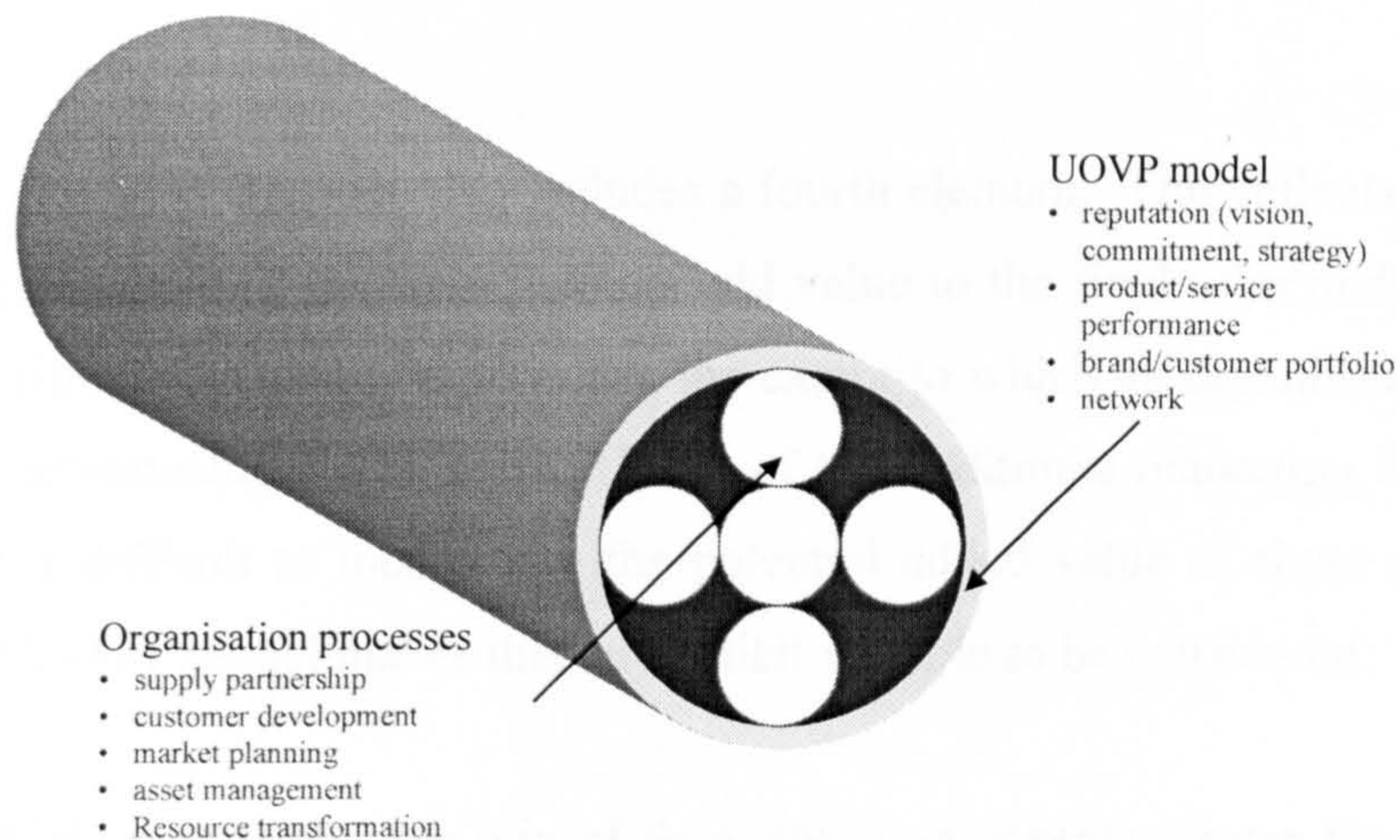
In summary the Van Riel framework does highlight the importance of developing a framework for managing Corporate Brand Communications, offering a number of tools that can be utilised. However, the framework does not provide a clear and holistic guide to which processes might be effective in certain circumstances and fails to ground his framework in empirical data.

Developing the definitions and processes of Corporate Brand Management: Knox and Maklan's UOVP model (1998)

The UOVP (Unique Organisation Value Proposition) was developed in the marketing field, by Knox and Maklan (1998), in response to their view that the traditional marketing tool kit does not help organisations to build a sustainable marketing proposition.

The UOVP planning process is proposed as a methodology for bridging the gap between brand and customer value and aligning an organisation's value-producing business processes to create a differentiated customer offer. The key contribution of this model is that it offers a bridging mechanism for re-interpreting brand and customer value across the organisation. It does this by integrating the company's core business

Figure 3.9 Knox and Maklan UOVP model (1998)



However, as the preceding chapter highlighted, these traditional tools are no longer enough to deliver sufficient levels of differentiation in competitive markets. One of the strategic roles proposed for the UOVP model is to determine the measures of performance that customers use to value the organisation's products and services.

Product Brand and Customer Portfolio - The UOVP model also includes elements beyond reputation and functional performance, such as the organisation's portfolio of product brands and customers. Knox and Maklan assert that the UOVP model, with its richer mix of variables, offers organisations a way to align the management of different sub-brands within the organisation and its customer groups. This also reflects the fact that there is often an inherent trade-off between the transaction focus of the traditional marketing brand USP and the more recent marketing focus on building customer relationships.

Management of the UOVP model is proposed as a means to resolve this trade-off and also create a corporate brand presence that allows companies to hold relationships with key stakeholders both as a series of product brands and as an organisation. This highlights another important contribution of the model in that the product brand is modelled as one component of the UOVP, a portion of customer value and not the object of it.

Network - The UOVP model also includes a fourth element. This reflects the extent to which an organisation's business partners add value to the final offer and the visibility of this contribution generally determines the extent to which an organisation brands its network of relationships. The narrow focus of the traditional marketing USP and 4 Ps tools make it difficult to incorporate the potential added value of these alliances. In contrast the UOVP model makes this an explicit variable to be considered.

Knox and Maklan state that the mix of these four components creates the organisation brand and the means by which it is differentiated from its competitors. They also offer a cyclical process for UOVP brand building, which starts by establishing a clear understanding of the main drivers of customer value and its impact on the key business processes through the business.

The UOVP model appears to offer a greater insight into the development of Corporate Brand Management practices than previous models for a number of reasons. First, it extends the traditional marketing USP approaches to reflect the organisation's total value adding capacity. Secondly, the four '*higher marketing variables*' proposed by the authors offer a framework, which reflects the complexity of most organisations and combines elements from both the marketing and organisational fields. Thirdly, the adoption of these four broader components offers a set of '*common starting points*' (Van Riel, 1995) from which a cross-disciplinary team within the organisation can begin to manage the corporate brand.

The limitations of the model are that it is primarily conceptual, although the authors highlight that it draws on a previous body of empirical research. Further, it offers only

limited insight on how organisations should use and develop the four higher marketing definitions, particularly for the reputation component.

Identifying the best practices of Corporate Brand Management: Balmer's models (1999, 2001a, 2001b)

Balmer has been one of the most prolific authors in this field in recent years, with a number of notable papers that address the operationalisation of Corporate Brand Management. These recent papers have traced the evolution of the field from his 1995 paper, which signalled the transition from macro to micro models of the system. In reviewing the development of Balmer's approach to the field, the researcher has focused on three main papers (Balmer and Soenen, 1999; Balmer, 2001a, Balmer 2001b), which make four key contributions to our understanding of the emerging field of Corporate Brand Management.

The first contribution (Balmer and Soenen, 1999) is the distinction between the elements that make up the corporate brand (defined in this paper as business identity) and the elements required to manage this mix. This builds from an observation that in previous models of '*strategic corporate identity management*', there is a tendency for many authors in the field to confuse the elements that comprise the corporate identity and those involved in its management. In the Balmer and Soenen model the corporate identity mix is defined as having three dimensions:

Mind - defined as those elements of an organisation's corporate identity, which '*are the product of more or less conscious decisions*'. This definition includes vision, philosophy, strategy, product and service performance, brand architecture and the nature of corporate ownership.

Soul - defined as including 'softer' issues including core values, organisation sub-cultures and internal images held by employees.

Voice - defined as the multi-faceted ways in which organisations communicate.

In a subsequent paper (Balmer, 2001b) these elements were developed and

re-categorised as culture, structure, communication and strategy. The model then adds a further set of variables, which must be addressed when managing the organisation's corporate identity (Figure 3.10):

Environment - the external political, economic and technological factors, which must be monitored by an organisation to ensure that its corporate identity remains salient.

Stakeholders - an organisation needs to develop and prioritise specific communications strategies for each audience based on analysis of various audiences' perceptions.

Reputations - the overarching impression of an organisation developed by audiences in terms of an organisation's country of origin, sector and senior management.

This model contributes to the debate by building on the mix of elements proposed in earlier models (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986) and highlights the need for a management mix that includes external 'environmental' factors. It also points to the importance of defining the stakeholder audiences as part of the communication process.

A second contribution of this body of work is the identification of five different types of identity (2001a), based on research conducted with leading brand consultancies. This typology (actual, communicated, conceived, ideal and desired) highlighted the fact that organisations are shaped by multiple identities, and proposed a diagnostic tool (*Dr Balmer's AC2ID Test*) which could help identify mis-alignments in the system.

Whilst this diagnostic tool indicates the need to align multiple identities in a similar way to the Rindova image cascade model, it goes further to show how these problems can be identified within the system. The major limitations with the model however are that it does not go further in explaining how these mis-alignments can be corrected.

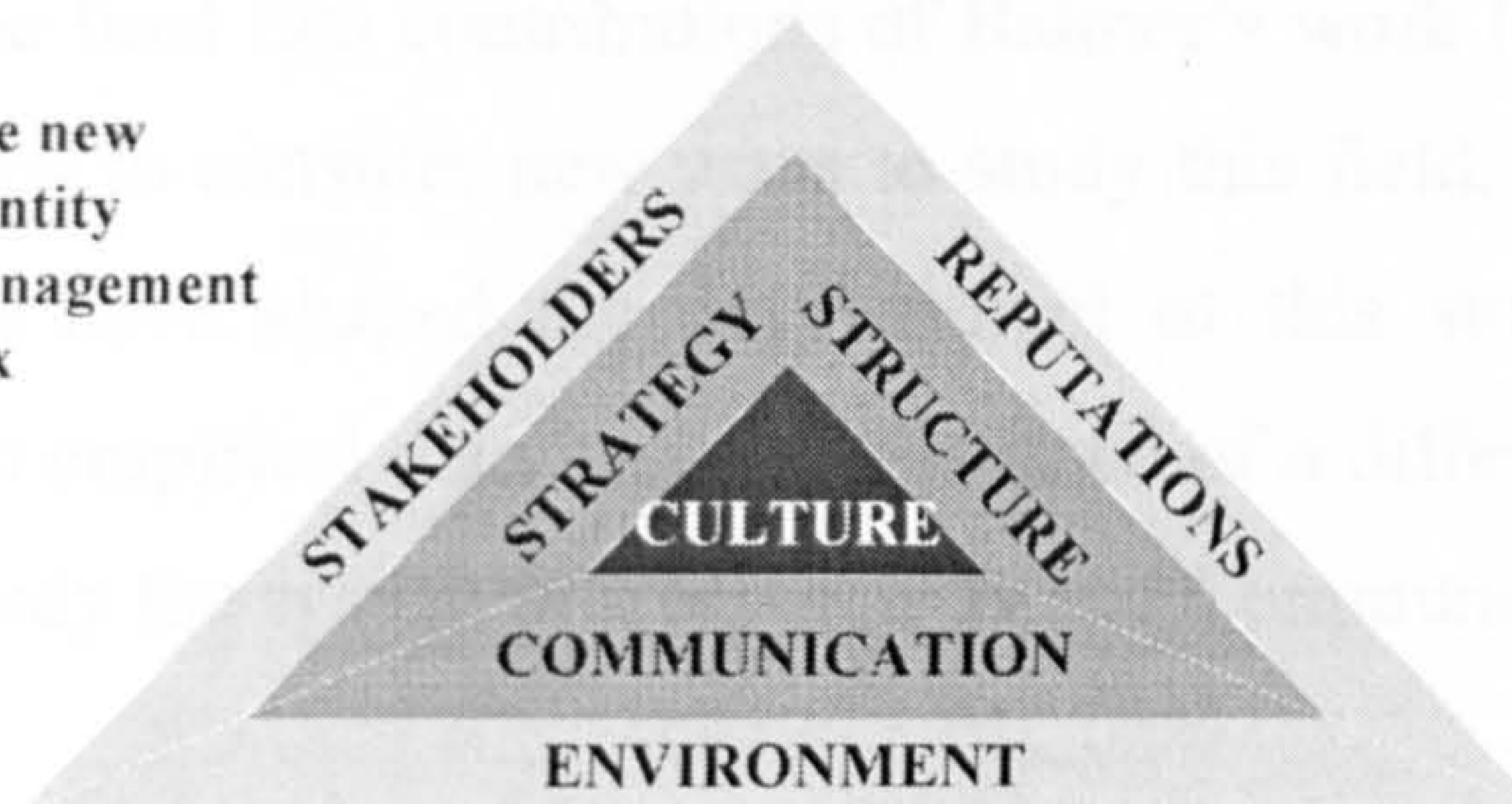
A third important contribution, in the context of this study, is the methodological implications raised in the most recent paper reviewed (Balmer, 2001b). In this paper Balmer points to the inappropriateness of the positivistic research paradigm in studying this field and calls for theory building research, suitable for investigating an emerging field.

Figure 3.10 Corporate Identity management mix - Balmer (2001b)

a) The new identity mix



b) The new identity management mix



Balmer also cites Gioia (1998) in highlighting that the new corporate brand mix involves *'marrying the interpretative lens with the functionalist lens'*. This indicates the need to break down the boundaries between research paradigms.

A fourth main contribution of this body of work is the overview of the field in terms of research possibilities (Balmer, 2001b). Here the author points to the *'paucity of empirical academic research'*. Balmer attributes this to the problems of access for researchers in studying an organisational phenomenon that is particularly sensitive, concluding that *'researchers are likely to experience acute difficulty in researching changes of business identity'*.

Summary

The preceding analysis of recent attempts to operationalise the practice of Corporate Brand Management show that the latest models are beginning to address issues of what tools and processes can be adopted by organisations to control the system of Corporate Brand Communication. However, there is a clear lack of empirically grounded data to support the development of a robust model for either this phenomenon or the wider concept of Corporate Brand Management.

It is this fact and the final two contributions of Balmer's work (2001b) that support the researcher's approach to consider new ways to study this field. The following chapter explains how these have shaped the development of this study and how this new approach yields rich empirical data by using the issue of a different means of access as an opportunity to study the system of Corporate Brand Communications at first hand.

Chapter Four: Philosophical Underpinning. From positivism to participatory paradigms

The previous two chapters have argued that the wider field of Corporate Brand Management has reached an important point in its development. The increasing academic and practitioner focus on the field points to the saliency of organisations actively managing their corporate brands. If Corporate Brand Management in general, and Corporate Brand Communication in particular, is to move from an academic construct to a functional management process, there is a clear need to understand how this system works and how organisations can manage this system effectively.

Chapter Three also indicated some of the weaknesses of recent attempts to operationalise the broader system of Corporate Brand Management. In order to address this identified gap in the literature the researcher first confronted the issue of philosophical perspective for the study. This requirement was guided by Kuhn's (1962) definition of the need for *'a coherent philosophical and methodological system for the conduct of scientific research including a commensurate theory of validation'*.

In framing the Research Questions for this study the researcher was intent on building knowledge that could contribute to both the theory and practice of Corporate Brand Communication. The literature review also highlighted the fact that positivist methods, designed as 'inquiry from the outside', detached observer studies create problems of relevance for practice and therefore limit the development of theory in the field (Balmer 1998, 2001b). This point is supported by recent experiences of studying systems in other fields such as information systems (Jonsson, 1991), which state that positivistic scientists have distinct limitations of relevance as they are free from responsibility for the applications of the outcomes of research (Reason, 1998).

In response to this impasse, the study of corporate branding has recently seen a trend towards methodological pluralism, with the adoption of qualitative research paradigms based on constructivism and interpretism (Hatch and Schultz, 1998; Balmer and Soenen, 1999). However, application of these paradigms in the context of this study

still present difficulties as their adoption in the field have, to date, generated further models and typologies without significantly deepening understanding of the systems involved in managing a corporate brand. This stems, in part, from the philosophical limitations of this paradigm. That is, the need to maintain a balance between subjectivity and objectivity for studying a system of Corporate Brand Communication where change is an expected consequence of the study.

In attempting to address these shortfalls the researcher examined more action-orientated forms of inquiry (Peters and Robinson, 1984). This recognises the growing body of literature that highlights the potential for integrating reflection and action, theory and practice, to produce empirically based frameworks that are relevant to practice (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). This view finds support from a number of fields including social research (Heron 1981; Reason, 1998), philosophy (Skolimowski, 1994) and corporate branding (Balmer, 1998; Ind, 1998).

However, action-orientated inquiry methods have received criticism in some quarters on grounds of methodological indiscipline, proximity to consulting and contextuality. These approaches have also been described as a fundamental choice between rigour (scientific research) and relevance in the form of Action Research (Argyris and Schon, 1991).

In addressing these issues, the researcher has examined the basis for these claims and cites the work of Peppard (2000) and Jonsson (1991) in the Information Systems field. These authors, among others, claim that the frequent dismissal of action-oriented methods as non-scientific stems from the widespread practice of its assessment through positivistic theories of validation (Eden and Huxham, 1996, Susman and Evered, 1978). Instead, research rigour should be determined by the principles and canons of the paradigm that govern the particular method adopted (Kuhn, 1962, Gummesson, 1988), as summarised in Figure 4.1.

The participatory paradigm has recently been promoted as a response to the limitations with the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. The paradigm, which has its

Figure 4.1 Qualitative paradigms compared

	INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM	CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM	PARTICIPATORY PARADIGM
Ontology	Subjective nature of social world. Plurality and co-existence of realities.	Relativism. Local and specific constructed realities.	Unity of natural and social world. Outer world as objectively represented. Humans are integral part of this world and self-determining.
Epistemology	Interpretations and meaning systems.	Transactional / subjectivist. Created knowledge.	Co-creation of definitions of reality.
Methodology	Interpretive understanding.	Hermeneutical. Dialectical.	Participation in collaborative action inquiry. Primacy of the practical. Use of language grounded in shared experiential context.
Research practice	Dual role of scientist: immersion and objectification.		Scientist as co-researcher and co-subject.
Validation	Inter-subjectivity. Authenticity. Trustworthiness.	Trustworthiness. Authenticity.	Congruence of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowledge. Iterative research cycle. Enactment of outcomes.

Source: Peppard (2000) based on Guba and Lincoln (1994), Heron and Reason (1997)

foundations in participatory philosophy (Skolimowski, 1994), states that forms of participatory research must be collaborative and transcend the orthodox, bridging the separation between researcher and subject. This type of *'inquiry from the inside'*,

explicitly involves the research subjects in the study. This offers the potential to overcome the epistemological limitations of interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which, as noted earlier, struggle to maintain a balance between subjectivity and objectivity in the search for knowledge (Peters and Robinson, 1984; Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

In the researcher's opinion the participatory paradigm is well suited to the study of the system of Corporate Brand Communication. First, participation, with its emphasis on the creation of knowledge through intervention allows the study to build an empirically robust model of the system of Corporate Brand Communication. Secondly, participation fulfils the requirements of the currency of research output by merging the place where the knowledge is created and disseminated. This reflects the dual nature of the phenomenon as an academic field of inquiry and an emerging management discipline (Ind, 1998, Balmer, 1998). Participation also contributes to the advancement of theory in the field by offering greater understanding of the processes involved in this under-researched area of the literature. Thirdly, participation allows for the continuous innovation of knowledge to reflect the emerging nature of academic inquiry in this field.

Participatory principles guiding this study

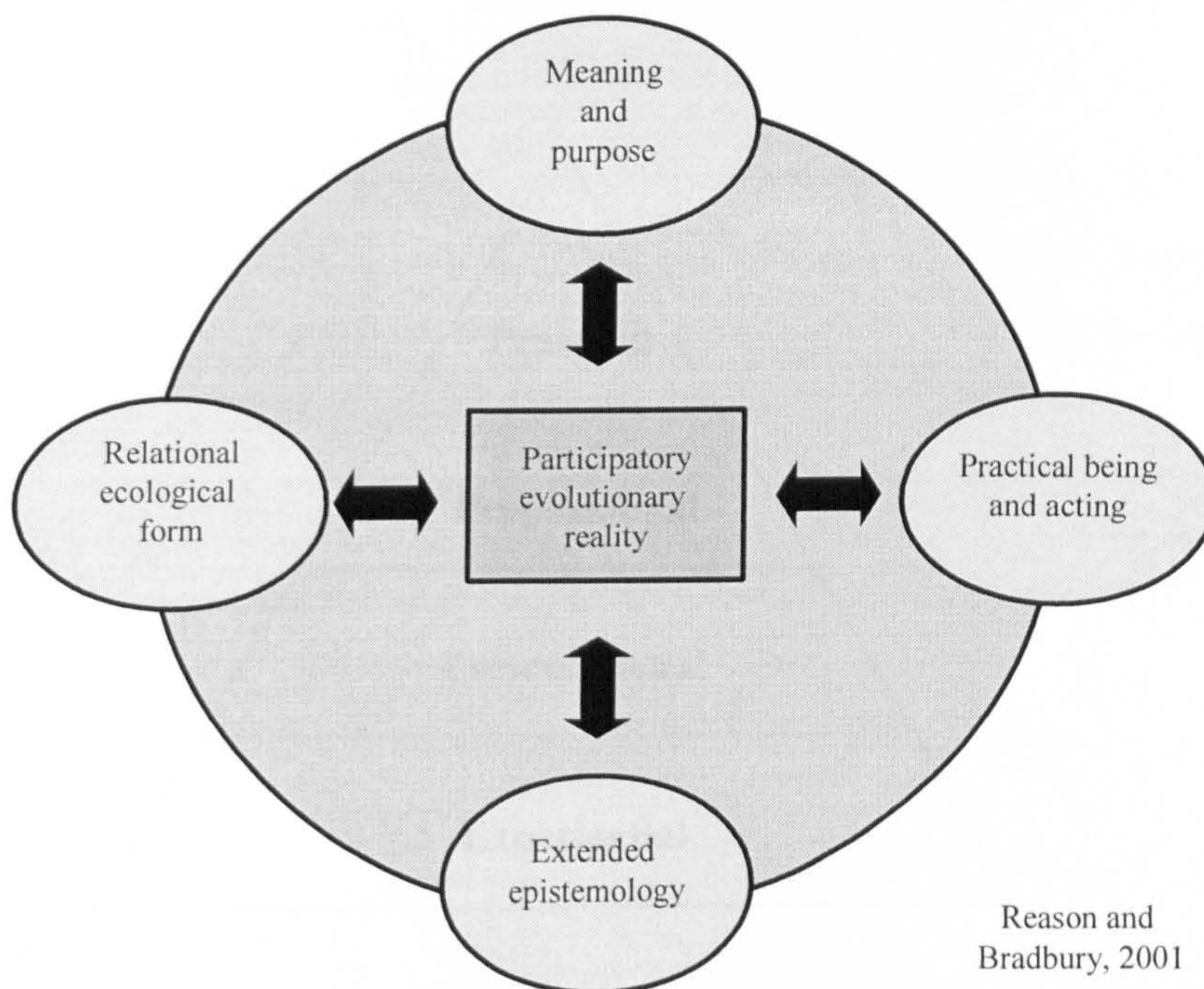
The participatory paradigm is typified by a set of principles (Reason 1998), which need to be made explicit in the context of this study. The **Ecological** principle is motivated in participatory philosophy by the concern for the environment. In the context of this study case research is motivated by the desire to develop knowledge in the practice context, thus contributing to the growth of understanding in the field. The **Epistemological** principle provides a theory of validation against which the legitimacy of knowledge claims can be assessed through researcher and research subjects co-creating and co-implementing knowledge. The **Spiritual** principle offers a commitment to using the scientific process to improve human understanding.

The **Aesthetic** principle acknowledges that participatory methods account for the human consequences of change. In shaping change through the actions of their involvement,

the researcher is acknowledging the research subjects' participation in shaping their own reality. The **Political** principle recognises the capacity of the research subjects to create knowledge through their actions and not simply receive knowledge from the outside. Finally, the **Methodological** principle acknowledges the intervention of the researcher into the empirical world, recognising that participatory inquiry is experiential and research is grounded in the experience of those involved within their own context.

The dimensions of the participatory worldview have been summarised by Reason and Bradbury (2001) as containing five key elements (Figure 4.2) and these elements have been used to guide and inform this study.

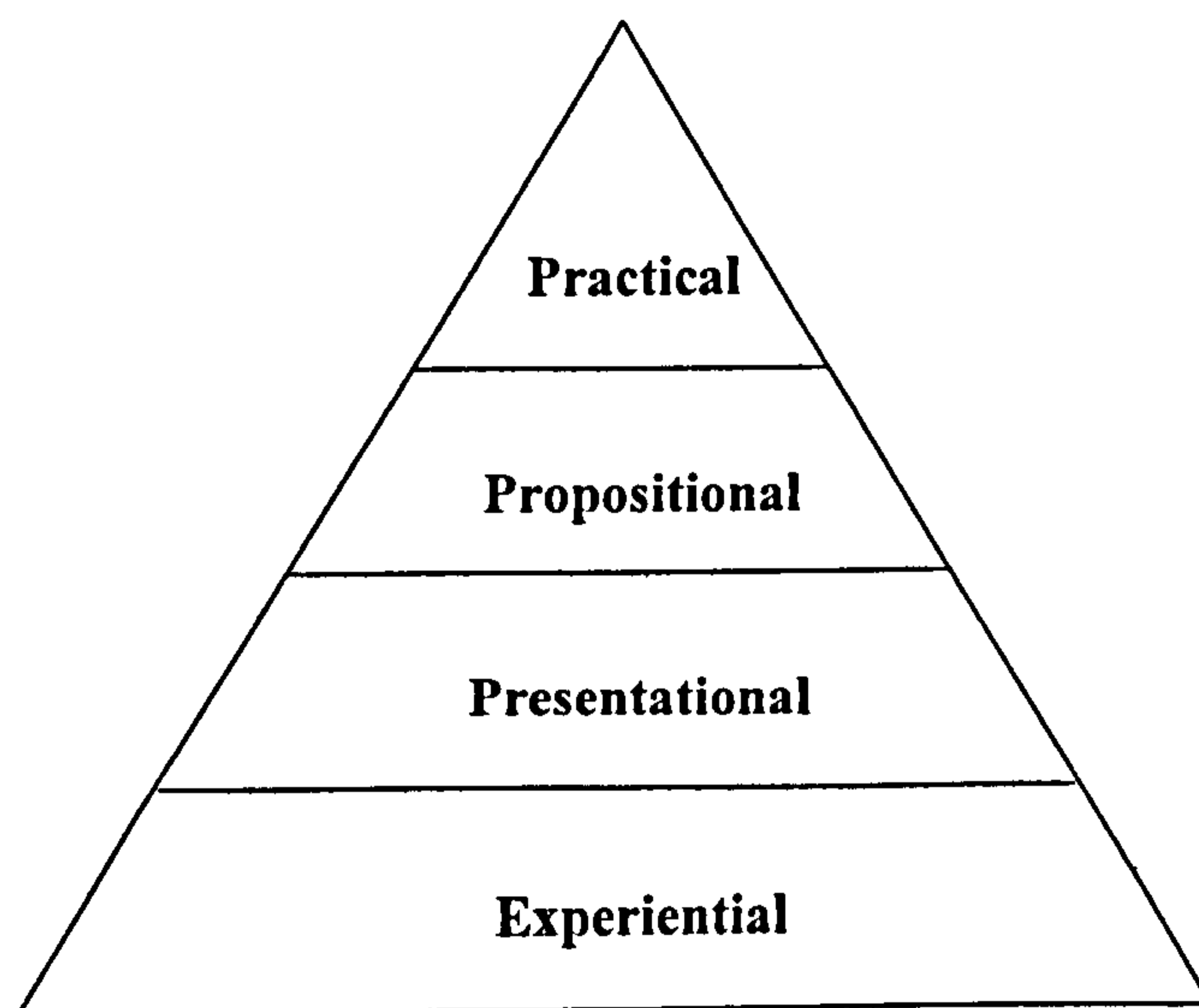
Figure 4.2 Dimensions of a participatory worldview



Knowledge creation in the participatory paradigm

A central question surrounds how knowledge is created in the participatory paradigm. This point has been addressed by Heron (1981), who identified four distinct types of knowledge, which are generated by participatory inquiry: **Practical knowledge** expressed in the skills and competencies learned from the inquiry process; **Propositional knowledge**, which is expressed in theories about the world from conclusions in the research; **Presentational knowledge** which emerges from the filtering of experience and its representation in concepts, metaphors and stories; **Experiential knowledge**, which is gained from the direct contact with the empirical world and is mainly tacit and difficult to surface in other paradigms (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Participatory paradigm and knowledge creation



Source: Reason (1999), Heron (1981)

Heron (1981) claims that these four distinct ways of knowing constitute an '*extended epistemology*' which spans the realm of theory and practice. The nature of participatory inquiry is that it cycles through these four phases of knowledge repeatedly. This cyclical model also acts as a strong validity check, where validity is enhanced in

creating and enacting these findings through those participating in the inquiry. This latter point is important in the context of this study as it provides a robust defence against any methodological concerns over issues of rigour.

In summary, the researcher's decision to adopt the participatory paradigm for this study was based on a recognition that it offered an opportunity to move beyond descriptions of meaning systems and offered the potential to develop a more empirically robust model of Corporate Brand Communications. Further, freeing the study from the constraints of positivistic validation methods also enabled the researcher to make a new contribution to knowledge in this field. This contribution required adherence to the paradigmatic principles of a participatory approach, which necessitates the adoption of an open, cyclical method of data collection and analysis. Such an approach therefore builds validation into the inquiry process and monitors the relevance of the outcomes to practice.

Before detailing the development of an appropriate research design for conducting this study it was first deemed necessary to confront the issue of methodological rigour. As a first step in this process the researcher set out his theoretical underpinning for the study, which is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Theoretical Underpinning. Developing a robust framework for conducting intervention studies

The researcher has already noted the historic dominance of the positivistic paradigm in the Corporate Brand Management field, which has led to a bias towards quantitative research methods, especially in the marketing field (Balmer, 1997). Adopting a qualitative, participatory inquiry approach to this study involves a collaborative, reflexive and action-oriented process (Park, 1999). In selecting the most suitable method the researcher considered each of the four accepted types of participatory inquiry as summarised in Figure 5.1.

Action Research encompasses forms of research, which result from the involvement of the researcher within an organisation being studied, where members of the organisation take action based upon this intervention. This approach has been described as situations where the researcher's concern is to create organisational change whilst simultaneously studying the system (Clark, 1972). This view draws on the earlier work of Lewin (1946) who is recognised as the founding father of Action Research with his claim that *'the best way to understand something is to try and change it'*.

Action Research in this definition is not fully participatory, with the researcher defining the topic and attempting to build descriptions and explanations within the practice context itself. This is achieved by conducting intervention experiments to validate theories and propositions from research and effect change in practice. The nature of this inquiry, which involves theoretical framing, data collection and analysis, calls for a cycle of interaction between theory and practice to build knowledge and validate initial propositions.

Action Science, in contrast, seeks to develop a theory of action from the research context by highlighting and understanding the subjects' tacit theories-in-use. The aim of interventions in this context is the identification of these hidden agendas that subjects use in the practice context.

Figure 5.1 Typology of participatory inquiry

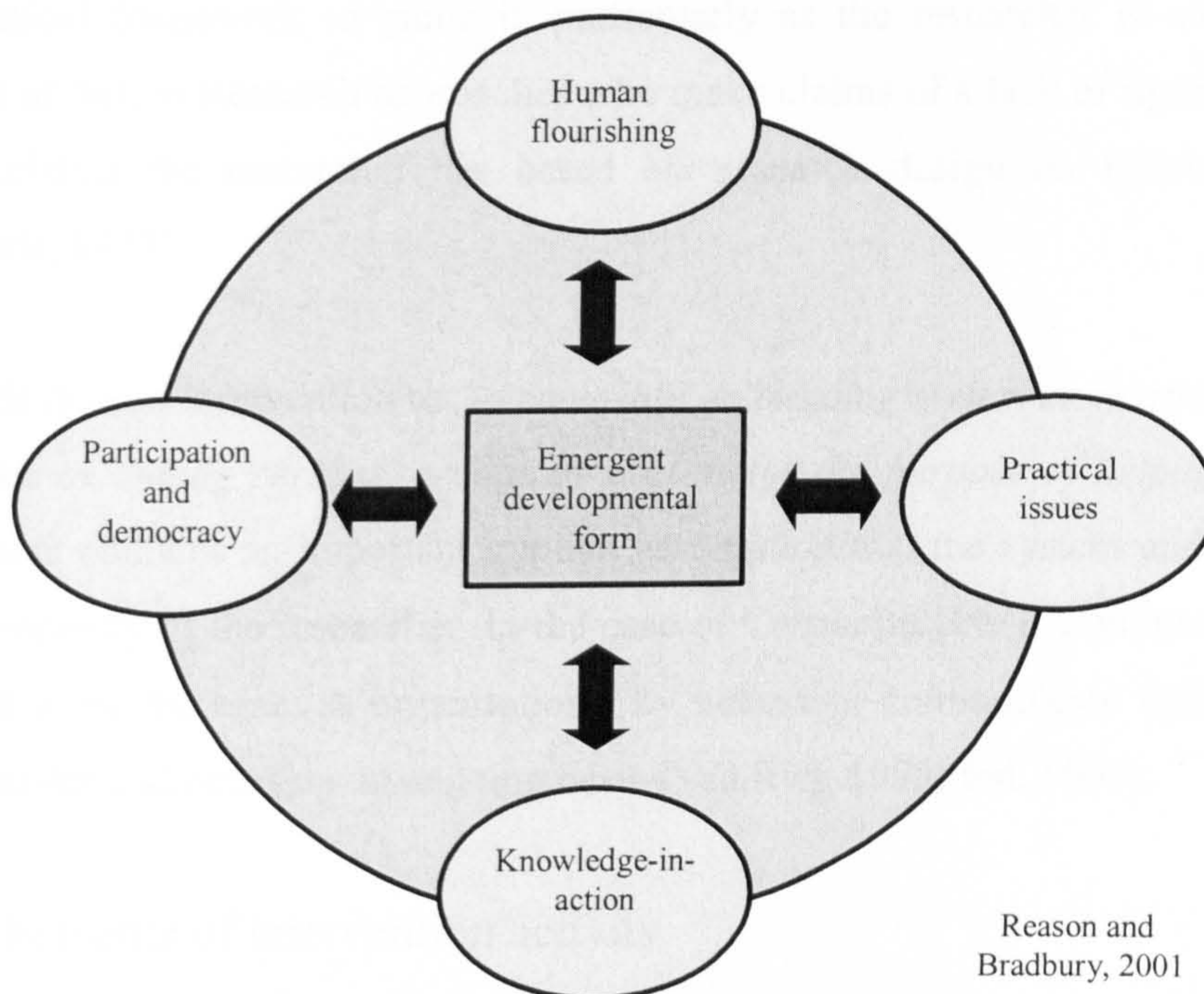
	Action Research	Action Science	Participatory action research	Co-operative inquiry
Concern	Uncovering of espoused theories of practitioners in practice context.	Emphasises the tacit theories-in-use that participants bring to practice and research.	Involves practitioners as both subjects and co-researchers. Commitment to action.	Involves practitioners as both subjects and co-researchers.
Aim	Builds descriptions and theories within the practice context.	Builds descriptions and theories within the practice context.	Commitment to social transformation.	Participants co-create results of the inquiry and thus their world.
Political ideology	Autocratic. Research on people.		Democratic. Research with people.	
Validation	Intervention experiments to test theories, hypotheses and effect change. Cycle of continuous interaction of theory and practice.	Intervention experiments to test theories, hypotheses and effect change.	Validation is built into the inquiry process through the strategy of research cycling. Participants build and test and enact theories and hypotheses.	

Sources: Peppard (2000), Argyris and Schon (1974), Checkland (1991), Reason (1994)

Participatory Action Research emerged from social research and aims to transform the status quo based upon the outcomes of the research. The level of involvement that the research subjects have in the research process distinguishes Participatory Action Research from Action Research. This distinction is further clarified by Heron (1981) who characterises the former as conducting research *with* people and the latter as conducting research *on* people.

Co-operative inquiry defines the far end of the intervention spectrum by acknowledging fully the contribution of the research subjects to all elements of the research process in terms of protocols, data collection, analysis and drawing conclusions from the findings.

Figure 5.2 Characteristics of Action Research



Each of these approaches, and their main characteristics (Figure 5.2), is distinguished from positivistic methods in the open and collaborative nature of the research process and involvement of the research subjects in the study. In addressing the needs of this particular study the researcher has adopted a Participatory Action Research approach. In attempting to build an empirically robust framework for Corporate Brand Communication, the study fulfils Reason’s (1998) objectives of empowerment (in this case of senior management) and the production of knowledge that is directly relevant to the research subjects taking part in the research (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). By adopting a participatory mode of research within a participatory paradigm the practice context also provides a strategy for validation. However, the researcher has noted that

Action Research is still an emerging developmental form (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) and thus needs to be theoretically and conceptually underpinned to bring assurance around issues of rigour and research practice.

Intervention Theory

Whilst this study is based on a clear research paradigm, it still needs an overall theoretical framework to guide it, particularly as the researcher is aware of certain critics of Action Research approaches who make claims of a lack of rigour. To minimise such claims the researcher has based his research design on Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973).

Argyris defines intervention as *'to enter into an ongoing system or relationship, to come between or among persons, groups or objects for the purpose of helping them'*. This statement contains an important implicit assumption that the system under study exists independently of the researcher. In the case of Corporate Brand Communication this is known to be the case, as organisations, by necessity, communicate with their various stakeholder audiences on an ongoing basis (Van Riel, 1995; Ind, 1998).

Requirements of intervention activity

Intervention Theory is based on three basic requirements of intervention activity: the generation of valid information; existence of free and informed choice; internal commitment. It is useful to examine the theoretical requirements for each and how they inform this particular study.

Valid information

It is clear that any good research design must generate data that is valid for the requirements of the study and its stated Research Questions. In terms of Intervention Theory, Argyris describes valid information as *'that which describes the factors, plus their inter-relationships that create a problem for the client system'*. Based upon this

definition Intervention Theory highlights a number of tests for checking the validity of information, including public verifiability, valid predication and control over the phenomena.

A further theoretical guide is provided by Argyris who states that all tests, if they are to be considered valid, must be conducted in ways that participants cannot, at will, make these events occur. The research design for this study, which included multiple cases, has therefore been designed to allow for public verifiability by participants in the process, but also has built in a cycle of reflection between each individual study. This allows the researcher to record his reflections on each study and test the valid prediction requirement across multiple cases.

Argyris also states that these tests for valid information have important implications for effective intervention activity. First, an interventionist's diagnosis must strive to represent the total client system and not just the viewpoint of a particular sub-group. In response to this point the research design, which details an intervention study of a defined process (Corporate Brand Communications), and works collectively with the senior management team, has been developed to guard against the problem.

A second implication stated in Intervention Theory is that the interventionist's diagnosis should include variables that can be manipulated by the research subjects and can be controlled enough so that if they are manipulated change will follow. By adopting a participatory approach the researcher has planned his study to ensure this criteria is also met.

Free and informed choice

Argyris stated that it is possible that the research subjects may wish to hand over complete responsibility to the researcher and that this must be resisted. Freedom of choice also suggests that the research subjects must have a clear objective for the intervention process and must be able to explore alternatives throughout the study. In response to this point the researcher's intervention method has been designed to ensure

a role as a facilitator working with the client team in developing alternative courses of action and sharing responsibility for the change programme.

Internal commitment

Intervention Theory also states that each member of the research team involved in the system must experience a high degree of ownership and feeling of responsibility about actions and choices made. This requirement was also used to guide the approach to intervention for this study. The researcher acted throughout each study as a facilitator of change whilst simultaneously studying the process as it developed. The researcher also created a clear intervention protocol for each study to educate and motivate participants in the study in terms of expectations and outputs at each stage. The fact that the researcher instigated this protocol distinguishes the study from the co-operative inquiry definition in Figure 5.1.

Implications for selecting suitable organisations for study

The primary intervention requirements, as outlined by Intervention Theory, also raised implications for the selection of suitable cases and the conduct of each intervention study. These are considered below under the following headings.

Congruence between effective intervention activity and effective client systems

According to the theory, a client system is effective to the extent that it can generate valid information, free choice and internal commitment. An effective intervention must, therefore, help a client system to learn how to solve a particular problem, but also how to operate more competently. This requirement guided the approach to intervention for this study by providing a clear demarcation between the boundaries of rigorous academic practice and consultancy. The three primary requirements were also used as criteria for selecting suitable client systems for study.

Argyris highlights the fact that the most suitable client systems will be open, capable of learning and linked to key decision points within the system. This criteria has guided the researcher to seek out suitable cases where there is a genuine desire for change and the senior management team are prepared to participate in the process. This guided the researcher's initial criteria when approaching target companies, by ensuring that each study would have active and sustained senior management support.

Adherence to the primary requirements minimises the probabilities of client and interventionist manipulation.

These three criteria were used as a guide to ensure that the process of data collection and data analysis reflected the need for effective intervention at each stage of the intervention cycle and to provide a framework for intervention and participation that guarded against accusations of methodology-based consulting.

Primary tasks are used as a criteria for leaving the client system

A number of prominent academics in the field of Action Research (Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Reason, 1998) have noted the potential difficulties in terminating an intervention. Given the time constraints in conducting multiple studies, these criteria were adopted to help the researcher judge when to leave the client system.

Primary tasks are related to the advancement of basic knowledge as well as practice

Argyris states that Intervention Theory should not be overly focused on change and is, by nature, capable of evolving. Therefore each individual study should be seen as having potential to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field. This criteria was reflected in the construction of the Research Questions for the study which balanced requirements to understand the process, monitor the communications output as a means to study systems effectiveness, and also examine the use of intervention approaches as a method of conducting research in this field.

In summary, Intervention Theory states that an interventionalist is someone who enters an on-going system (Corporate Brand Communications) to help generate valid information; to create conditions in which research subjects can make free and informed choices; to help them develop an internal commitment to their choices. Whilst the theory accepts that the interventionalist and research subjects may develop secondary tasks of change, the decision to select certain cases must be driven by the client's capacities to fulfil these three primary requirements.

Implications for research design

Intervention Theory informs this study in terms of rigour by providing clear guidance on the development of a robust approach to conducting intervention research, with Argyris stating that a systematic approach is a critical influence on the quality of effective intervention activity. Further, such activity must actively seek to strike a balance between rigorous methods and the need for valid information and client commitment. This leads Argyris to conclude that an exploratory researcher needs to have a more sustained relationship with the client than the researcher who has a specific hypothesis to test.

In applying Intervention Theory to this study, careful consideration was also given to the nature of the system and conditions under which individuals or groups tended to be '*competent or effective*' within a given system.

System definition

Argyris identifies three core activities of any system as the ability to achieve its objectives, maintain its internal environment and adapt or control the relevant external environment. How well a system accomplishes these core activities over time and in any given situation indicates its competence and effectiveness.

Relating these activities to the system of Corporate Brand Communications, the system's core activities were described as having an objective of creating a consistent

projection of the corporate brand; controlling the factors that created this consistency of projected images (Rindova, 1998); ensuring relevance of these projected images to intended audiences in the organisation's external environment.

Conditions recommended by Intervention Theory to foster system competence

Argyris points to a number of conditions that can guide a researcher in helping develop system competence. First, a high degree of psychological success will be experienced where leadership and power are shared in the research group and can be delegated to individuals to accomplish specific tasks. Secondly, the group members identify with the health of the system and care about its effectiveness. Thirdly, all group members are able to focus on the system and make a contribution to the process.

To help build this level of trust, the researcher invested time in each case engaging in preliminary discussions with client contacts on the nature of the client's system. This preliminary work ensured that there was a mutual understanding of the importance of the corporate brand and desire to improve the system of Corporate Brand Communications across the senior management team, and not just a few individual advocates.

The conditions Intervention Theory recommends to foster system effectiveness

Argyris states that the researcher must invest time and resources to build up trust and feelings of psychological success within the client team. However, he also states that it is possible to accomplish the primary tasks in a much shorter space of time. To achieve this, the client system must have a pressing problem to solve, with a highly motivated client team who are ready to co-operate openly to improve the system. Intervention Theory, therefore, suggests that a crucial role of the researcher is to create a climate of trust and openness in as short a timeframe as possible.

An examination of these underlying dimensions suggests that intervention relies on a number of interpersonal, small-group factors, a view supported by Argyris and Schön

(1978). It also places considerable emphasis on the personal qualities needed by the researcher, including confidence in the researcher's intervention philosophy; accurate perception of stressful reality and the ability to view stressful environments as learning experiences. These issues are considered below.

Confidence in own intervention philosophy

Argyris states that the researcher should have as complete and internally consistent a cognitive map as possible of Intervention Theory. In preparation for this study, the researcher studied the literature on theories of action and Action Research approaches before developing an intervention cycle approach, which is explained in the following chapters.

Argyris, also counsels that the researcher must be as aware as possible of the motives being fulfilled when making an intervention, and be guided by a '*well thought-out, articulated and internalised intervention strategy*'. This demanded a level of control, understanding and self-awareness that the researcher had developed over the last 15 years in his role as a consultant.

Accurate perception of stressful reality

Intervention Theory states that a researcher must be able to perceive accurately his own internal world and the events going on around him. For this study the development of an intervention approach which maps out separate, but interlinked, action and reflection cycles helped to provide a clear framework for intervention. This allowed the researcher to capture reflections both during and after intervention cycles for each study.

Investing stressful environments with growth experiences

Gummesson (1991) has described Action Research approaches as the most demanding method of conducting case research. This view is supported by Argyris, who states that the researcher must be capable of learning from the clients' stress and help the research

group to learn from stressful situations. In the context of this study, this guided the researcher to actively investigate stressful events and discuss the lessons learned with the research group.

Intervention Theory also offers a framework for understanding different types of intervention activity. Argyris outlines three types of intervention. First, interventions where a large cluster of problems are common to different types of clients and intervention is based on existing knowledge and techniques. Secondly, interventions, which involve the creative arrangement of existing knowledge. Thirdly, interventions where the resources of the client system and the researcher join together to conduct an intervention that helps the client understand the nature of the problem and adds to the basic theory of intervention activity.

Argyris states that the latter category is the rarest but also the one with most potential for a researcher who values model building. This point, combined with the researcher's philosophical stance, have directed the researcher to seek out client systems where the client members are prepared to work co-operatively in diagnosing the problem and developing a process that answers the Research Questions.

In summary, this chapter has explained the theoretical underpinning for this study. A Participatory Action Research approach, when built from the theoretical foundations of Intervention Theory, provides a strong basis to conduct an effective intervention study. The chapter has also explained how the theory has been used to guide case selection and development of the research design. These are explained further in the following chapters, which articulate the Research Questions and development of the research design for the study.

Chapter Six: Research Objectives and Research Questions

The review of the literature in both the marketing and organisation fields shows a considerable body of work converging on the importance of the corporate brand. This has resulted in a number of recent observations that organisations are unsure how to manage their corporate brand effectively (Lane Keller, 1999) and identification of the need to reveal the processes involved in building and sustaining positive corporate reputations with wider shareholder audiences (Balmer, 1998, Ind, 1998, Macrae, 1999).

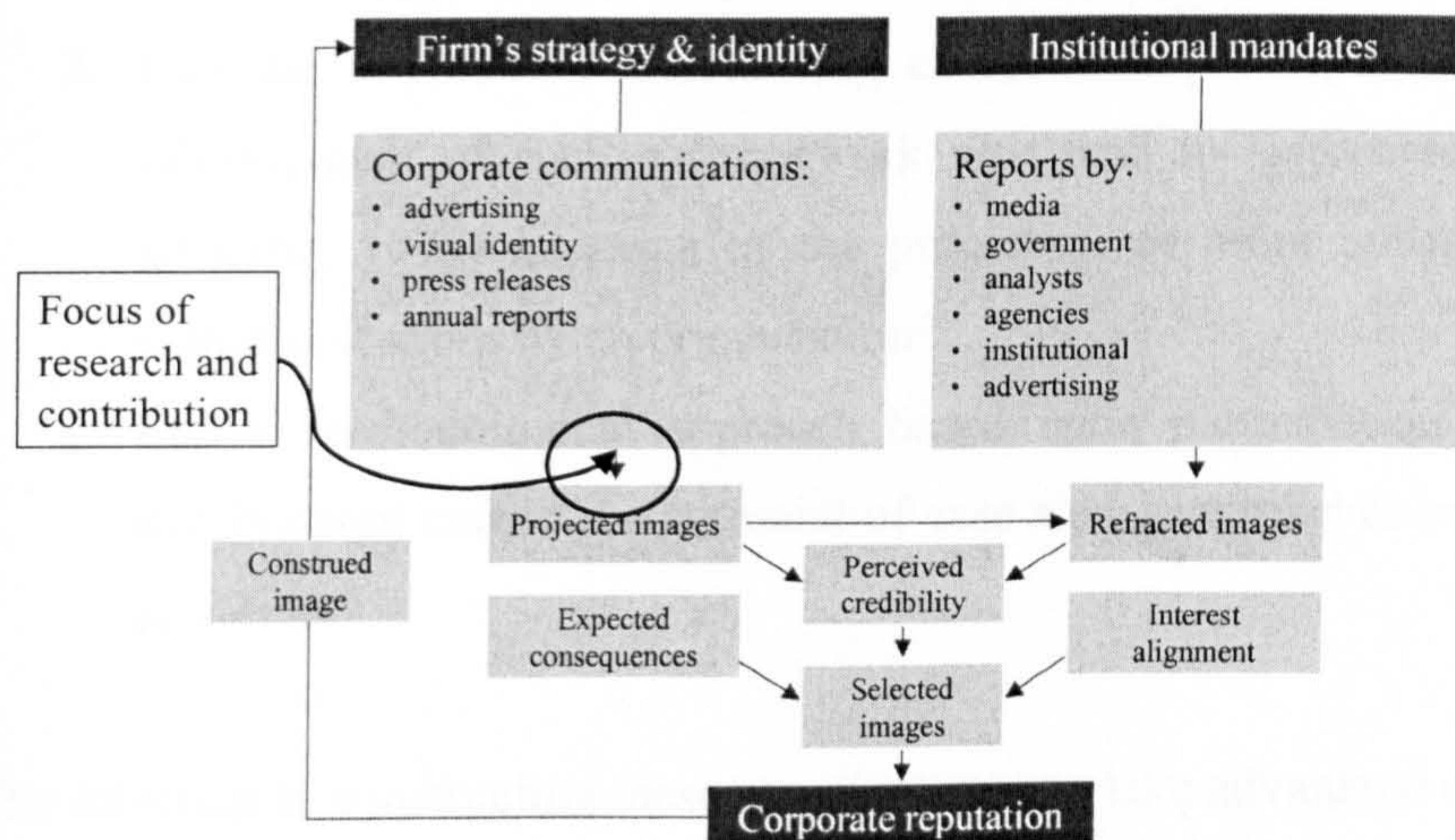
The argument constructed in the preceding chapters is that the current level of knowledge surrounding the phenomenon of Corporate Brand Communications is being inhibited by the positivist and constructivist paradigms adopted to date to study the concept. In Chapter Four the researcher introduced the participatory paradigm as an alternative lens for the study of the phenomenon, based upon the principle of intervention in the client system (Argyris, 1973) as an effective way to study that system '*from the inside*'. Based upon this view the researcher developed Research Objectives and Research Questions to underpin the study and gave explicit consideration to the contribution that such a study would make to the existing body of knowledge.

Establishing the Research Objectives for the study

The objective of this study, as introduced in Chapter One, is to build an empirically robust framework for Corporate Brand Communications. The study adopts a participatory perspective and has built an intervention approach from the body of work known as Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973). Such an approach offers the researcher privileged access to study the system of Corporate Brand Communications at close quarters by helping to facilitate a research group intent of effecting change to their system.

The conduct of the study adopted a Participatory Action Research approach to examine the process by which organisations attempt to establish and control the consistency of their Corporate Brand Communications. A communications focus was chosen to bound the study by providing focus to each intervention study conducted. It was also deemed by the researcher to be a concept that would be understood by research groups, and had been identified in previous studies as a key element in the Corporate Brand Management process (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Ind, 1998; Balmer, 2001a). Further, its definition avoided overlap with issues of visual (graphic) design management practices and had been highlighted by recent studies as an area with research possibilities (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000). This focus is summarised in relation to the literature in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Research focus and contribution of study (Rindova, 1997)



A further rationale for the explicit focus on communications was the requirement outlined in Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973) to understand and contribute to '*system effectiveness*'. A study that focused on organisation communications, defined as the development and communication of projected images (Rindova, 1998), allows the application of content analysis to measure '*system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973) in terms of Corporate Brand Communications consistency. Such an approach could be adopted as both an input to the intervention process and as a means to measure systems output, before and after the researcher's intervention.

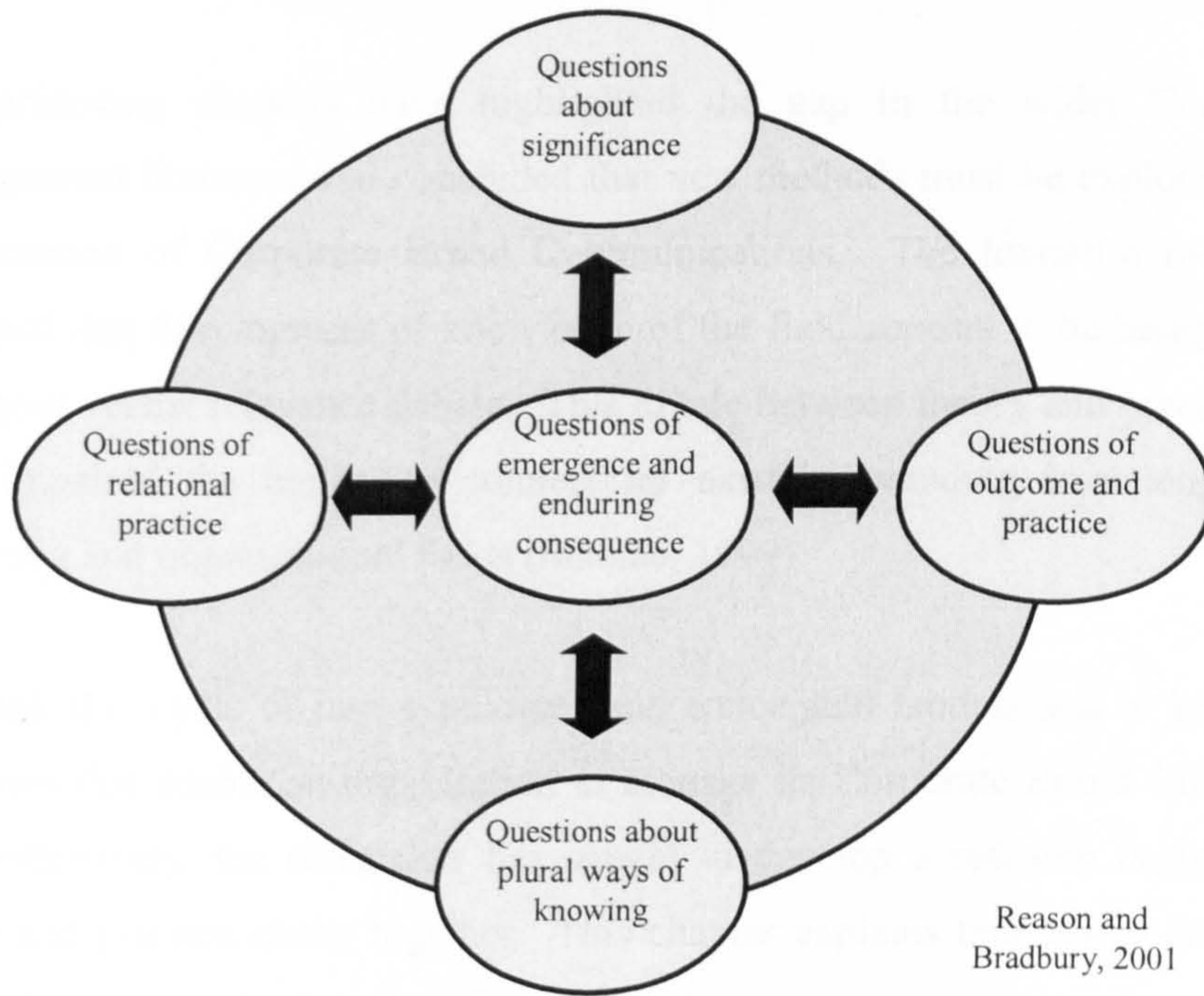
Defining the Research Questions

Having established the objectives for study the researcher then defined three distinct, but related Research Questions:

1. Can a participatory, action-oriented approach to the study of Corporate Brand Management systems aid the development of a more empirically robust framework for the management of Corporate Brand Communications?
2. Can the improved understanding of research participants in contributing to the development of such a framework also lead to '*improved system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973) in terms of the projection of more consistent Corporate Brand Communications by an organisation?
3. Can a methodological approach based upon participation and active researcher involvement extend the potential of case study approaches in studying management processes?

The intention in constructing these questions was to take advantage of the privileged access afforded by the conduct of the study to both gain insight into the management processes involved in the phenomenon and consider issues of system effectiveness. The findings from this process would then be considered in terms of the quality and validity criteria for Action Research developed by Reason and Bradbury (2001) summarised in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 Reason and Bradbury criteria for assessing validity and quality



The following chapter shows how the philosophical and theoretical underpinning for the study has been operationalised to answer the Research Questions defined in this chapter.

Chapter Seven: Research design: Framework for conducting intervention studies

The preceding chapters have highlighted the gap in the wider Corporate Brand Management literature and concluded that new methods must be explored to study the phenomenon of Corporate Brand Communications. The literature review has also indicated that development of knowledge of the field appears to be being held back by the rigour versus relevance debate. This divide between theory and practice appears to have impaired the ability to connect up existing branding knowledge from both marketing and organisational fields (Macrae, 1999).

To break this cycle of new typologies and conceptual models and to help clarify the processes that enable an organisation to manage its Corporate Brand Communications more effectively, the researcher has sought to develop a research design that brings theory and practice closer together. This chapter explains this design and how it was used to investigate the three Research Questions.

Building a participatory framework to study Corporate Brand Communications processes (RQ1)

The typology of participatory inquiry was introduced in Chapter Five (Figure 5.1). Adopting a more holistic and inclusive approach for this study is not only considered to be the most effective method for investigating the Research Questions, but is also consistent with the emergent nature of the research phenomenon, the researcher's own skills and chosen philosophical paradigm.

Having established a logical link between the Research Questions and selection of research method the next step is to consider how a Participatory Action Research approach, underpinned by Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973), can guide the investigation of the underlying processes that lead to creating more consistent Corporate Brand Communications.

Action Research: guiding principles for this study

To provide further clarity of definition for the intervention approach adopted for this study, it is useful to highlight the work of Peters and Robinson (1984) and Eden and Huxham (1993). Peters and Robinson claim that the many diverse approaches categorised as Action Research share four key qualities, which have informed the research design and selection of suitable organisations for this study. These four qualities are explained in the following section.

Problem focus

The selection of suitable organisations for this study was driven by the need to select only those organisations that had identified a problem with their current corporate brand definition and communication. This accords with Greenwood and Levin (1998) who state that the results of an Action Research process must focus on the workability of the solutions devised, and supports Eden and Huxham's requirement for a '*strategic intent*' to the project.

The Research Questions, philosophical and theoretical underpinnings were used as a basis to screen potential intervention study opportunities and initial meetings were held with four target companies. A detailed intervention protocol (after Yin, 1995) was prepared for each target outlining research objectives, and data collection methods. This protocol was used as a basis to submit a written proposal to each company detailing timeframe, outline of the process and outputs for the study. These were judged to allow the best scope for an action orientation and generation of valid information, free choice and internal commitment (Argyris, 1973) within the timeframe available for each particular study.

Action orientation

Given the nature of the Research Question (RQ1), with its stated need to investigate the Corporate Brand Communications system and measure the impact of an intervention,

the researcher required assurance that the short-listed companies were prepared to support this process in terms of senior management involvement and commitment to the study. This is in line with Eden and Huxham who state that Action Research requires an *'intent to change the organisation'* and Greenwood and Levin, who point to the production of new knowledge from solving real life problems. It also fulfils the criteria set out in Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973).

Selection of suitable organisations for study was also guided by the need for generalisability. Given the requirement for there to be *'implications beyond those required for action'* (Eden and Huxham, 1993), cases were selected where the researcher could act as a facilitator in the process. In doing this, it was the researcher's intention to demonstrate that the results gained could inform other contexts, in the sense of *'suggesting areas for consideration'* (Eden and Huxham, 1993).

Cyclical process

For a process to be defined as Action Research, there must be a systematic approach to posing questions, gathering and analysing data and generating interpretations (Heron, 1988). To answer these points and to address the claims against a context-specific approach, the research design was guided by the requirements of Intervention Theory and carefully planned to ensure a high degree of *'systematic method and orderliness'* in reflecting about and holding onto the data. To this end it was crucial that an appropriate degree of researcher reflection was built into the process (Gummesson, 1991).

To ensure systematic orderliness in data collection all interview and focus groups were recorded and transcribed for subsequent review and analysis. In addition, contact summary sheets were prepared after each intervention to capture the researcher's immediate observations and interpretations.

To ensure appropriate researcher reflection, and be consistent with the views of Richardson (Eden and Huxham, 1993), time away from the intervention stages was used to record observation, methodological and theoretical notes in the form of a journal.

These attempted to relate the reflection back to each stage of the intervention and capture all insights gained. This approach was guided by the work of Eden and Huxham who stated that Action Research need not necessarily deliver fundamentally new theories, but *'rather research insights are likely to link with and so elaborate the work of others'*.

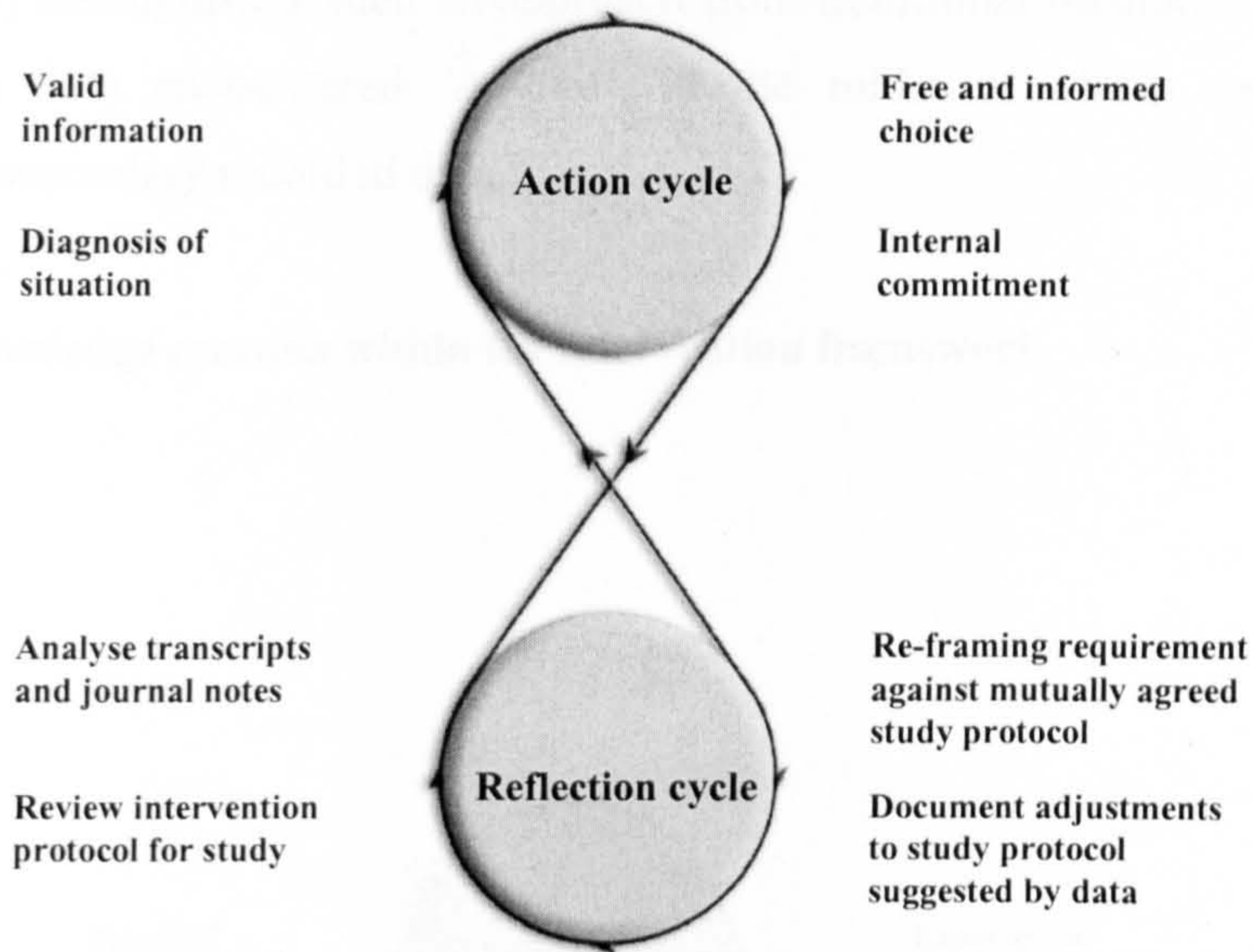
Greenwood and Levin (1998) highlight the importance of this action-reflection cycle in this process citing Schön's (1983) identification of two separate reflective processes: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. **Reflection-in-action** rests upon the researcher's ability to mirror a reflective process in the action itself. This was achieved through the keeping of journal notes. **Reflection-on-action** involves the researcher and research subjects in working through the experiences gained at the completion of each study. This second type of reflection was approached by the use of Matrix displays (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to check for patterns and themes across different studies and to check findings via exit interviews against the reflective notes collected during each study.

Collaboration

Peters and Robinson's fourth quality of Action Research is the requirement for a high degree of collaboration between the researcher and members of the organisation. For each intervention study the researcher recognised the need to work closely with the senior management team but retain a level of objectivity, by assuming the role of the *'friendly outsider'* (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). This involved the creation of an intervention protocol, a clear description of each stage of the intervention and good communication with the senior management team to develop processes, outputs and discuss expectations for the study at each stage.

Collaboration was also used at a second level, with a key communications contact within the organisation who was consulted in the test coding stages to ensure intercoder reliability for the data collected. The precise details of these elements are explained later in this chapter.

Figure 7.1 Intervention framework developed for the study



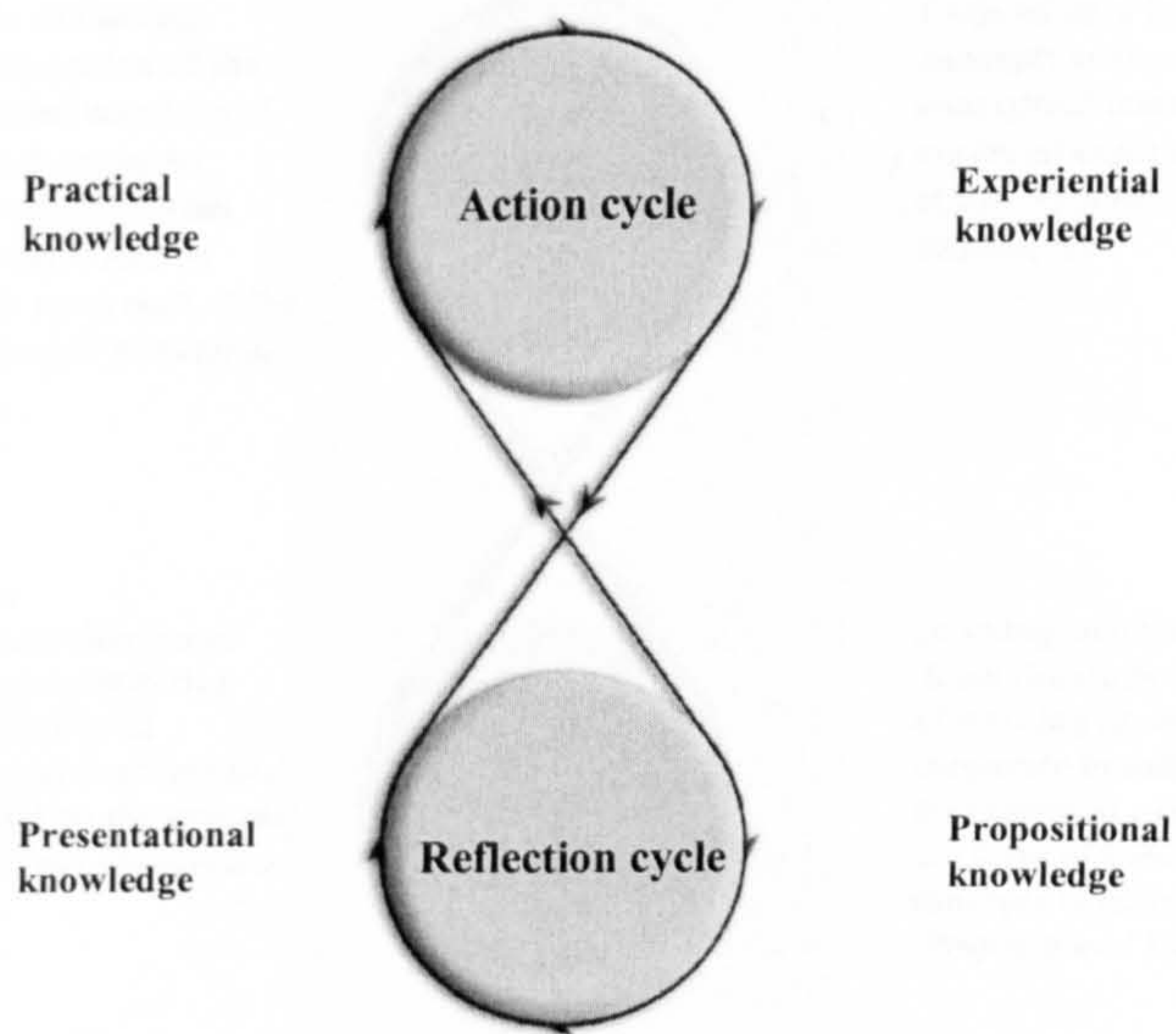
Greenwood and Levin (1998) stress that Action Research approaches demand considerable investments in time. To fulfil these various requirements within a limited timeframe, the intervention approach had to be disciplined, following a clearly defined iterative process.

The researcher has used the three key requirements outlined by Intervention Theory to build a cyclical framework for study. This reflects the guiding principles of participatory approaches by formalising the action/reflection cycle, which, in turn, can be applied to drive data collection and on-going analysis. Figure 7.1 shows the dynamic nature of this action/reflection cycle and how this approach was both grounded and guided by the key requirements of Intervention Theory.

The potential for such an approach is supported by a number of authors including Jonsson (1991) who states that such a cyclical inquiry approaches '*adds texture to our*

theoretical notions and food for our theoretical speculation'. The notion of 'texture' is an important one as a research design that aims at inquiry from the inside, where a researcher is actively involved with the research subjects in the process and study of change, offers the opportunity for richer insight than other qualitative research methods. Torbert (1991) distinguishes such an approach from traditional methods by the concern with primary data encountered 'on-line', in the midst of action and perception, supported by secondary recorded data.

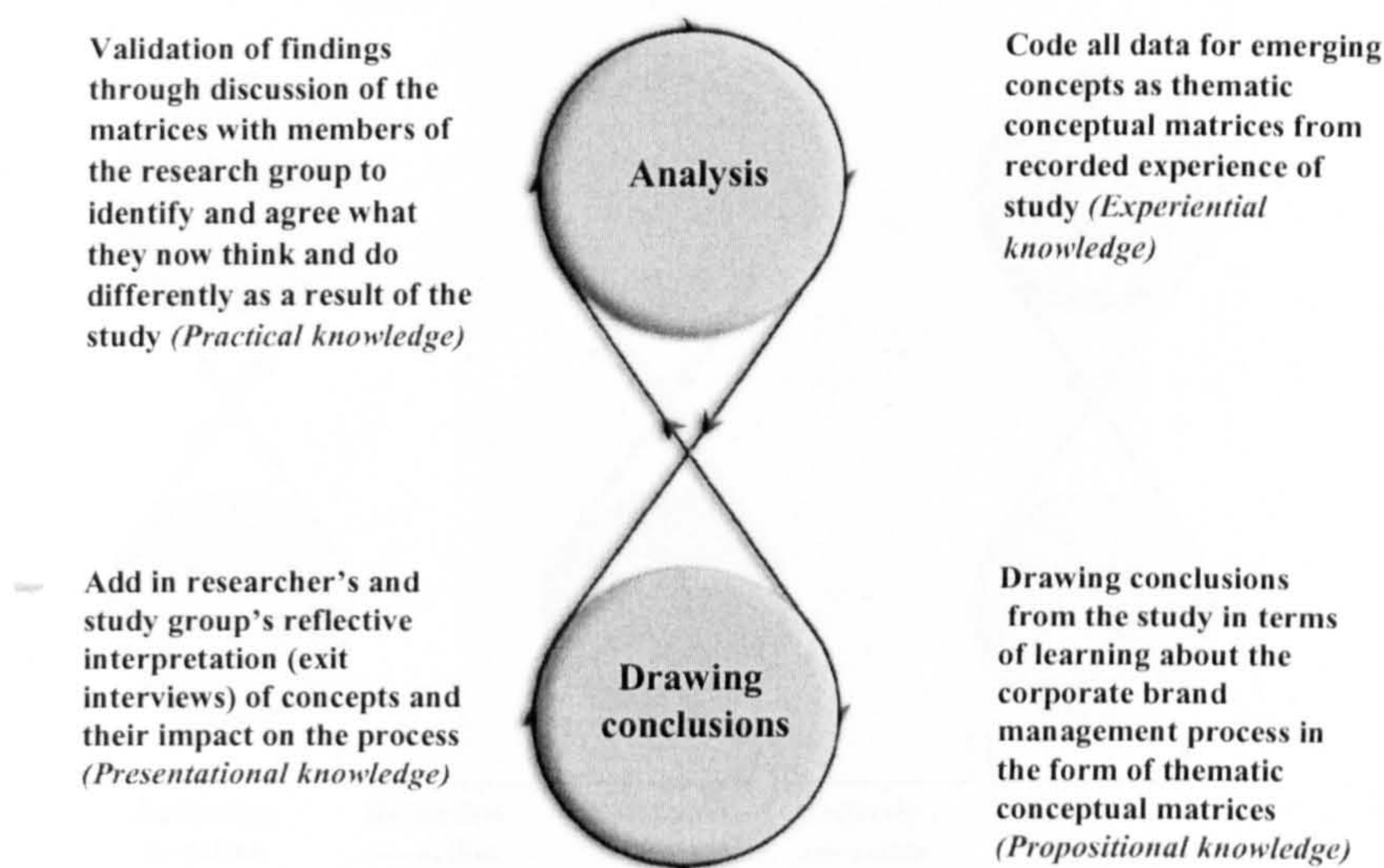
Figure 7.2 Knowledge creation within the intervention framework



By enlisting the support of the research subjects in interpreting these insights and actively encouraging consciousness in the course of action, the researcher sought to understand the context of action and invite these insights, rather than drawing context-free generalisations from a detached observer standpoint (Wood-Harper, 1992).

The main challenge presented by such an approach was the ability to overcome accusations of lack of rigour in both methods employed and in theorising from the findings of context-specific studies. This was addressed by combining the intervention framework developed in Figure 7.1 with Heron's (1981) extended epistemology for knowledge creation (Figure 7.2). These four stages of knowledge creation were incorporated into the intervention framework to help understand the Corporate Brand Communications system.

Figure 7.3 Approach to data analysis working with the intervention framework

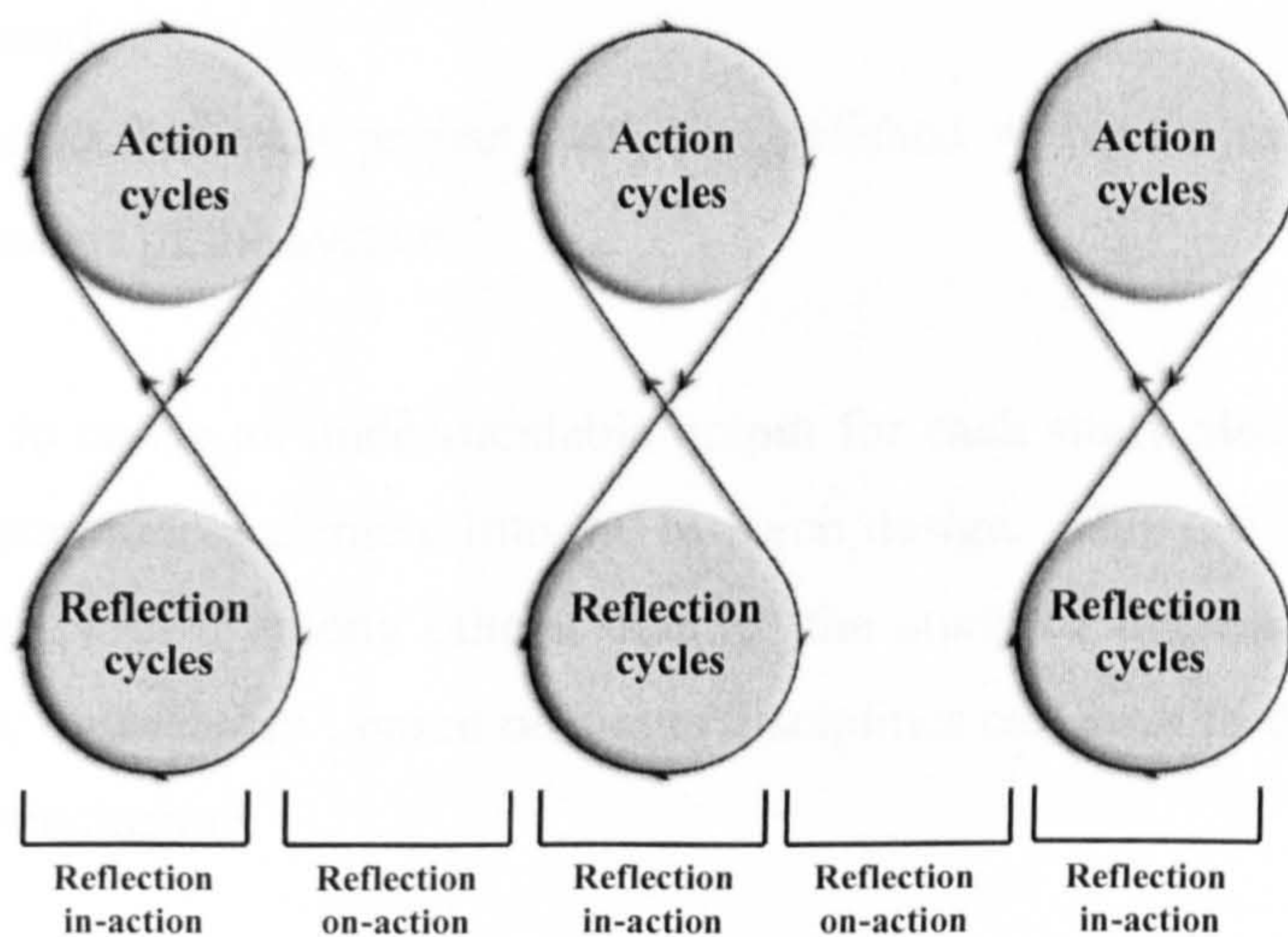


The framework was also used to guide data analysis and conclusion drawing at the completion of each study with all data recorded as transcripts and project journal notes coded for emerging concepts and displayed as thematic conceptual matrices. This approach was adopted to capture all experiential knowledge gained from each study. The researcher then added data gathered from exit interviews conducted with the research group at the conclusion of the study to analyse the group's reflective

interpretation of these emerging concepts. This stage was defined as the creation of presentational knowledge.

The matrices developed were then supplemented with the conclusions drawn from this activity as propositional knowledge. As a final stage, the developed matrices were then discussed again with the research group to identify what changes the study had made to their beliefs and behaviours towards the Corporate Brand Communications system (practical knowledge). This process is demonstrated in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.4 Approach to data collection and analysis for multiple intervention studies



This approach was replicated across multiple intervention studies, with each individual study conducted according to distinct cycles of action and reflection-in-action and the conclusion of each study featuring a period of reflection-on-action informing the data collection and analysis stages of subsequent studies (Figure 7.4).

Measuring changes in system effectiveness in the Corporate Brand Communications system (RQ2).

A key requirement of Intervention Theory, as previously stated, is the need to generate valid information about the system under study. As a further step to ensure an adequate framework for the study the researcher referred back to Argyris (1973) and reviewed the five criteria recommended by Intervention Theory to evaluate the success of an intervention. These are:

1. Information generated is understandable to research subjects;
2. Information generated by each project can be used by the research subjects;
3. The associated investment in terms of time and resources is acceptable;
4. The problem identified at the beginning of the project is either solved or better understood;
5. The conduct of each project was accomplished without a negative impact on the performance of the system.

The desire to create an understandable output for each study also led the researcher to include a quantitative element into the research design. This reflected the viewpoint of Warmington (1980), among others, that for the study of organisation processes '*unidimensional approaches*', based on single disciplines can limit findings and even lead to erroneous conclusions.

As a means to operationalise the second Research Question, and to answer the first two of Argyris' five requirements in particular, the researcher also included an additional inductive stage, which measured system effectiveness in the form of consistency of Corporate Brand Communications before and after the intervention period. This inductive stage used content analysis, which Weber (1990) defines as '*a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text*'. Weber explains that these inferences can be about either the sender(s) of the message, the message itself or the audience for the message. Krippendorff (1980) endorses this view,

describing content analysis as an important research technique, which seeks to understand data not as a collection of physical events, but as symbolic phenomena.

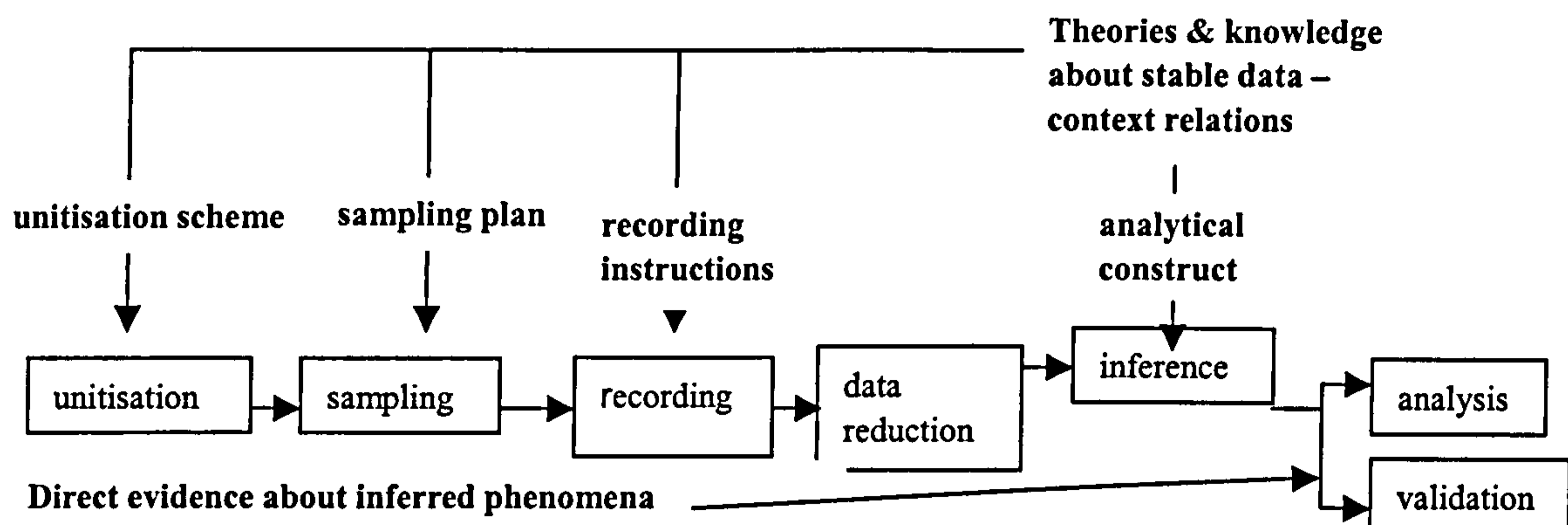
For the purposes of this study, content analysis was used to analyse the corporate brand messages projected by investigating the communication content of published communications. Consideration was given to other methods, particularly the use of Delphi techniques. However, this particular option was rejected due to the practical problems of recruiting a genuinely representative sample of stakeholder audiences for the individual organisations studied, and the time required to monitor this progress, which would not be feasible within the timeframe of a study that adopts a multiple study approach.

Within the context of this study, content analysis has two main advantages over other data generating and analysis techniques. First, communication is recognised as a central aspect of the Corporate Brand Management process (Van Riel, 1995; Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Balmer and Soenen, 1997). Second, compared with techniques such as interviews, content analysis yields unobtrusive measures of '*theory in use*' as it applies to Corporate Brand Communications rather than '*espoused theory*' (Eden and Huxham, 1993). Further, as Berelson (1952) notes, it is a technique that is objective, systematic and provides quantitative measurement.

Acknowledging the views of Janis (1965) that there are many different classifications of content analysis, the technique adopted for this study is Attribution analysis, which investigates the frequency with which certain attributes are communicated, an approach with an established history in mass communication research. Krippendorf (1980) supports this approach, which highlights the frequency with which a symbol or subject occurs in a stream of messages meaning it can be interpreted as '*a measure of importance, attention or emphasis*'.

Both Krippendorf and Weber agree that there is no one right way to conduct content analysis, stressing the need to develop a framework that processes information logically. This study therefore follows the procedures advocated by Krippendorf (Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5 Content analysis approach adopted for this study



Such an approach raises two key issues of reliability and validity, which needed to be addressed in this study.

Addressing Reliability issues

Weber (1990) highlights three types of reliability in content analysis: stability; reproducibility; accuracy. Krippendorff (1980) also supports the importance of reliability, pointing out that many researchers fail to assess the coding reliability. To guard against this situation the following actions were taken in the research design.

With reference to **stability**, Weber (1990) defines this as the extent to which the results of content classification are invariant over time. That is, the situation where the same content can be coded accurately more than once by the same coder. To minimise inconsistencies in coding, a framework generated from the data in the pilot study was drawn up at the start of the first intervention study.

Reproducibility, or intercoder reliability, refers to the extent to which content classification produces the same results when text is coded by more than one coder. To fulfil this condition, sample coding was supplied to a co-researcher (defined as a member of the research group from the organisation under study) at each stage of

measurement. This procedure was adopted to ensure that definitions, and hence measures, were consistent at each stage.

Accuracy refers to the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm (Krippendorf, 1980). The issue of accuracy was addressed by the use of a qualitative data software programme (QSR nud.ist) for recording data, careful consideration of category classification and adoption of a consistent recording unit across each intervention study. One of the principle advantages of conducting computer-aided content analysis was that the rules for coding text are made explicit and can generate formally comparable results (Weber, 1990).

Addressing Validity issues

In addressing validity issues, the researcher referred to Weber (1990) who notes that there are a number of definitions of validity that impact on content analysis. Weber, however, highlights two distinctions relating to correspondence and generalisability. Validity as correspondence describes the links between two sets of things, such as concepts, variables, methods and data. For this study, definitions of categories for content analysis were developed into a framework from data collected at the pilot study stage.

Validity as generalisability relates to the study results, their context and relationship to existing theory. Here the use of more than one intervention study was adopted to address issues of generalisability of results based on the Research Question.

Beyond issues of reliability and validity, Weber highlights four other critical areas that researchers conducting content analysis must address. These are measurement, indication, representation and interpretation. These issues were addressed in the data collection and analysis stages of each intervention study, which are detailed in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven.

Extending the potential of case study approaches in understanding management processes (RQ3)

The use of case studies has become an increasingly accepted form of academic inquiry in management research (Gummesson, 1991, Yin, 1995). The popularity of such approaches has been driven by the emerging requirement of many strands of academic inquiry to develop more holistic and meaningful views of real-life events, including the study of particular management processes.

Yin (1995) develops the definition of case study research further, stating that their central tendency is the objective of illuminating a decision or set of decisions in terms of why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result. In pursuing this objective, case studies can be categorised as exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. Each of these categories of case study inquiry demand holistic, context bound investigation, which adopt all-encompassing methods and can use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Kjellen and Soderman (1980) extended the applications of case study research to include generating theory and initiating change. These authors also acknowledge that the initiation of change within an organisation requires the researcher to have a deeper knowledge of the organisation, the phenomenon of interest and the ability to develop concepts and processes that lead to understanding rather than focus solely on causal explanations. Such approaches demand far greater researcher involvement than traditional case study research.

By migrating from traditional case research, as defined by Yin, to Participatory Action Research, the researcher has consciously moved along a continuum of involvement in the subject of study. In acknowledging this continuum, Gummesson (1991) refers to Action Research approaches as the most demanding and far-reaching methods of conducting case study research.

As part of the study the researcher also attempted to contrast the Participatory Action Research approach with the accepted principles of case study research, as set out by Yin (1995) and reviewed by Gummesson (1991). To add clarity and provide a framework for approaching the third Research Question, the researcher used Hult and Lennung's (1980) widely-accepted definition to examine how the study extended the insight gained from conventional case study approaches:

'Action Research simultaneously assists in practical problem-solving and expands the scientific knowledge, as well as enhances the competencies of the respective actors, being performed collaboratively in an immediate situation using data feedback in a cyclical process aiming at an increased understanding of a given social situation, primarily applicable for the understanding of change processes in social systems and undertaken within a mutually acceptable framework'.

Hult and Lennung (1980)

In summary, this chapter explains how the researcher's philosophical and theoretical positions have guided the operationalisation of this study to address the three Research Questions. Given the researcher's assertion that new methods were required to study the field, the intervention framework developed for this study has been outlined in detail. Whilst the framework is clearly grounded in Intervention Theory and the Action Research literature there was still scope for refinement to the approach. Given the nature of the intervention framework developed, it was considered essential that this be tested in terms of data collection and analysis with a pilot study.

The conduct of this pilot study and how it refined the researcher's intervention framework is explained in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Eight: Pilot study

The research design detailed in the previous chapter required a disciplined approach to conducting sequential intervention studies within a given timeframe. Referring back to the lessons of case study research, Yin (1994) stresses that such approaches can fail if the research design is not sufficiently robust or methodologically sound. Yin therefore advocates the use of a pilot case study to both test the research design and data collection procedures.

Given the description of intervention studies as the most extreme and challenging form of case study research (Gummesson, 1991), the nature of the Research Questions and the lack of previous empirical research in this area (Fombrun and Rindova, 1998), a pilot study was considered essential to help refine the researcher's data collection plan and test the viability of an intervention approach to the study of this phenomenon.

Suitability of organisation for pilot study

Yin notes that the choice of a suitable pilot study can be governed by a number of factors including convenience, access and geographic proximity. The selection of an initial pilot study in this case was opportunistic and resulted from contact with another researcher (a Cranfield MBA student) who worked as a public relations manager for a leading international law practice. The opportunity was deemed suitable for a number of other reasons, which can be understood with reference to Peters and Robinson's (1984) four key criteria for conducting Action Research. These were as follows:

Problem focus

The organisation was experiencing a period of considerable change and had identified issues around their corporate brand. This gave a strategic intent to the study (Eden and Huxham, 1996).

Action orientation

The senior partner had recently launched a new five-year strategy that identified the need to address the issue of the corporate brand and was, therefore, open to a Participatory Action Research approach. Further, the intervention of an external party, in the form of the researcher, was considered crucial to help facilitate a process of discovery and change in the organisation.

Cyclical process

Following initial meetings, a study protocol was prepared that outlined a series of interventions via small focus groups and face-to-face interviews. This satisfied the researcher's demand for systematic orderliness in data collection, access to senior managers and also provided the organisation with a clear process and agreed outputs.

Collaboration

The study had senior management support (partner level) and offered the opportunity for the researcher to utilise the PR manager as a co-researcher in the process of data collection and reflection.

Negotiation of access

Access was negotiated at an initial meeting in May 1998 with the PR manager and Business Development Director. At this meeting the scope for the project was discussed including the expectations of the researcher and the organisation. This negotiation was aided by an organisation requirement for external facilitation at a planned corporate branding workshop. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to deliver an initial output and begin the study process with a senior team drawn from across the organisation.

Background to pilot study

The law firm studied had shown considerable growth in the last 20 years, and established a strong reputation in certain key practice areas. The Managing Partner had overseen the development of the firm since his appointment in 1993, and had launched a new strategy for growth in April 1998 which set out the firm's vision to be a global law firm with a reputation for consistent, high quality service. Inherent in this plan was the need to shift attitudes and behaviours of a number of the partners to create alignment with this vision and strategy. This mutuality of interest gave an opportunity for the researcher to intervene in the client's corporate branding system and simultaneously test his research design.

Objectives for the pilot study

Following approval to undertake the study from the Managing Partner, the researcher prepared an initial intervention protocol for discussion with the Business Development team. The proposal outlined the scope and process for the study and its development was guided by the objectives for the study defined as:

1. To conduct an initial study of the Corporate Brand Communications system within the organisation to assess the research subjects' ability to understand and engage with a Participatory Action Research process.
2. To gain insight into the research group's understanding and definitions of the components of a corporate brand.
3. To document the conduct of the pilot study to understand the issues in conducting an intervention study within an organisation.

Given that the organisation under study required a consultancy deliverable from the research there was a strict time constraint (three months) placed upon the project with the need for the researcher to present back his findings at a scheduled Board meeting. This meant that the intervention cycles had to be carefully planned to ensure that the researcher had adequate opportunity to test his data collection methods and assess these procedures against the criteria of systematic method and orderliness (Reason, 1998). The benefit of the defined timeframe was that it expedited the conduct of each stage and enabled the researcher to gain access that totalled 36 hours of actual intervention time with the organisation and approximately 144 hours of reflection-on-action time with the data generated from each intervention, making a total of 180 hours of active engagement with the study.

Conduct of the pilot study

The stages in the intervention process are detailed in the following sections under the headings of the Action and Reflection stages outlined in the research design.

Data collection (Action phases)

The project featured three distinct intervention phases. These were:

- **Phase one:** initial meetings with the Managing Partner, Business Development team and an extended focus group with 15 senior partners
- **Phase two:** face-to-face interviews and small group sessions with senior partners conducted at the firm's offices
- **Phase three:** a further working session with the Board of Directors and follow-up meetings with the Business Development team.

Phase one interventions

Initial interviews were conducted with the PR Manager, Head of Business Development and Managing Partner using a semi-structured questionnaire to establish the context for corporate branding within the firm. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by a third party for analysis. As part of this initial process the researcher investigated the current image of the firm by analysing archival data conducted by a third party, on client's attitudes to the firm's services. In addition, the researcher prepared initial input for defining the components of a corporate brand, using the UOVP model (Knox and Maklan, 1998) as an initial framework to input into the session. This decision was made by the researcher as it was considered that the UOVP model with its four *'higher marketing variables'* offered an understandable framework for a non-marketing research group and also combined tangible and intangible elements within the definition.

This data was then used as an input to an extended focus group, which involved 15 Senior Partners. The researcher's role as facilitator in this session allowed him to structure a process, which was guided by the three key intervention principles from Intervention Theory: valid information; free and informed choice; internal commitment (Argyris, 1973).

The session utilised the archival image data as an input for the group to develop a collective view of the main drivers of value for clients, which were charted using a Customer Value monitor (Knox, 1999). This tool was developed by the researcher as a means to generate

valid information from the session (which was recorded by the PR manager for transcription), and also offered the participants free and informed choice.

To fulfil the third criteria of intervention theory (internal commitment), the group were also encouraged to discuss areas of strength and weakness for the current corporate brand rating their own assessments of the firm's performance against the customer value drivers. These scores were averaged and used to plot the Customer Value monitor (Figure 8.1). A further output from the session was that the group identified a lack of consensus among the partners present as to the desired and actual components of the firm's corporate brand. In particular there emerged a lack of consensus around the reputation element of the UOVP framework, specifically with regard to commitments and values.

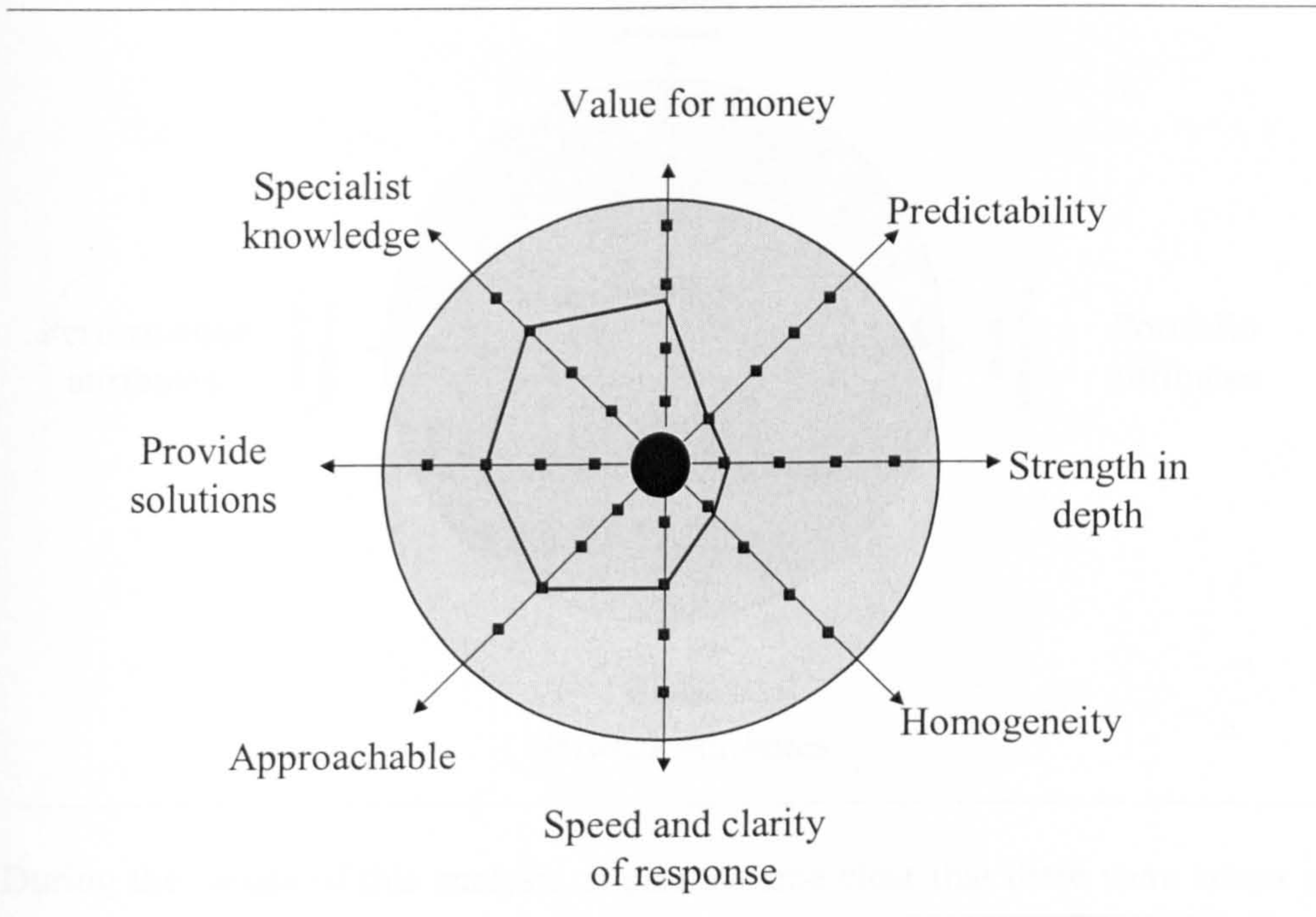
Phase two interventions

The second phase of interventions included a series of face-to-face interviews and small group sessions with partners (total sample 16), conducted in the firm's London offices. This sample was selected in discussion with the Business Development team as representative of all key departments across the firm. All interviews were conducted with the assistance of a second researcher (PR Manager) who acted as a recorder for the discussions, which were also taped. The interview format varied from individuals to small groups of two or three partners and was conducted using a semi-structured interview questionnaire, which had been prepared in advance.

Following each interview tapes were transcribed by a third party and a stage of peer debriefing was conducted with notes exchanged and summaries of each interview agreed. The data from each interview was then coded using QSR nud.ist software based upon a provisional list of codes drawn up from the UOVP model (Knox and Maklan, 1998), to provide structural and conceptual order to the coding.

Following the first phase interventions the Managing Partner specifically requested that the researcher focus particular attention on the issue of corporate values, which had emerged at the focus group. This variable was made a point of focus and a conceptually ordered matrix was used for data display to identify key themes.

Figure 8.1 Customer Value Monitor generated at focus group

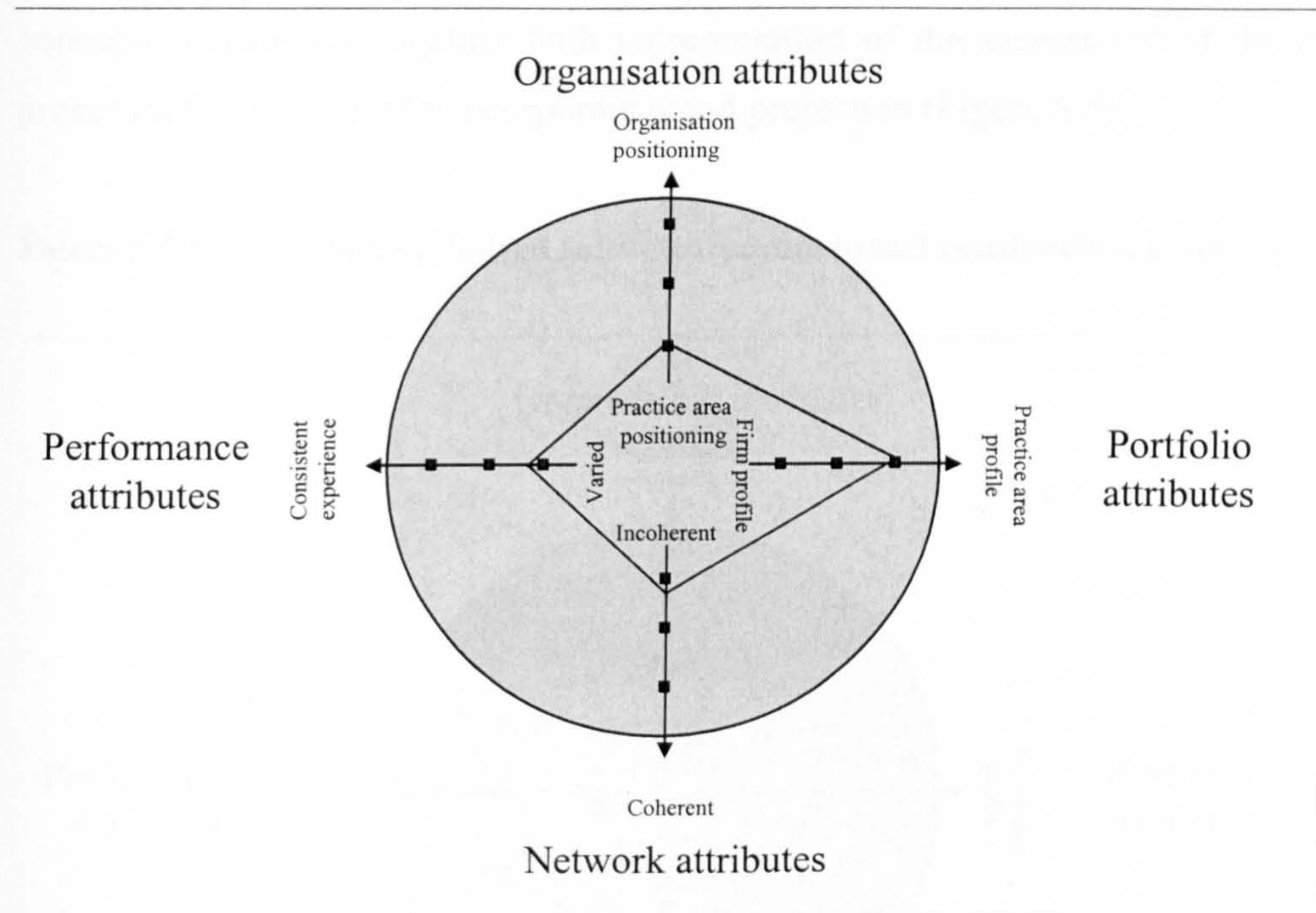


Reflection-in-action (Within case data analysis)

As part of the deliverable required by the firm the researcher conducted an initial analysis of all interview transcripts and journal notes. This used the UOVP model (Knox and Maklan, 1998) to assess the current strengths and desired future positioning of the firm's corporate brand. This involved coding of transcripts on a line-by-line basis to capture and organise all data as it related to this initial framework. The key themes were then displayed in the form of thematic conceptually ordered matrices, which utilised the UOVP model for its coding framework. Data was displayed in terms of key issues, inhibitors identified

within the existing system and possible facilitators that could provide practical solutions to these issues.

Figure 8.2 Presentation of current corporate brand construction emerging from data



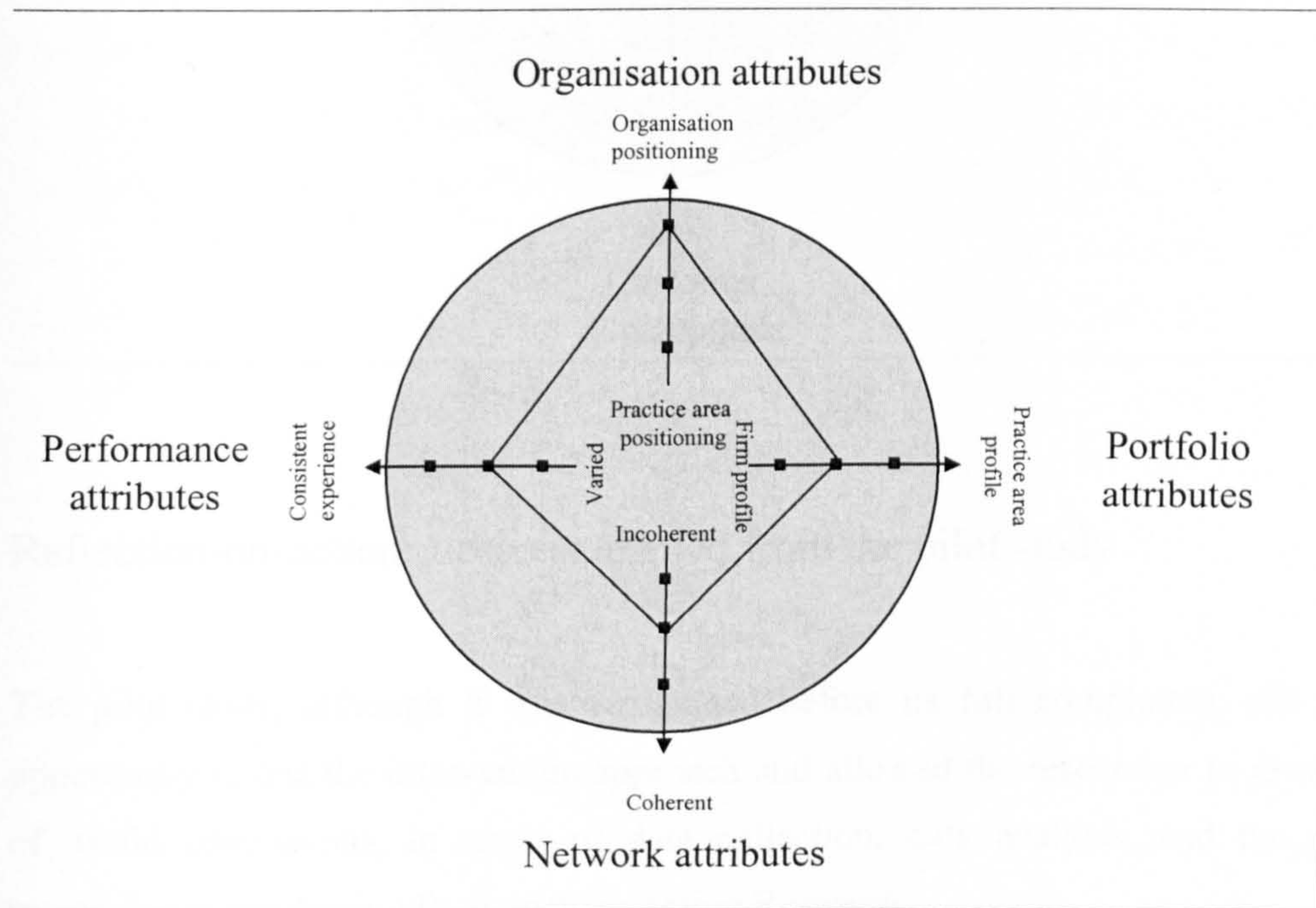
During the course of this analysis, it also became clear that there were issues surrounding the behaviour and business processes of the organisation, which impacted on the external experience of the corporate brand. These were coded separately using a similar process to that adopted for the four main corporate brand elements.

Phase three interventions

The third phase of interventions were driven by demands from the firm for a deliverable on the corporate values audit. In response to this demand a series of draft statements for the main components of the corporate brand, based upon the UOVP model (Knox and Maklan, 1998) were developed with the Business Development team for discussion at a further

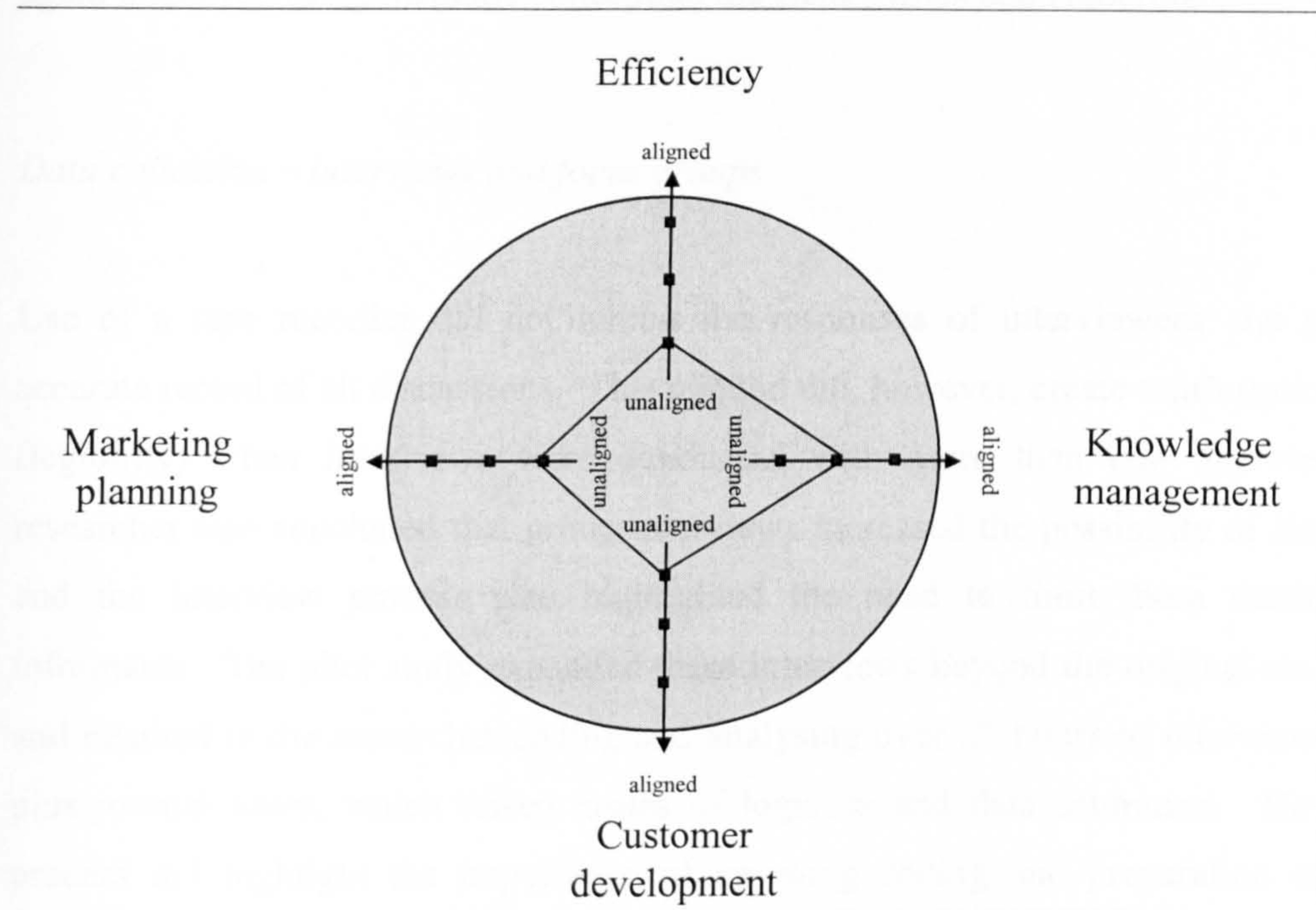
session with the main Board in September 1998. The corporate brand statements were supported by the main findings from the process and an indicative model of the current status of the corporate brand (Figure 8.2) that emerged from the data together with an indication of the desired future positioning of the brand (Figure 8.3). These were displayed in diagrammatic form to highlight the main findings of the data contained in the thematic conceptual matrices, together with representation of the assessment of the key business processes that supported the corporate brand projection (Figure 8.4).

Figure 8.3 Presentation of desired future corporate brand construction emerging from data



Following this session the researcher was informed that the project would have to be suspended pending significant corporate activity. Because the pilot study was terminated prematurely the researcher was not able to test the procedures for the second Research Question (measuring communications output).

Figure 8.4 Business process monitor showing current situation drawn from data



Reflection-on-action: Lessons learned from the pilot study

The pilot study, although it was terminated before its full completion, did provide an opportunity to test the intervention approach and allowed the researcher to draw a number of useful conclusions, in terms of data collection, data analysis, and the role of the researcher in conducting Participatory Action Research.

To consolidate this learning the researcher returned to the data at the completion of the project, aggregating all journal notes with the interview and focus group transcripts and using QSR nud.ist to re-analyse the data. This time the researcher examined the system of Corporate Brand Communications and the conduct of the intervention cycle. As a coding basis the researcher investigated the data on a line-by-line basis coding all issues as they

arose. These issues were then clustered into a series of main findings. All main issues were again displayed using thematic conceptual matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Data collection – interviews and focus groups

Use of a tape recorder did not inhibit the responses of interviewees and provided an accurate record of all discussions. This method did, however, create transcription problems (legibility) when interviews were conducted with more than one interviewee. The researcher also concluded that group interviews increased the possibility of interview bias and the interview process also highlighted the need to limit these sessions to key informants. The pilot study expanded these interviews beyond the original study protocol and resulted in the researcher coding and analysing over 20 hours of interview transcripts plus journal notes, which raised issues of logistics and data saturation. However, this process did highlight the importance of on-going coding and preparation of summary contact sheets after each interview.

Data analysis

The pilot study afforded the researcher the opportunity for developing a suitable coding frame drawn from the four key variables of the UOVP model (Knox and Maklan, 1998) and the preparation of intervention transcripts for analysis using a qualitative data software package. Beyond this operational insight, the data analysis also yielded findings of direct relevance to the overall study. These are discussed below:

Role of corporate branding

The main findings (Appendix 8.1, page 284) highlighted a high degree of consensus that corporate branding had an important role to play in the operations of the organisation.

Indeed, in the context of this study, the lack of a clearly articulated corporate brand had created difficulties in external projection, with partners resorting to negative branding (explaining what the firm was not), and acknowledged problems of internal staff alignment. The role of communication in establishing a common language and as a means to promote and reinforce the corporate brand was also recognised, although there were indications that no real process currently existed within the organisation to make this happen.

Corporate Brand Communications process

The importance of understanding the business context for undertaking a review of the corporate brand was a significant point that emerged from the data (Appendix 8.2, page 285). This highlighted the importance of building a clear understanding of the organisation's history as well as the current internal and external perceptions of the business. Use of customer value data worked as an effective input in the initial sessions to create a common reference point for the senior management team. This provided focus to the sessions and enabled the generation of valid data, allowing the team to discuss and choose options as the study developed. A further benefit of establishing a common starting point was the creation of internal commitment for the process amongst the team, providing momentum to the study.

Components of the corporate brand

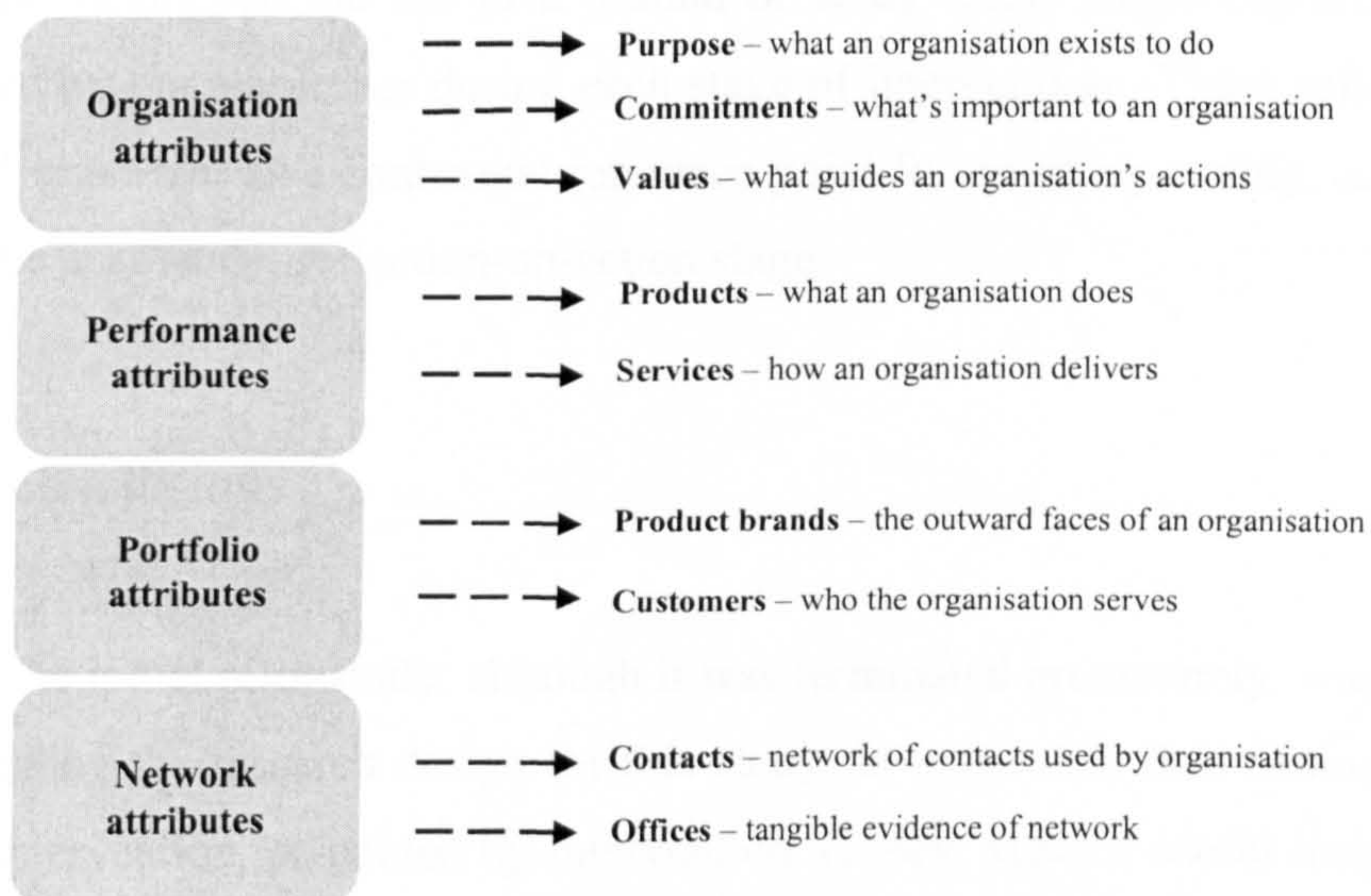
Analysis of the data highlighted considerable inconsistencies in respondents' understanding of the variables that make up a corporate brand. This issue was explored further and the key elements of the corporate brand were displayed using a further thematic conceptual matrix (Appendix 8.3, page 286). Whilst the typology of the UOVP model helped to provide a useful initial framework for coding, further analysis of the data suggested that each of the four '*higher marketing variables*' required further definition. The typology that

emerged is modelled in Figure 8.5. The researcher concluded that this typology with its more robust definitions could be applied to the content analysis stages of subsequent studies as an effective coding frame.

Data display

The pilot study also allowed the researcher to experiment with different types of data display to identify the most suitable method for the study. The nature of the data led the researcher to experiment with various forms of conceptually ordered displays to organise key concepts and themes from each interview.

Figure 8.5 Corporate brand model definitions emerging from pilot study



The cycles of intervention also allowed the researcher to test the use of different data display techniques. Data displays such as the Customer Value monitor and the Organisation Brand monitor

were helpful in enabling the management team to make choices and develop internal commitment to the process (Argyris, 1983).

Role of Action Research: managing the intervention cycle

The pilot study was undertaken with two clear objectives in mind: to test the viability of an intervention approach and to refine the data collection process. These objectives were used as part of the reflection on action analysis and displayed as a further thematic conceptual matrix (Appendix 8.4, page 291). Referring to the first of these objectives, the pilot study provided the researcher with first-hand experience of the conflicting demands for consultancy outputs (addressing the organisation's particular problem) and the research requirement to study the system of Corporate Brand Communications. Balancing these twin demands and ensuring rigour in terms of data collection, analysis and display techniques was a key learning point from the pilot study. During the pilot study the researcher also developed the use of a journal or study diary, which captured reflective notes recorded by the researcher during each stage of intervention. These reflective notes were deemed important as a contextual reference point for on-going coding, and delivered insights for the post-study, reflection-on-action stage.

Pilot study conclusions

In summary, the initial pilot study, although it was terminated prematurely, was a valuable exercise in testing the research design for this study. In particular, field-testing a cyclical approach to intervention, as guided by Intervention Theory, yielded useful insights. These included the need for a clear study protocol and preparation prior to each stage of intervention to ensure the generation of valid information in each phase. The lessons learned from the pilot study were then consolidated and carried forward in the development of intervention protocols and techniques for the subsequent studies, which are described in the following chapters.

Chapter Nine: European Science Foundation Study

During the pilot study the researcher also contacted a number of other organisations with a view to conducting a full intervention study. An initial positive response was received from the European Science Foundation. This chapter describes the conduct of this study from initial contact through to the completion of the intervention and analysis of the findings.

Negotiation of access

In response to this inquiry the researcher arranged an initial meeting with the Head of Communication for the Foundation. This meeting was held in London during June 1998 and involved the researcher in giving an overview of his research and the potential for a participatory approach to study. Following this meeting the researcher was asked to prepare an initial proposal for the study to include timeframe, process and input required from the Foundation. This was prepared as an intervention protocol, which was submitted in July 1998 to the ESF Senior Management team for approval.

Following further telephone conversations with the Head of Communication the researcher was informed in August 1998 that the Foundation would be willing to undertake the study.

Suitability of case organisation for study

Selection of this organisation for study was deemed suitable when assessed against Peters and Robinson's (1984) four key criteria for Action Research:

Problem focus

The ESF was approaching its 25th year of operation in a much-changed operating environment. A major strategic re-appraisal had indicated the need for the organisation

to raise its profile and re-assess how it could build stronger relationships with key audiences. This re-appraisal had pointed to the need to develop a more focused communication strategy for the organisation, which was deemed by the researcher to give a strong strategic intent (Eden and Huxham, 1996) to the project.

Action orientation

The ESF management team welcomed the researcher's approach and showed a genuine concern for the need to manage the organisation's reputation. This recognition was important to the process of the study as it reflected a willingness on the part of the ESF management to support the research. The ESF as an organisation were also resource-constrained and therefore open to an action-oriented approach where an external party from outside the organisation could intervene and facilitate a process of change.

Cyclical process

There was management support within the organisation for a review of the ESF corporate brand. Given the significant workloads, including travelling, of the senior individuals it was agreed that the best way to conduct the study would be via a series of planned interventions by the researcher. In addition, the location of the ESF head office (Strasbourg, France) called for the phases of intervention to be carefully planned and efficiently conducted, as the researcher faced both logistical and financial constraints.

Collaboration

Given the nature of the ESF's business, promoting scientific research, the researcher felt confident that his project would receive support from the organisation. In addition, the project had the support of senior management and the ESF Communications team. The Head of Communication was designated as the sponsor of the project, which also indicated senior management commitment to the study.

Based on this review of Peters and Robinson's four criteria, the researcher concluded that the ESF was a suitable organisation for study in terms of the nature of their

business, indicating a pre-disposition towards supporting academic research, and the support expressed by the senior management team at the initial meetings.

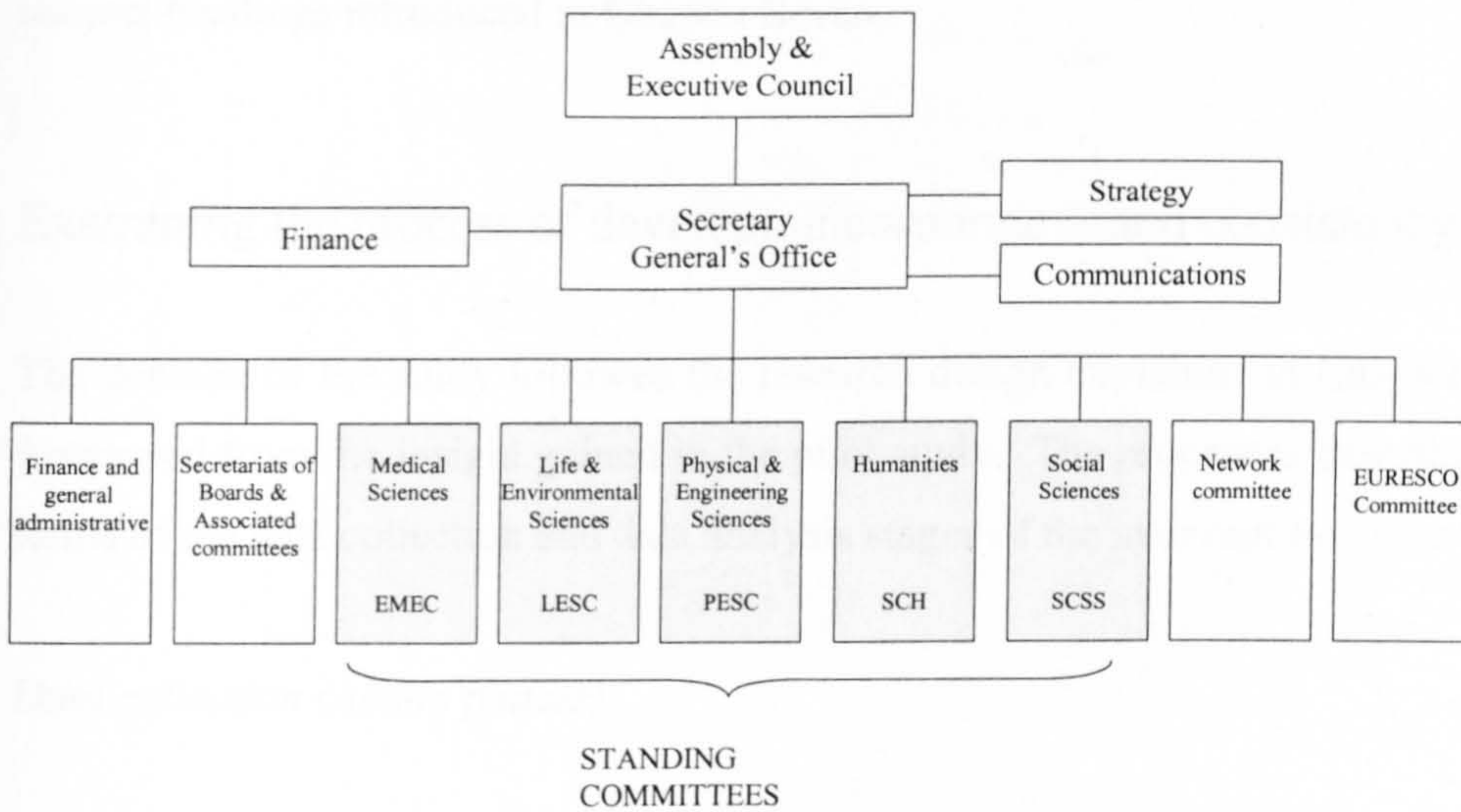
Background to the study

The European Science Foundation (ESF), based in Strasbourg, France, is an international, non-governmental association of organisations devoted to the promotion of scientific research across Europe. At the time of the study the ESF comprised its 65 member organisations from 21 countries in Europe and the scientific scope of the Foundation included Humanities, Social Sciences, Economics, Natural, Medical and Technical Sciences. The structure of the Foundation (Figure 9.1) centred on the ESF Head Office in Strasbourg.

The majority of the Foundation's work was conducted through five Scientific Standing Committees, which acted as the outward-facing 'brands' for the ESF, being responsible for scientific activity in their individual fields. In addition, a small number of newer committees had recently been established in emerging scientific areas.

At the beginning of the study the ESF was entering its 25th year, in a much-changed operating environment from its early years. In response to these environmental developments the ESF had undertaken a strategic re-appraisal in 1994, which concluded that the Foundation needed to strengthen its strategic links and alignment to member organisations. In 1998 the ESF published its Corporate Plan, which highlighted the need for the ESF to develop and reinforce its communications policy in a concerted effort to build profile and visibility within the European scientific community and beyond.

Figure 9.1 ESF structure overview



Objectives for the study

Following the approval for the project, the researcher prepared a more detailed intervention protocol, which was based on Yin's (1994) model for increasing the reliability of case research (Appendix 9.1, page 292). The protocol outlined the scope and procedures for the study and its development was guided by the objectives for the study which were defined as:

1. To investigate the process of developing consistency in ESF Corporate Brand Communications through a Participatory Action Research approach.
2. To measure the output of ESF Corporate Brand Communications using a sample of published communications taken before and after the researcher's intervention to see whether such an approach leads to improved '*system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973).
3. To document the conduct of the study to reflect upon the potential for such an intervention approach to extend the insights gained from a traditional case study approach.

Given the location of the organisation, intervention cycles had to be carefully planned to ensure effective data collection and to meet the criteria of systematic method and orderliness (Reason, 1998). The stages in this process are detailed below using the subject headings introduced in Chapter Seven.

Examining the process of developing corporate brand consistency

The conduct of the study followed the research design explained in Chapter Seven and developed from the insight gained in the pilot study. The process is described below in terms of the data collection and data analysis stages of the intervention cycle.

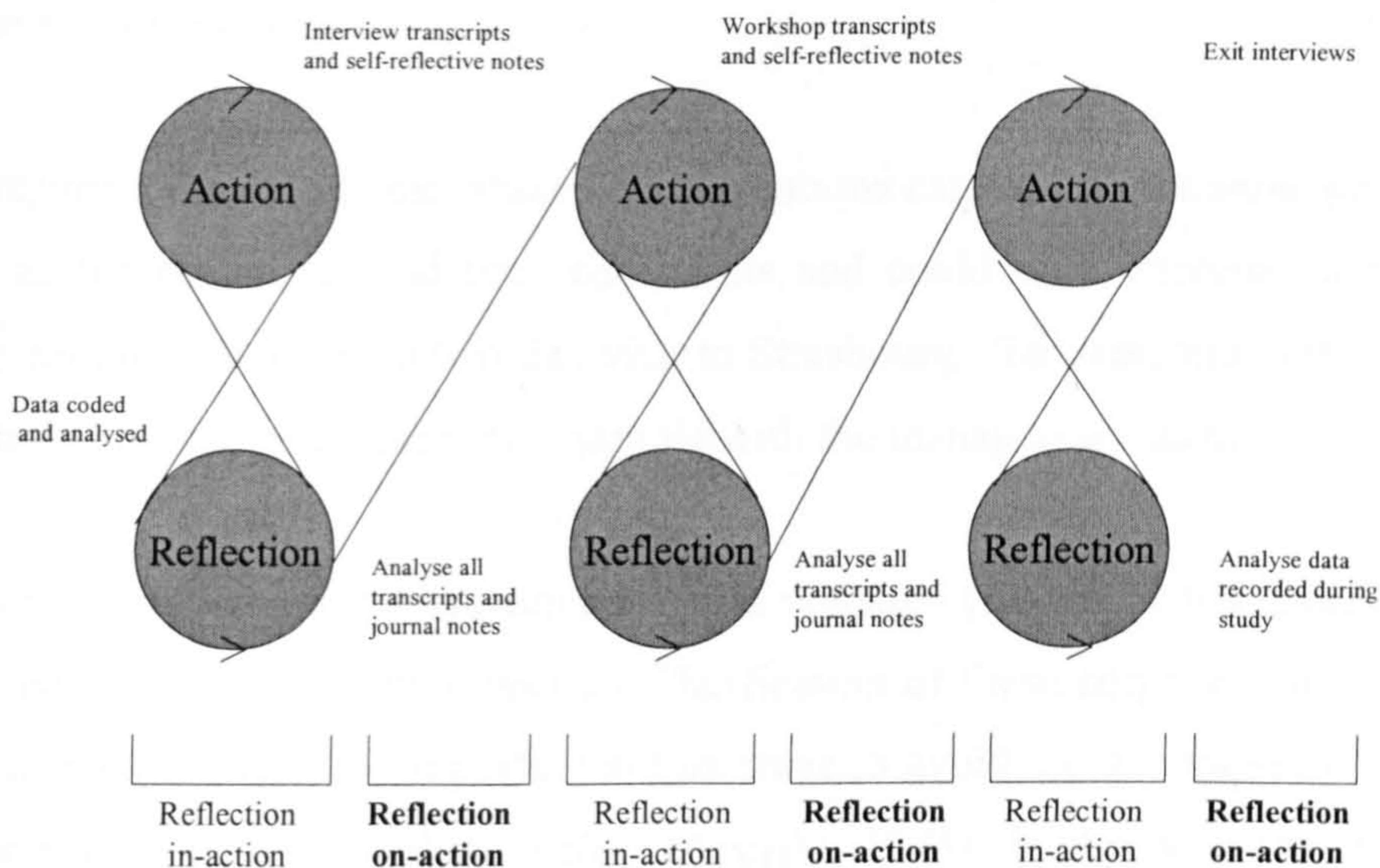
Data collection (Action phases)

The study (Figure 9.2) featured three distinct intervention phases:

- **Phase one:** Initial meetings and face-to-face interviews with the ESF Senior Management team
- **Phase two:** A further round of face-to-face interviews with representatives from the ESF Scientific Standing Committees
- **Phase three:** Brand development sessions with the Corporate Communications team and follow-up meetings with the Senior Management team
- **Phase four:** Exit interviews with the Corporate Communications team to review the process of the study and capture learning.

In total the study comprised 44 hours of active intervention time and approximately 156 hours of reflection-on-action time with the data generated from each intervention, making a total of 200 hours for the study over its duration.

Figure 9.2 Approach to data collection and analysis adopted for ESF study



Phase one interventions

A series of initial interviews were conducted with the Senior Management team in Strasbourg during September 1998. These interviews included extended face-to-face interviews with the Secretary General, Head of Strategy and Head of Communication.

The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 9.2, page 294) with the objective of establishing the context for Corporate Brand Communications and discussing the key components of the ESF corporate brand, in line with the findings of the pilot study. A contact summary sheet was prepared after each interview (Yin, 1994) to summarise key themes (Appendix 9.7, page 304). Each interview was taped and transcribed by a third party for initial analysis, guided by the views of Miles and Huberman (1994) who caution that *'late coding enfeebles analysis'*.

During the initial interviews, and in subsequent data analysis, it became clear that the ESF Scientific Standing Committees played a vital role in Corporate Brand

Communications. It was therefore agreed that the researcher should conduct a further round of interviews with representatives from these Committees as part of the next phase of interventions.

Phase two interventions

In preparing for the second phase of interventions careful pre-planning was considered vital as the researcher had time constraints and could only interview a sample from these committees during a two-day visit to Strasbourg. To overcome this constraint the researcher agreed a representative sample with the management team.

A second semi-structured questionnaire was prepared (Appendix 9.3, page 295), which clarified brand nomenclature issues. Clarification of these corporate brand definitions was deemed particularly important at this stage to avoid the generation of information that would not be defined as '*valid*' (Argyris, 1973). In this way the initial coding developed from the pilot study was used to drive on-going data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and introduced as a framework to minimise the risk of potential interviewer bias in the process. The second questionnaire was drafted and sent to the Head of Communication for input and approval prior to the second phase interventions.

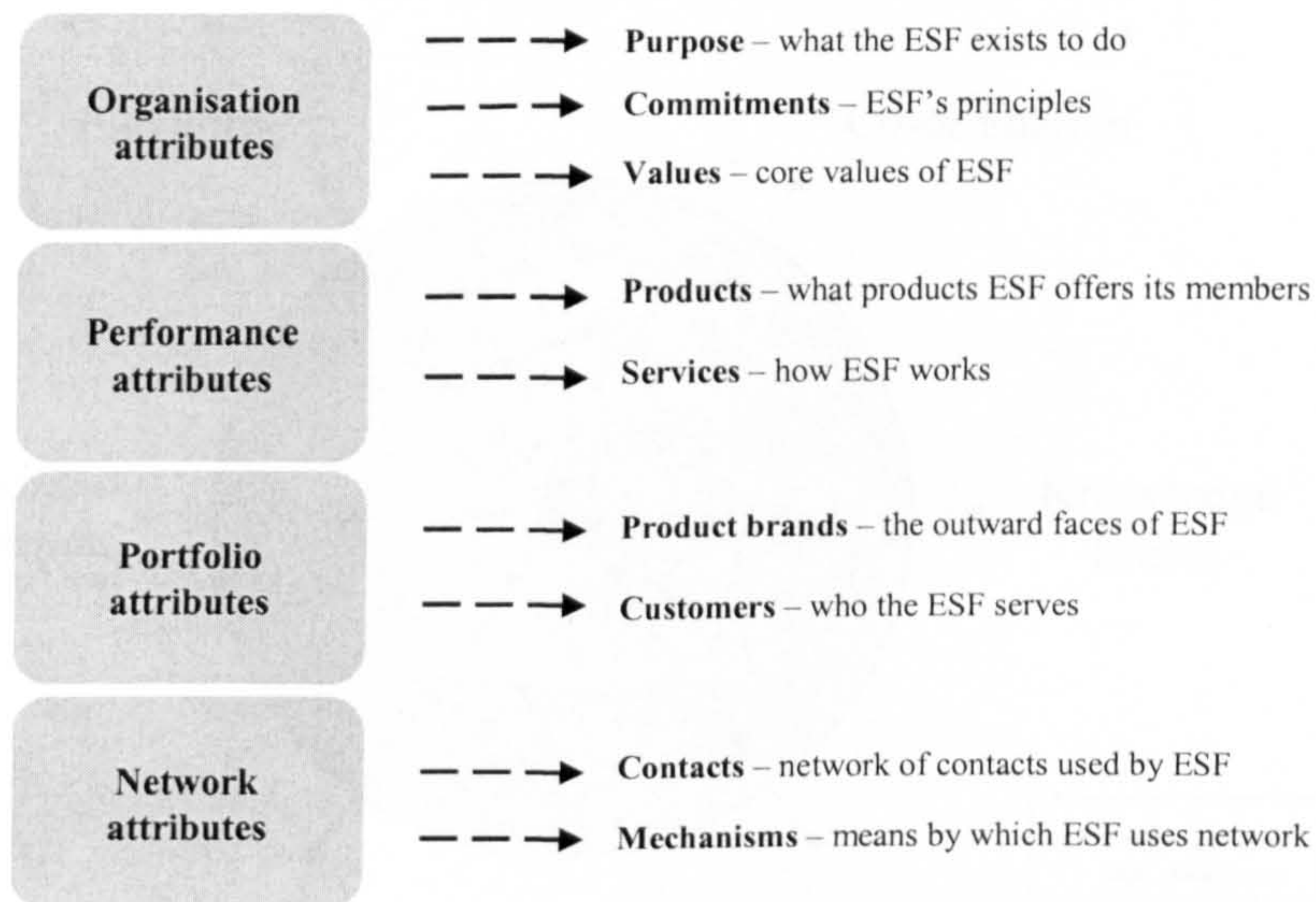
The gap between conducting the first and second round of interviews enabled the researcher to code the transcripts for the first phase of interventions and make reflective notes in a project journal. In addition, the researcher conducted an initial audit of the published communications produced by the ESF for its various stakeholder audiences.

A similar procedure was adopted for the second phase interventions, with contact summary sheets prepared after each interview, and each interview taped and transcribed by a third party for analysis.

Reflection-in-action (Within case data analysis)

All transcripts from the taped interviews and journal notes were coded using a qualitative data software package (QSR nud.ist). Following a first run of coding on screen, the researcher went to hard copy and used marginal remarks to aid analysis and add meaning and clarity to the notes. Coding was conducted utilising a coding frame (Figure 9.3) of corporate brand definitions drawn from the findings of the pilot study.

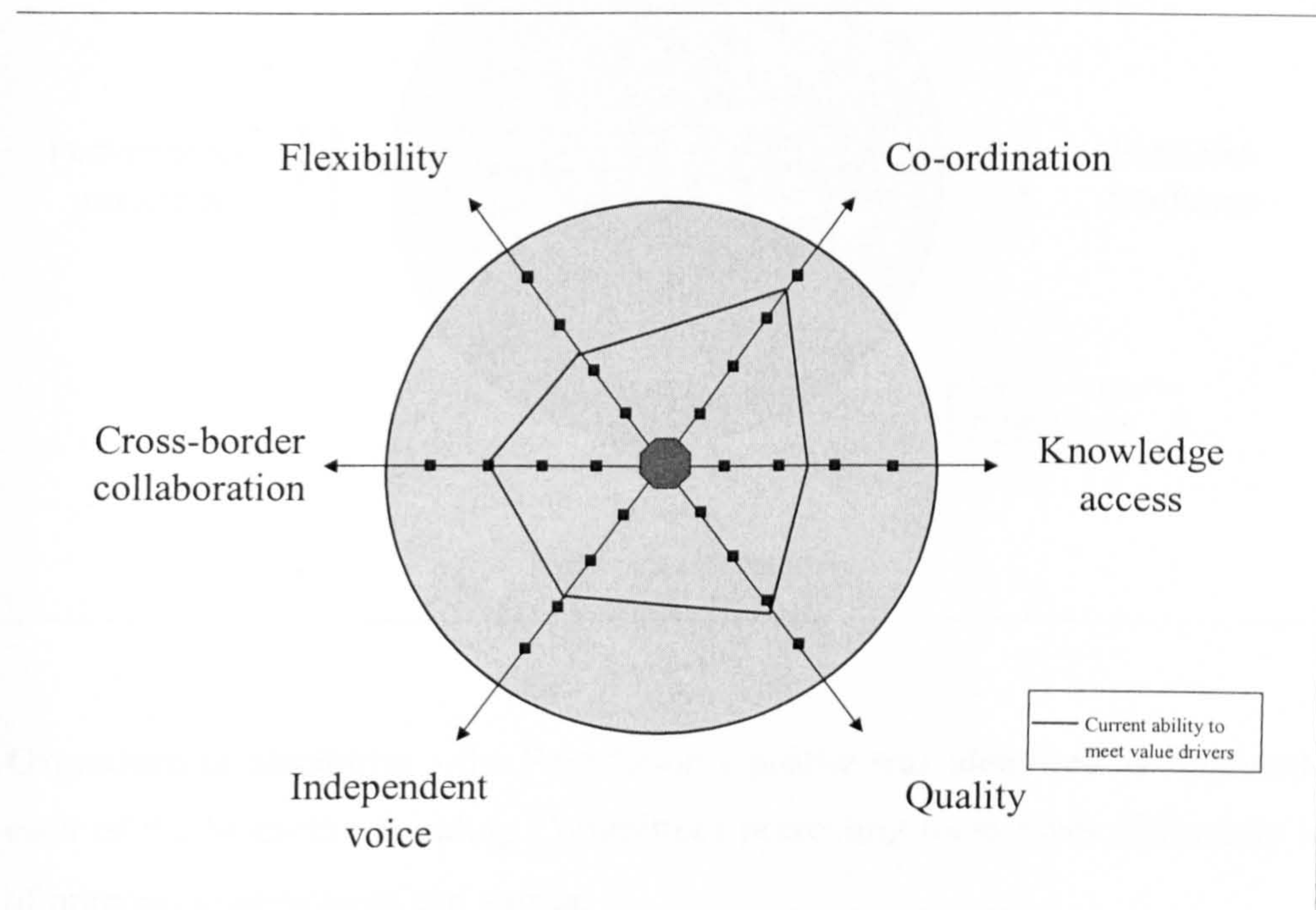
Figure 9.3 Definition of the ESF corporate brand developed during study



In selecting a suitable method for data display the researcher was guided by the views of Miles and Huberman (1994) that this should be adapted to meet the needs of the particular study. As the variables for this study were already clearly defined by the Research Questions, the researcher examined display methods that were organised in terms of concepts and again selected a thematic conceptual matrix as the most suitable tool. This method of data display was utilised to examine the data in terms of key themes (Appendix 9.5, page 297).

As a second stage of within case data analysis the transcripts and journal notes were examined to identify the main ways in which the organisation delivered value to its key constituents. The findings from this stage of analysis were displayed using a series of monitors (Knox, 1999). The Customer Value Monitor (Figure 9.4) developed from the data highlighted six key components of customer value and this display together with the thematic conceptual matrices were then developed with the ESF Communication team for further discussion.

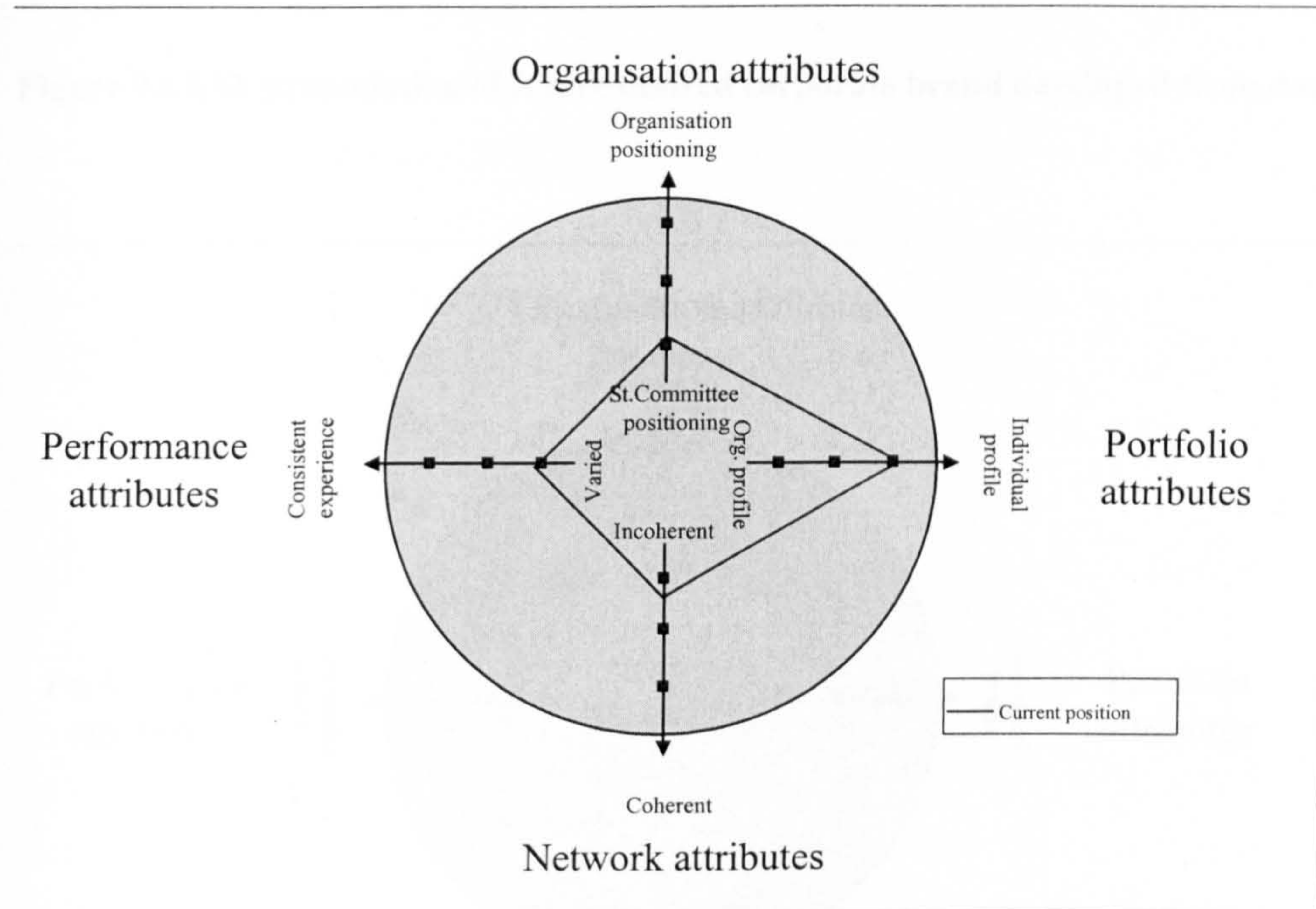
Figure 9.4 ESF Customer Value Monitor developed from data in phase one



Following further meetings with the ESF Communication team to discuss these drivers, the researcher returned to the data to examine the key components of the ESF brand. A Corporate Brand Monitor (Figure 9.5) was used as a further form of data display, based upon the four elements of the corporate brand, defined in Figure 9.3, building on the elements identified in the pilot study. Based upon this analysis the researcher worked with the Communication team to develop a continuum for each element of the brand

and then map the current situation and desired future position for the corporate brand. These were defined as follows:

Figure 9.5 ESF presentation of current corporate brand developed from data



Organisation attributes - the Foundation's profile was identified as fragmented with each of the Scientific Standing Committees presenting themselves differently in terms of purpose, commitment and values.

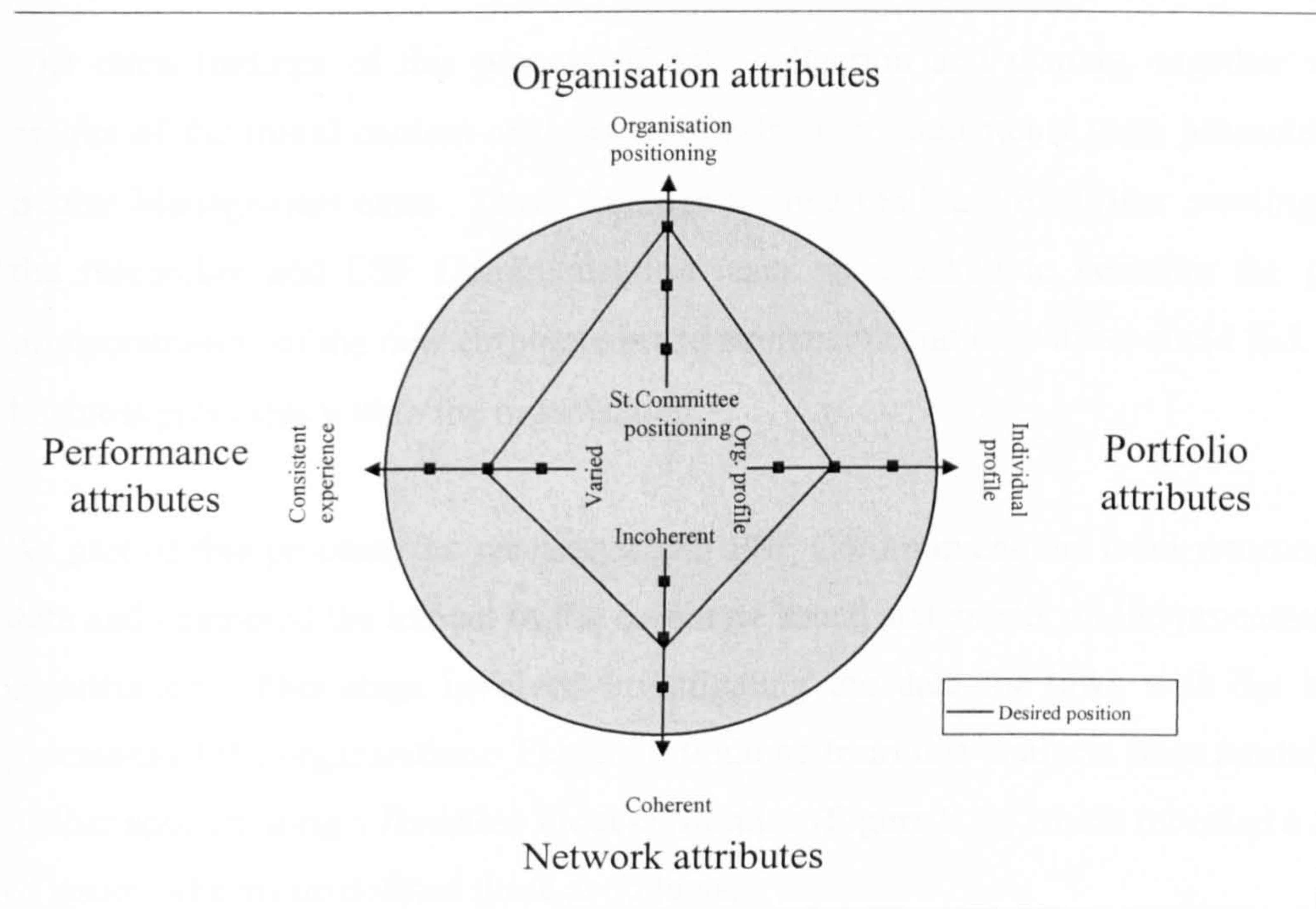
Performance attributes - each individual Scientific Standing Committee's presentation of its products and services were markedly different. Further, the systems and processes adopted by each area were very different and served to create markedly different service experiences of the ESF corporate brand.

Portfolio attributes - the individual emphasis of each of the Scientific Standing Committees had created a situation where there was an acceptance of high recall for

each individual Standing Committee within its own scientific field, but low levels of awareness for the organisation that stood behind the individual committee.

Network attributes - it was widely accepted that there was no consistent or coherent explanation of the ESF's links both within the organisation, across its different scientific disciplines, and outside with other scientific bodies across Europe.

Figure 9.6 ESF presentation of future desired corporate brand developed from data



Use of a Corporate Brand Monitor also enabled the researcher to display the desired future positioning for the ESF as it emerged from the interview data for each of the four main variables (Figure 9.6). This facilitated further group discussion on how the ESF would achieve this desired corporate brand positioning, thus generating further valid information for the study and helping to build internal commitment for the process of change required (Argyris, 1973).

Phase three interventions

Based upon the findings from the previous phase the researcher worked with the ESF Communication team to develop a series of corporate brand statements, which articulated the desired corporate brand positioning (Appendix 9.6, page 298). Given the problems of distance, these sessions were conducted via teleconference as a series of on-going interventions, which were recorded for transcription. Despite the remote nature of this intervention, the iterative process helped in developing a consensus between the researcher and the ESF team on the main elements for each statement.

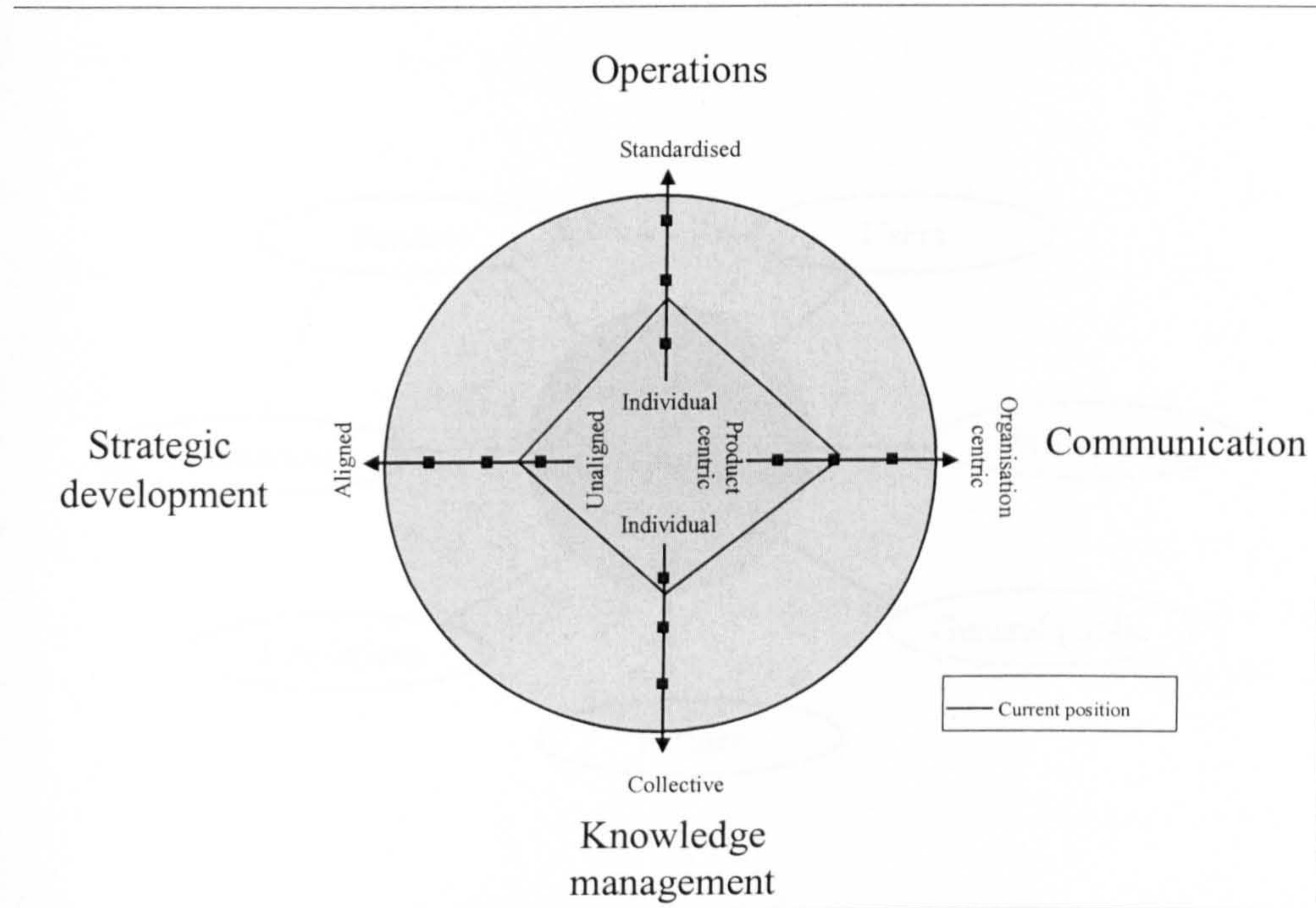
The main findings of this process of data collection and display, together with the results of the initial content analysis and draft brand statements were presented to the Senior Management team. These findings formed the basis of further meetings where the researcher and ESF Communication team were asked to consider the practical implementation of the new corporate brand statements and how these could link into the business processes within the organisation.

As part of this process, the researcher and ESF Communications team returned to the data and examined the impact of the corporate brand statements on the processes of the organisation. This stage involved investigating the data for links with the business processes of the organisation. The main findings from this analysis were modelled at a further session using a Business Process Monitor (Figure 9.7), which revealed a number of issues. The group defined these as follows:

Operations - a key finding which emerged from the data on business processes was that the operations within the Foundation were not standardised. Each individual Scientific Standing Committee operated differently, re-enforcing the fragmented presentation of the organisation in terms of both behaviour and communication. Embedding the new corporate brand positioning would therefore involve process standardisation initiatives across the organisation.

Communication - communication from various parts of the organisation focused its content on the specific area and not the organisation as a whole, resulting in the projection of mixed and contradictory messages. The desired positioning would create the logic for more centralised communication co-ordination across the organisation.

Figure 9.7 ESF Business Process Monitor

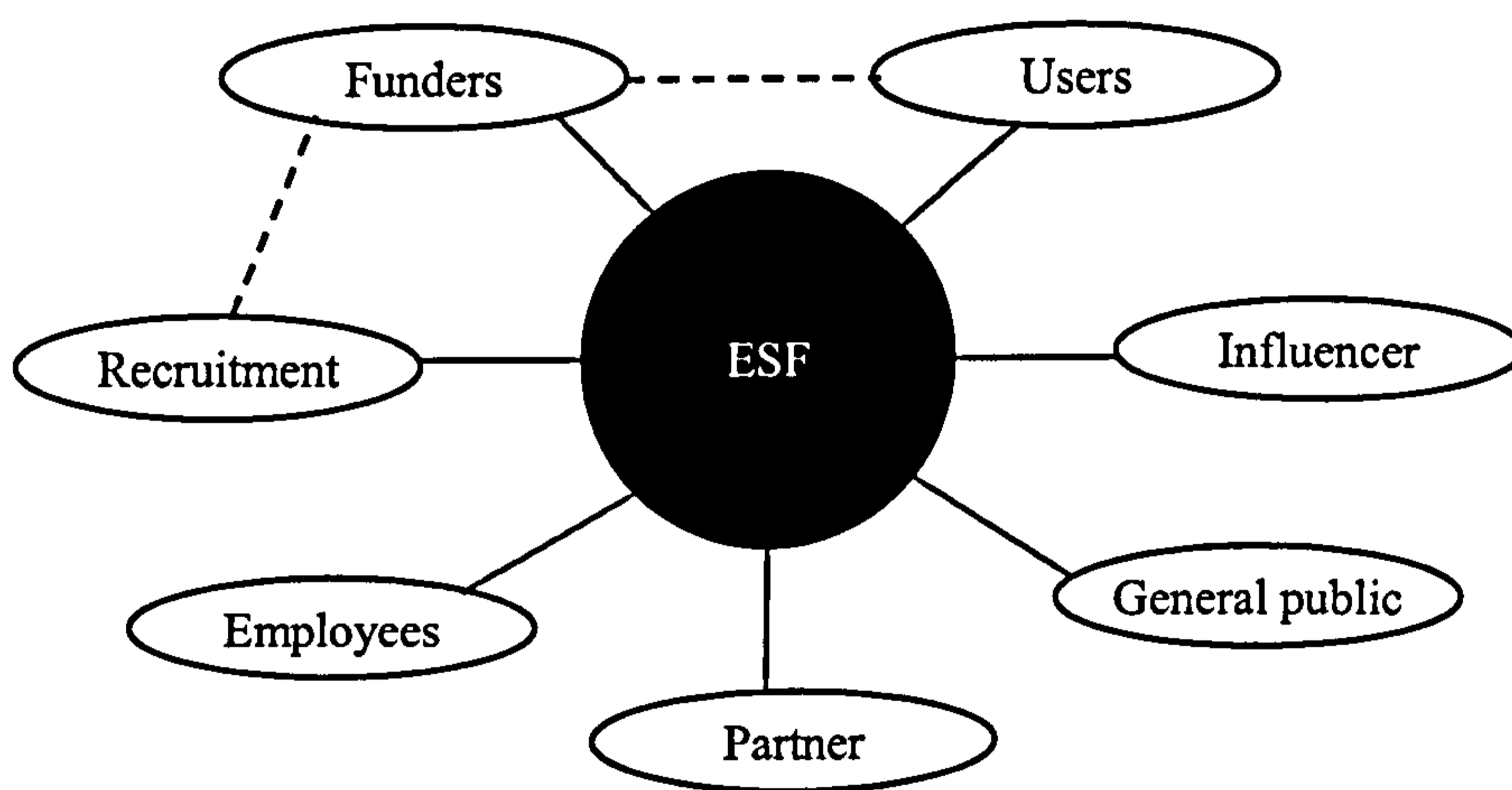


Knowledge management – the data indicated that knowledge was held in pockets within the organisation, which operated as a series of individual product silos. A central implication of the desired corporate brand positioning was the need to improve the flow of knowledge and best practice across the organisation.

Strategic development – key themes emerging from the data were the need for strategic developments to be planned and co-ordinated across the organisation to support the new corporate brand proposition. This called for a move away from more localised or sequential strategic planning by various parts of the organisation.

As a further stage of analysis the research group also identified the key audiences for ESF communications (Figure 9.8). This exercise was considered an important input to the development of the corporate brand statements as it helped inform the universe of recipients for communication. Further, it indicated that a number of the ESF audiences were inter-connected. For example, the members of the ESF who contributed funds.

Figure 9.8 Audience mapping by research group



were also users of the ESF’s outputs and programmes, whilst recruitment also occurred from these funding bodies. This led the group to conclude that consistency of communication was important to build profile and reputation with these cross-over stakeholders and informed the approach to RQ2 detailed in the following section.

Measuring Corporate Brand Communications consistency as an output

The section below outlines the approach adopted for this study, which follows Krippendorff’s (1980) model for the conduct of content analysis, as explained in Chapter Seven.

Sampling

To measure the consistency of Corporate Brand Communications as an output the researcher had to adopt a suitable measurement sample as a first step in the analysis. Referring back to the phase one interventions of the study, the data indicated that the ESF audience typology was blurred by the presence of crossover stakeholders. It was, therefore, important that the researcher find a suitable measure of published communications that reflected all of these audiences, but also provided a reliable sample for conducting content analysis within the timeframe of the study.

During the initial interviews the emerging role of the corporate website as the prime vehicle for communication and information dissemination, was highlighted by a number of respondents. Further discussion with the ESF Communication team, and an analysis of current use of the site (Appendix 9.4, page 296) suggested that this had become a prime mode of communication with external audiences. Further, the absence of an internal intranet meant that the corporate website was also frequently used as a main information source by ESF staff. The researcher therefore concluded that the narrative sections of the corporate website fulfilled Weber's criteria of measurement reliability.

Weber (1990) recommends an approach to document sampling that yields interesting and theoretically useful generalisations while reducing the amount of information analysed. Krippendorf (1980) supports this view stating that the aim of any sampling plan is to yield representative samples of the phenomena of interest. Adopting the ESF website for measurement fulfilled this requirement as it allowed measurement of an interface that was representative of communication with all stakeholder audiences.

To preserve semantic coherence the researcher investigated the narrative text (defined as all headings and body copy) from the ESF corporate website. This text was downloaded onto a laptop computer direct from the website, as rich text format, (measurement universe 705 text lines) and imported into QSR nud.ist software for coding and analysis.

Recording and Data reduction

The analysis was conducted under similar conditions at two distinct intervals in December 1998 before the intervention and in September 1999 after the intervention.

The coding procedure was as follows:

Definition of recording units

Weber highlights six commonly used options; word; word sense; sentence; theme; paragraph; whole text. As the objective of the study was the measurement of Corporate Brand Communications consistency, the most appropriate measure was the sentence, recorded by the number of lines. This unit of measurement enabled the researcher to consistently capture and measure each concept as it occurred in the text.

Definition of categories

In constructing a definition of categories the researcher was guided by Krippendorf's view that categories should be clearly defined and distinctive from each other. For the initial analysis a coding frame was created based upon the corporate brand definitions generated from the data collected during the pilot study (Figure 9.3). The researcher judged that these definitions fulfilled Krippendorf's criteria. To make the coding frame exhaustive, a fifth category was added for all items that did not describe the four defined categories (termed non-brand elements).

Additional rigour was also achieved by the method of coding. Use of a qualitative data software for the study meant that the rules for coding text were explicit, and capable of generating formally comparable results (Weber, 1990). This approach also offered stability of coding with inconsistencies minimised.

A number of analytical techniques were considered for data recording ranging from frequencies to techniques such as cross-tabulations and cluster analysis. In making the most appropriate selection the researcher was guided by Krippendorf who states that

frequencies are the most common form of data representation as they highlight the degree of attention given to a certain subject.

The analysis was then conducted in two phases. For the initial classification each text line was coded using the coding frame explained in Figure 9.3. For the secondary classification a further stage of analysis was conducted to code the text within each category in terms of the different concepts that appeared within each category of coding.

This approach is the opposite of clustering (Krippendorf, 1980), where the initial category concepts are then interrogated to examine how many sub-concepts are communicated. In this way the consistency of language used was highlighted by the analysis.

Data display

The data from each stage of content analysis was displayed in two ways. Relative frequencies were compared for the two stages of analysis to show the relative importance of each category within the sample universe. Absolute frequencies were then contrasted for each category to show the consistency of communication, within each defined brand category. The results of this process are displayed in Figures 9.9 and 9.10 with data tables supplied in Appendix 9.8 (page 305).

Figure 9.9 Overview of ESF content analysis results

Content Analysis 1: December 1998

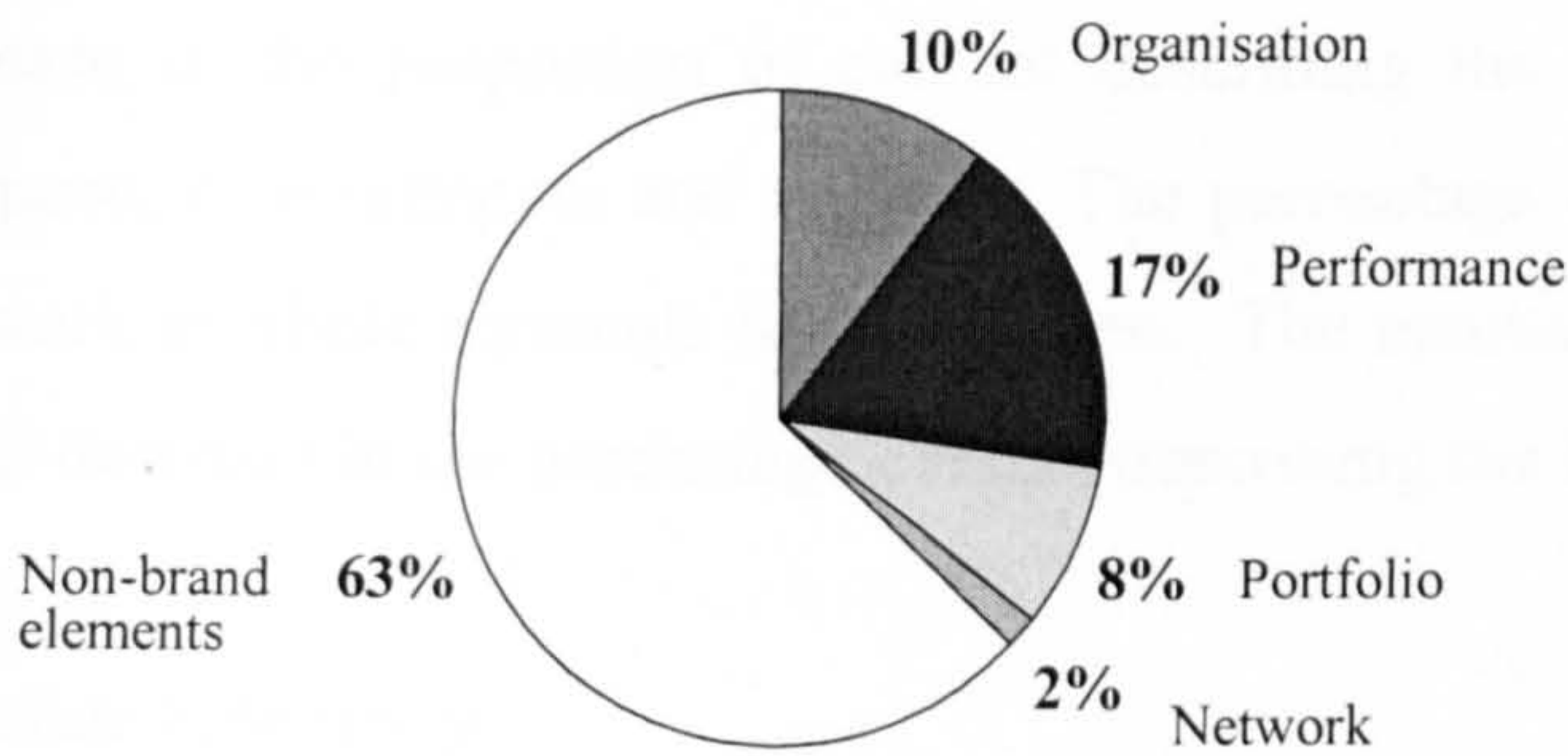
Brand Element	Number of text units	% of total sample
Organisation Elements		
Purpose	45 text units	6.4%
Commitments	14 text units	2.0%
Values	13 text units	1.8%
<i>Total organisation elements</i>		<u>10.2%</u>
Performance Elements		
Products	55 text units	7.8%
Services	66 text units	9.4%
<i>Total performance elements</i>		<u>17.2%</u>
Portfolio Elements		
Product brands	57 text units	8.1%
Customers	0	-
<i>Total portfolio elements</i>		<u>8.1%</u>
Network Elements	11 text units	1.6%

Content Analysis 2: September 1999

Brand Element	Number of text units	% of total sample
Organisation Elements		
Purpose	49 text units	7.0%
Commitments	49 text units	7.0%
Values	105 text units	15.0%
<i>Total organisation elements</i>	203 text units	<u>29.0%</u>
Performance Elements		
Products	134 text units	19.0%
Services	21 text units	3.0%
<i>Total performance elements</i>	155 text units	<u>22.0%</u>
Portfolio Elements		
Product brands	42 text units	6.0%
Customers	0	-
<i>Total portfolio elements</i>	42 text units	<u>6.0%</u>
Network Elements	35 text units	5.0%

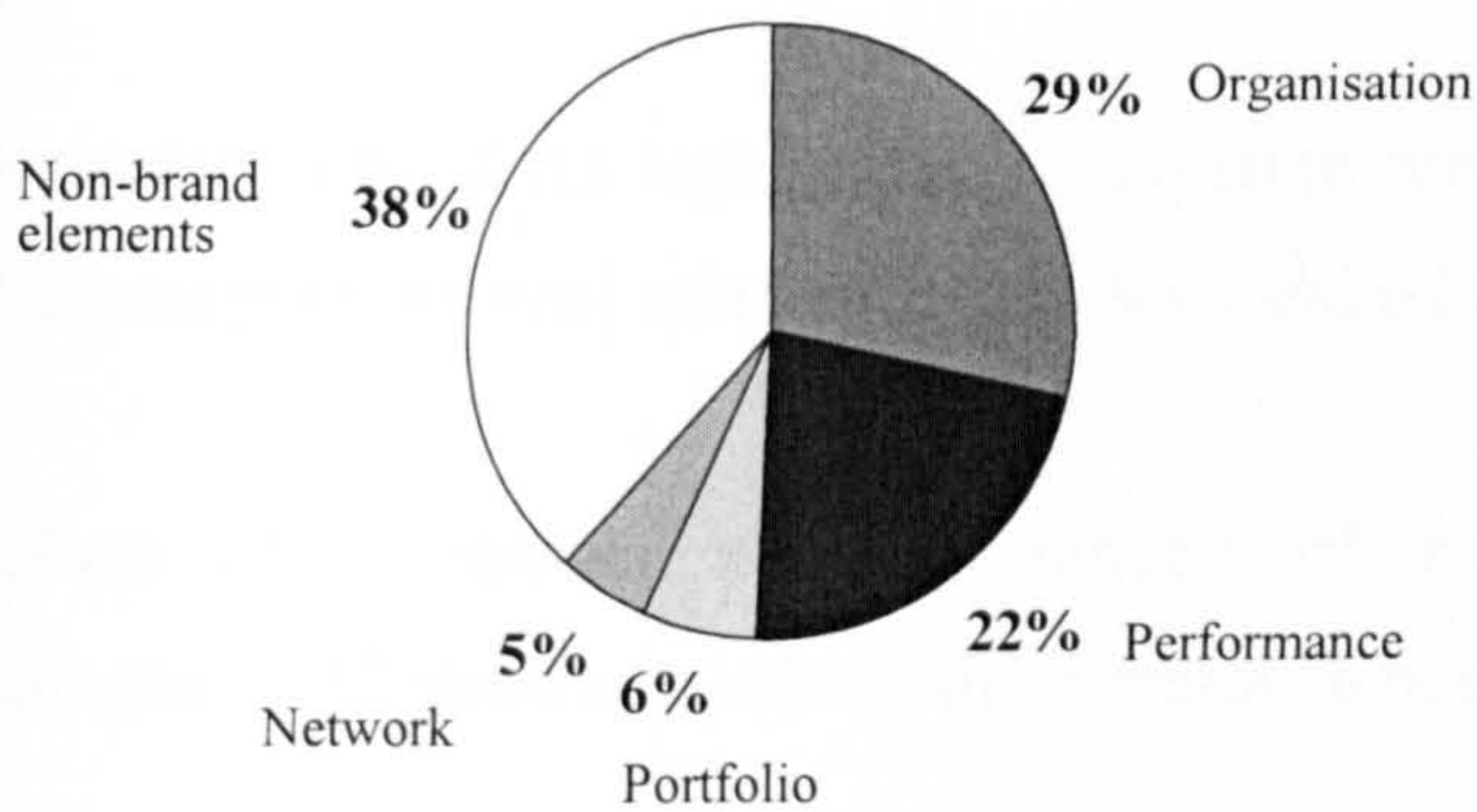
Figure 9.10 ESF relative frequency content analysis results

Content Analysis 1: December 1998



The pie chart above shows initial coding results from the sample expressed as a pie chart to show the relative importance of the defined brand elements. It is noted that almost two-thirds of the sample comprises communication content that is non-brand related.

Content Analysis 2: September 1999



The post-intervention figures, represented as a pie chart above, show a far higher proportion of total communication relating to the brand (non-brand communication content has fallen to 38%). Organisation elements have substantially increased and the percentage of performance and network elements of the whole has increased.

Interpretation of findings

Relative Frequency

The proportion of total communications content related to the brand had risen from 37% to 62% during the period between measurements. This rise reflected a substantial increase in the proportion of content describing the Organisation attribute elements (purpose, commitments and values). The percentage content of the Performance and Network attribute elements had also risen. The results of the analysis also indicated a slight decrease in the percentage content describing the Portfolio attribute elements.

Absolute Frequency

These findings related specifically to the measurement of corporate brand consistency as set out in the research design. Discussion of each attribute, which are presented in Appendix 9.8, is detailed in the following section:

Organisation attributes

Purpose - The findings from Content Analysis (CA1) show a fragmentation of message with 16 different concepts expressed within the 40 text units. CA2 has less total text units but a more consistent message centred on two concepts.

Commitments - CA1 highlights nine separate concepts in 13 text units. CA2 showed an increase in the total number of text units and a focus on three concepts.

Values - CA1 showed a limited number of text units and high fragmentation of concepts. CA2 showed a substantial increase in consistency and frequency of concepts.

Performance attributes

Products - CA1 showed 10 different concepts with five of these concepts featuring as three text units or less. CA2 showed greater frequency and consistency of concepts.

Services - CA1 indicated 20 different concepts, again with a high proportion featuring as three text units or less. CA2 showed less text units but a concentration on three concepts. These findings were probably explained by the consolidation of concepts in the 'products' category and the increased emphasis on 'commitments' and 'values' categories.

Portfolio attributes

Product brands - The high frequency for 'standing committee activities' in CA1 reflected the fact that lists of activities were included in the data without any description. Data in CA2 provided greater narrative explanation of the role of these committees.

Network attributes

CA1 showed a low frequency of text units and limited number of concepts. CA2 showed an increase in the number of text units and focus on two concepts.

Validation of findings

Before the researcher considered what inferences could be made from this data, it was first deemed important to consider issues of reliability and validity (Figure 9.11). Krippendorf (1980) states that a reliable procedure should yield consistent results from the same set of phenomena, regardless of the circumstances of application. The main aim of testing reliability in this case was to establish whether the data obtained from the process could provide a trustworthy basis for answering the Research Question.

Both Weber and Krippendorf highlight four types of reliability: stability; reproducibility; accuracy. Approaches to test these elements are summarised in Figure 9.12.

Figure 9.11 Krippendorff's (1980) typology for reliability and validity

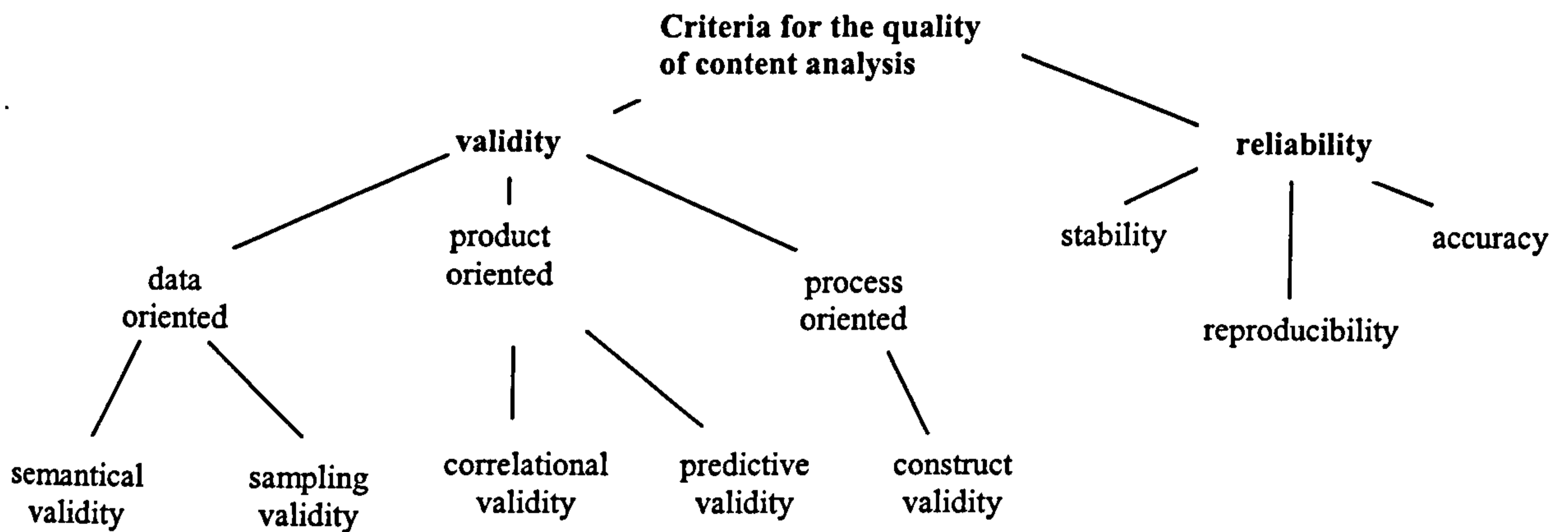


Figure 9.12 Types of reliability

Types of reliability	Reliability designs	Errors assessed
Stability	Test-retest	Intra-observer inconsistencies
Reproducibility	Test-test	Intra-observer inconsistencies and inter-observer disagreements
Accuracy	Test-standard	Intra-observer inconsistencies, inter-observer disagreements and systematic deviations from a norm

Source: Krippendorff, 1980

Stability tests

Stability tests were conducted on each stage of the data analysis to ensure that the coding process was invariant over time. This was conducted as a test-test situation with the data coded twice by the researcher within a one-week period. These tests yielded the following figures:

Content Analysis 1 - 96% accuracy

Content Analysis 2 - 98% accuracy

For the first round of content analysis there were 13 text lines that showed different coding in the test-test situation. The researcher then followed Krippendorff's approach using single category reliability to identify that these differences in coding related to two categories ('commitments' and 'services'). This resulted in a refined definition of the coding description for each category. In this way Weber's condition that coding categories be mutually exclusive was fulfilled. Krippendorff states that there is no set figure for data reliability. However, the researcher was guided by the views of Weber that a figure in excess of 80% gives a good indication of reliability.

Reproducibility tests

Reproducibility tests were conducted to assess whether the coding process could claim intercoder reliability. This was achieved at each stage of the content analysis by sending the coding frame together with a 100 text-line sample to the Head of Communication at ESF. These results of the intercoder reliability tests were calculated using a co-efficient from Krippendorff (1980) for testing the reliability of small sample sizes (Scott's 1955 agreement co-efficient). This is stated as follows:

$$pi = \frac{\% \text{ of observed matches} - \% \text{ of expected matches}}{1 - \% \text{ of expected matches}}$$

Based upon an expected matches figure of 80% (Weber), the agreement co-efficient was calculated as follows:

Content Analysis 1: December 1998

$$pi = 1 - \frac{100 - 98}{100 - 80} = 0.9$$

Content Analysis 2: September 1999

$$pi = 1 - \frac{100 - 95}{100 - 80} = 0.75$$

Each of these high levels of coding agreements and high co-efficients were taken as a strong indicator of intercoder reliability.

Accuracy tests

Krippendorff states that in situations where messages are coded into categories, the standards against which accuracy can be established are rarely available. Thus, the reliability of the data was concluded by the researcher to be robust as indicated by the stability and reproducibility tests.

Validity

Both Weber and Krippendorff highlight the importance of validity in content analysis, as it provides assurance in research findings and enables the researcher to draw inferences with a high degree of confidence. Krippendorff notes that content analysis procedures that do not consider suitable means of validity findings are open to accusations of lack of rigour. The findings from this particular study were therefore considered using Krippendorff's typology (Figure 9.11).

Data oriented validity

Krippendorff highlights the need to consider how well the method of analysis represents the information inherent in the data. This can be interpreted as the degree to which the representation of the data in analysis corresponds to the researcher's initial conceptual framework for the study. Data oriented validity must therefore be reviewed under the following headings:

Semantical validity - assesses the degree to which the research method is sensitive to symbolic meanings. Given the context for this study, the explicit nature of the Research Question and the rigour of the sampling and data analysis process, a strong claim can be made that the findings showed semantical validity.

Sampling validity - Krippendorff states that a sample is valid to the extent that its composition corresponds to the composition of the universe for which it is intended to stand. The rationale for the selection of the ESF corporate website as a representative interface with all stakeholder audiences was justified earlier in the chapter as a representative sample of ESF communication activity.

Product oriented validity

Krippendorff's second category of validity is also described as pragmatical validity (Weber, 1990). This concept can be reviewed under two further headings:

Correlational validity - This is of particular concern when the phenomena of interest mediate between both the production and reception of images. As stated earlier this study concentrated on the production of messages only.

Predictive validity - content analysis is judged to have predictive validity if its inferences can be shown to exhibit high agreement with the phenomena. Once again, these findings can be related back to the initial corporate brand framework generated in the pilot study and Research Question.

Construct validity

Construct validity is used to assess the degree to which an analytical procedure functionally represents relations in the context of the data. However, Krippendorff states that when a content analysis procedure is designed de novo, as in the case of this study, it is almost impossible to establish construct validity without the aid of past experience or availability of concurrent indicators.

In summary, the measurement of Corporate Brand Communications consistency as an output as applied to this study, has explained the context for the study, the procedures adopted and highlighted the main findings. The interpretation of these findings has also been considered in relation to the twin concepts of reliability and validity. The research method was designed to check both intra-observer and inter-observer reliability and the main conditions for Krippendorff's typology of validity have also been addressed. Weber also asserts the importance of generalisability. This condition is answered by the application of the same framework and Research Question to further studies, which are detailed in the following chapters.

Reflection-on-action: Study conclusions

The intervention cycle approach to conducting multiple intervention studies (Figure 9.2) highlighted the need for a period of further analysis at the completion of the study. This was defined as the period where the researcher in the post-intervention phase returned to the data and re-coded the data for key concepts and themes emerging holistically from the study.

This procedure accords with the Argyris (1973) view of intervention as helping the client system. By adopting a participatory approach the researcher's intervention aimed to develop a new contextual model that explained the Corporate Brand Communications process. All main issues were again displayed using thematic conceptual matrices, organised according to Heron's extended epistemology of knowledge creation (Figure 9.13). The development of these data displays was discussed with the ESF Communications team as a further stage of validation. The main findings that emerged from this further analytical stage are discussed below.

Figure 9.13 ESF study reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrix

Post intervention stage - September 1999

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
1.0 Context for branding			
1.1 Absence of forum to review corporate brand	No clear forum or process to review the status and dynamics around the corporate brand	Lack of existing management process to manage corporate brand communication	Need to establish a clear process and forum for addressing corporate brand communication issues
1.2 Increasing demands for transparency	First phase of study highlighted external pressures on organisation to explain itself and its operations more fully	Expectations on organisation to be more open and allow external audiences to deepen their understanding of the organisation	Pressure on organisations to be more explicit in explaining their operations in terms of what they do and how and why they do it
1.3 Focus on external dynamics	Study provided the opportunity for the research group to review external dynamics around the ESF corporate brand	Ability of study to raise awareness of and create focus around the system of Corporate Brand Communication	Importance of creating a process that allows for examination of these external factors as part of the review process

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>2.0 Corporate Brand definitions</p> <p>2.1 Refinement of 'Reputation' definition</p>	<p>Finding that the concept of reputation had different meanings to participants – needed to develop a generally accepted understanding for these elements</p>	<p>Areas of disagreement generated by differing levels of understanding about branding and reputation</p>	<p>Importance of building group consensus on the key definitions of elements that comprise the corporate brand</p>
<p>2.2 Development of key organisation attributes</p>	<p>Group generated clearer definition of three key attributes – purpose, commitments and values – that comprise a category re-termed 'organisation attributes'</p>	<p>Opportunity to refine these definitions to achieve engagement of the research group</p>	<p>Broader definition of key organisation attributes provides an improved understanding of the key attributes of the organisation</p>
<p>2.3 Refinement of 'Network' definition</p>	<p>Research group had different understanding of the term network as it applied to scientific networks. Need for the study group to generate a revised definition to remove this confusion</p>	<p>Specific definition problem with this area that could be resolved by deepening the definition to provide clarity to the term</p>	<p>Need for researcher to invest time in the first phase of intervention to check for understanding of these definitions</p>
<p>2.4 Extension of network category to include relationships</p>	<p>Research group refined definition of this category to include description of key organisation relationships</p>	<p>Clarity provided by further discussion and refinement of the concepts within a certain category</p>	<p>Extension of network definition to include dependent relationships and further refinement of the corporate brand definition</p>

<p>2.5 Use of data displays to enable development of brand scenarios</p>	<p>Use of data monitors successful in helping group generate valid information</p>	<p>Importance of generating data in forms that enable the research group to understand and make decisions</p>	<p>Importance of developing specific tools to enable understanding and build commitment throughout the intervention process</p>
<p>Concept</p> <p>3.0 Common starting points for branding</p> <p>3.1 Overcoming fragmentation</p> <p>3.2 Building consensus</p> <p>3.3 Potential of data displays to build consensus</p>	<p>Presentational learning</p> <p>Initial stage presented challenges as participants had a number of divergent views on the current situation and desired future state of the corporate brand</p> <p>Requirement to build consensus in the initial stages of intervention to provide focus and commitment of research group</p> <p>Use of Customer Value Monitor a good tactic to make the research group focus on external requirements and generate consensus</p>	<p>Reflective interpretation</p> <p>Need to allow participants to express their own views early in the process but within a clear framework and to understand source of this fragmentation</p> <p>Importance of creating early alignment among the research group to build credibility for the study</p> <p>Development of these data displays as common starting points for the study process</p>	<p>Propositional learning</p> <p>First phase of intervention is critical to engage participants in the process and allow them to express their views</p> <p>In planning intervention researcher must actively consider strategies for building consensus in the first phase of intervention</p> <p>Application of Customer Value Monitors to help build consensus and create alignment among research group</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>4.0 Improving system effectiveness</p> <p>4.1 Sampling communication with crossover stakeholders</p>	<p>Need to find suitable content analysis sampling that reflects complex channels for communicating with crossover stakeholders pointed to website</p>	<p>Important to identify different stakeholders and examine communication channels used before deciding on best sampling measure</p>	<p>Need to identify and segment different audiences and map channels of formal communication before deciding on best sampling method</p>
<p>4.2 Adoption of corporate website as key communication measure</p>	<p>ESF had limited budget for communication therefore relied on certain key channels. Absence of intranet meant that corporate website was key channel for external and internal communication</p>	<p>Working with research group to identify these audiences and channels is vital to developing valid samples and measures</p>	<p>Need to develop dialogue with research group to identify these channels and audiences</p>
<p>4.3 Operational issues of communication control</p>	<p>Decentralised nature of organisation meant that much communication was devolved to separate teams creating problems of consistency and control</p>	<p>Need for an overall framework for communications that can be understood and supported throughout organisation</p>	<p>Role of communication to overcome structural difficulties by providing consistency and coherence to organisation</p>
<p>4.4 Creating effectiveness by reducing fragmentation</p>	<p>Content analysis results point to increased understanding of branding communications by focusing on a limited number of core attributes</p>	<p>Need to provide focus and clarity via a communication framework</p>	<p>Greater consistency can be achieved by focusing down on key elements rather than expanding number of elements communicated</p>

4.5 Significance of organizational attributes in system improvement	Largest increase in attributes measured occurred in organisation attributes category	Organisation attributes was area with least degree of clarity therefore framework of study helped group to develop clarity and more coherent approach to branded communications	Potential to improve consistency and clarity of communications through greater focus on organisation attributes
Concept 5.0 Linking corporate brand, communication and behaviour 5.1 Implications beyond communication 5.2 Using corporate brand to reveal inconsistencies in behaviour	Presentational learning Experience during interventions that there needed to be clear linkage established between corporate brand communication and behaviour of organisation, as fragmentation of communication was linked to different behaviour within sub-cultures Experience of research group was that the disconnects in behaviour and stated intentions of corporate brand could be highlighted by examination of the performance definitions	Reflective interpretation Impacts of corporate brand extend beyond communication to cover behaviour and the two concepts can be mutually reinforcing Corporate brand definition process can be used to identify areas of the organisation that do not conform to the performance attributes articulated as part of the study	Propositional learning Understanding that communication must fit within broader context of organisation behaviour Broader applications of the approach to Corporate Brand Communications to identify areas where there is mis-alignment of behaviour within the organisation

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>6.0 Linking corporate brand, structure and business processes</p> <p>6.1 Need to build understanding of operational processes as part of the study</p> <p>6.2 Identification of link with business processes</p> <p>6.3 Linkage with organisation structure</p> <p>6.4 Application of data displays to help inform this process</p>	<p>Requirement generated by the group to examine the underlying business processes that lead to fragmentation and inconsistency</p> <p>Lack of harmonisation of operational processes was identified as a key contributor to the absence of a consistent corporate brand presentation</p> <p>Corporate brand study identified as a means to build alignment and consistency across vertical silo organisation structure</p> <p>Generation of Business Process monitors helped group to identify current areas where business processes worked against corporate brand consistency</p>	<p>Need to look beyond communication to understand organisational issues that can create inconsistency</p> <p>Extension of scope of research group to consider causes of current fragmented branding</p> <p>Applications of study can extend into issues of organisation structure</p> <p>In later intervention phases need to get group to consider causes and implications of particular actions by discussing impacts</p>	<p>Link between brand communications and operations of the business which can act to reinforce the corporate brand or contradict it</p> <p>Researcher must be prepared to explore more fundamental root causes behind problems with the corporate brand communications system</p> <p>Scope for corporate brand studies to extend into implications for general management and corporate structure</p> <p>Allow the group to consider broader aspects and implications of corporate brand study and how it impacts the organisation</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>7.0 Role of Action Researcher</p> <p>7.1 Context setting is on-going</p>	<p>Dealing with multi-lingual team created need to establish common definitions</p> <p>Additional planning required when conducting European study</p>	<p>Importance of establishing common frame of reference at each intervention stage</p> <p>Need to actively plan each intervention stage for maximum impact owing to geographical distance</p>	<p>Need to continually re-engage research group and re-state definitions</p> <p>Important to carefully plan each intervention phase, setting expectations and schedules</p>
<p>7.2 Establishing a project champion</p>	<p>Distance forced need for a project champion within organisation</p>	<p>Need for a single, reliable point of contact who would resolve issues and represent project throughout</p>	<p>Part of enrolment process should involve identification of key project contact</p>
<p>7.3 Implications beyond communication</p>	<p>Experience of project were that implications beyond communication needed to be addressed</p> <p>Use of different data displays helped group to address wider issues</p>	<p>Research group need space and forum to consider wider implications of corporate brand</p> <p>Recognition of connectivity with issues of structure and other business processes important part of the study</p>	<p>Intervention style must be flexible to allow for this exploration of wider issues</p> <p>Need for researcher reflexivity to adjust interventions to allow group to focus on issues important to them at each stage</p>
<p>7.4 Post project review</p>	<p>Liaising with project contact in post project phase helped validate further the study</p>	<p>Involve subjects in the post study write up via reflection on action matrices</p>	<p>Important to validate final write up as a final stage of study</p>

Context for corporate branding

The phase one intervention was vital to establishing the main parameters for corporate branding. This included an appreciation of the external market dynamics for the organisation in addition to the external image and internal culture of ESF.

Within the context of this study the increasing demands for transparency about the organisation, and how it operates, called for the need to establish a corporate brand review process that addressed organisational communication as a first stage in the process. One main finding of the study was that there was no clear forum or format within the organisation to review and discuss these dynamics and consider their impact on the ESF corporate brand. The intervention process allowed the research group the opportunity to address these issues within a framework.

Corporate brand definition

The study clearly identified a gap in the clarification of the organisational attributes of the organisation: its vision, commitments and stated values. The development of clear definitions for each of these elements was seen as an important first step in defining performance standards for the organisation.

The initial corporate brand definition, drawn from the UOVP framework (Knox and Maklan, 1998), and adopted in the pilot study, was found to be robust. However, two areas of redefinition that were identified from the data as important were the elements referred to in the initial model as 'Reputation' and 'Network'.

The Reputation element was broadened to cover the expression of three key Organisation attributes. The Network concept was identified as too limiting and potentially confusing within the context of this study. Reviewing the data there was a consensus that this element should cover all an organisation's key dependent relationships.

The use of an Organisation Brand Monitor to help identify the relative strength and importance of each of these elements provided a means to display valid information and a clear process and guide for the management team to identify both the current situation and desired future corporate brand projection.

Common starting points for corporate branding activity

Identification of a clear common starting point for corporate branding activity was deemed necessary to reduce complexity and help the management team to navigate through the fragmentation of views and approaches. The use of a Customer Value monitor as an approach and method of data display helped to build an initial consensus across the management team.

It was also clear that much of this fragmentation had evolved and sub-cultures emerged in the absence of a clear unifying corporate voice. Communication from the centre was therefore recognised as a key catalyst in initiating this change within the organisation.

The role of communication in improving 'system effectiveness'

The presence of crossover stakeholders (audiences having multiple relationships with the organisation) created a situation where audience definition was important in terms of the brand. Use of the corporate brand articulation to identify each audience and to explain the unique relationship that the organisation held with each was a key stage in the intervention cycle. These crossover stakeholders meant that the organisation operated as a conduit between internal and external audiences – a dynamic situation that could be actively managed using the Customer Value and Organisation Brand monitors.

The decentralised approach to communication within the organisation also highlighted the need to establish communication guidelines using the corporate brand definition. Failure to achieve this consistency was considered to result in the fragmentation of messages and hinder the development of a consistent corporate profile. The process that emerged from the intervention cycles involved the development of an audience-driven,

‘bottom-up’ approach that utilised a Customer Value monitor, combined with an organisation-driven, ‘top-down’ process to develop a common organisation language. The corporate brand definitions emerged from the dynamic conversation between these two approaches.

Linking corporate brand, communication and behaviour

Evidence from the data highlighted that the implications for corporate brand development extend beyond communication to behaviour, with the fragmentation of communication reflected and reinforced by inconsistent behaviours within the organisation. Further, the corporate brand initiative was extended in process terms to examine how the new corporate brand statements could help to define behaviour within the organisation. These inconsistencies in behaviour were revealed through analysis of the performance elements of the corporate brand. Use of a Corporate Brand Monitor also helped the ESF team to identify what changes to behaviour would be required to achieve the desired corporate brand.

Linking corporate brand, structure and business processes

The intervention cycles also highlighted the need to align the corporate brand definition work with an understanding of the operational processes of the organisation, as these influenced organisational behaviour. In the context of this study the lack of harmonisation of operational processes was identified as a key contributor to the absence of a consistent corporate brand. The introduction of a Process Monitor was successful in helping the management team to identify their various operational areas and understand how this could either align or misalign with the corporate brand definition. This process also pointed to issues of organisation structure, with the corporate brand emerging as an initiative that could build horizontal links between the vertical silos of the organisation and a catalyst that could help the integration of new areas into the business.

Role of Action Researcher: managing the intervention cycle

The reflection-on-action stage also addressed the third research question concerning the role of the researcher during the intervention stages. In conducting this analysis the researcher built on the findings of the pilot study stage, re-analysing all the project data and displaying the main elements in the form of a further thematic conceptual matrix (Figure 9.12).

One key finding of this process was the need to continually re-engage the research group in the study. This was especially apparent in the conduct of this study as the research contained a number of different nationalities. This placed additional emphasis on the need for the researcher to establish common frames of reference and definitions at each stage of the intervention. This need for context setting throughout the study was also necessitated by the fact that the study was conducted at distance with interventions carefully scheduled at the ESF offices in Strasbourg. This placed a premium on good planning and communication throughout.

The researcher also concluded that the appointment of a project champion within the organisation was crucial to the successful completion of the study. This individual acted as a key co-ordinator, liaison point and source of issue resolution as the study progressed. The study also benefited from the fact that the individual in question had sufficient seniority within the organisation.

A further important finding on the conduct of the study was the need for the researcher to build sufficient flexibility into the study process to enable the research group to address important implications of the branding process that moved beyond communication. In the context of this study, the group deemed it important to examine the link between the brand and business processes and structure. As part of the reflection process the researcher identified this need for flexibility to allow the group to consider all options that were deemed important to them.

The main findings from this reflection-on-action analysis were then stored for comparison with the data generated from subsequent studies, which are described in the following chapters.

Chapter Ten: Logistics Consulting Partners (LCP) study

At the conclusion of the pilot study the researcher drew up a list of criteria for selecting suitable organisations to study. Through the researcher's consultancy experience and contacts a shortlist of three organisations were selected for an initial approach.

One of the shortlisted organisations had been suggested by a contact of the researcher. The contact, Dr Steven Tibble was an independent research and marketing consultant who had been retained by a client to research internal and external attitudes to the organisation. Dr Tibble was aware of the researcher's academic project and offered to make an introduction to the company in question.

Negotiation of access

At the request of this contact the researcher provided a brief synopsis of his study and interest in the field of Corporate Brand Communications. Based upon the synopsis the researcher was invited to make an informal presentation to the management team at Logistics Consulting Partners (LCP) in January 1999.

At this meeting, held at LCP's head office in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, the researcher made a presentation outlining the background to his study, his intervention framework and the objectives for possible research into the LCP corporate brand. The management team had a number of links with Cranfield University, which were unknown to the researcher at the time of his initial approach to the organisation. These ranged from LCP individuals recruited from Cranfield School of Management, to a number of guest lectures given by the LCP Chairman at Cranfield and the presence of a member of the faculty as a Non-Executive director of the business.

These links made the LCP management team receptive to the researcher's proposal for an academic research study. However, the LCP team still requested further details on the process for the study and possible outputs, with particular emphasis on how this

project would benefit the organisation. This information was confirmed in writing to the LCP Marketing Manager, Gabrielle Blackman-Shepperd.

In response to this information a further meeting was arranged with the Managing Director, Dr John Lockton and the Marketing Manager. At this meeting the researcher presented a written synopsis of the study and time plan which indicated a period of one year to complete the study. This timeframe had been prepared to reflect the fact that the management team had significant operational and client responsibilities and it was clearly understood that these must take precedence over the conduct of the study. Despite this fact, the Managing Director indicated that the importance of the reputation of the business was understood by the management team and acknowledged that the researcher's initial presentation had shown the relationship between the corporate brand and corporate reputation.

At the conclusion of this second meeting the Managing Director gave his approval to the study. The timeframe for negotiating access was relatively short (three months) for this study. In this case the early engagement of the management team and timing of the researcher's approach were crucial in ensuring commitment. The initial presentation to the full LCP management team was also important in allowing the team to assess whether the researcher would have the skills and character to undertake an effective study within the organisation.

Suitability of selected organisation for study

In following a similar structure to the previous study, the suitability of LCP for a Participatory Action Research approach was again assessed against Peters and Robinson's (1984) four key criteria for Action Research. The main points arising from this assessment are outlined below.

Problem focus

LCP had grown considerably over the past few years and was described by the Managing Director as 'entering the third phase of its business life'. The stated business strategy was to evolve the LCP business offer from focusing on more technical Supply Chain issues to a concentration on broader logistics and supply chain problems and their impact on corporate business strategy. This change in focus involved the business in building a dialogue with a different target audience of senior executives and main Board Directors. The LCP team acknowledged that managing the company's corporate brand and reputation was a vital element in this change. Further, recent market research conducted by the LCP marketing team had highlighted an existing perceptions gap with LCP viewed as a small, specialist technical consultancy.

Action orientation

The fact that the LCP management team acknowledged the role of branding and reputation in effecting this change was important to the conduct of the study as it reflected a willingness to invest valuable management time in the process. Further, the management team could see the potential business benefits in creating a stronger and re-defined corporate brand for the business.

The role of communication content analysis in the process was also welcomed as an indication that it would provide data that enabled the team to measure current communications and benchmark progress of their marketing efforts. This reflected one of the core competencies of the management team who used complex data analysis techniques as part of their business offer and were therefore open to such processes in the marketing and brand management field.

Cyclical process

The management team demonstrated a clear willingness to be involved in the process of brand development. Given the significant operational workloads of the senior

management team it was accepted that the only way that the study could be conducted was via a series of planned interventions by the researcher.

Whilst this was an important point in negotiating initial access for the study it was also recognised by the management team, and the Managing Director in particular, that there would need to be considerable flexibility in the planning of each phase. This was to ensure both momentum for the study and not hinder the day-to-day conduct of client business. This constraint was felt by the researcher to be consistent with the research design, which allowed for a number of phases of intervention over a defined time period.

Collaboration

Based upon the initial meeting with the full management team it was clear that they were extremely interested in the subject of branding and reputation management from both an operational and intellectual perspective. This helped fulfil Peters and Robinson's fourth requirement as the senior team exhibited a willingness to engage in the study and to contribute actively as individuals to the debate. This situation was also aided by the team's interest in process development, which was recognised by the researcher to be another core competence of the LCP business.

It was concluded from this analysis that the LCP organisation fulfilled all four of Peters and Robinson's criteria and was also a suitable organisation for study in terms of the timing of the researcher's approach and the support of the senior management team.

Background to the study

LCP was founded in 1985 by Alan Braithwaite, who remained as Chairman. The original vision for the business was to merge new Supply Chain thinking with the use of PC technology to process data and analyse performance. The LCP Managing Director described the company at the time of the study as entering the third phase of its growth.

The first phase ran from 1985-1993 and was characterised as the entrepreneurial phase of formation, early client relationships and survival.

The business underwent a second phase of growth from 1994-1997 with the development of the consultancy into a recognised leading boutique in response to a strategic review, which had been undertaken in 1994. The output of this review had been a stated objective to become a recognised leading independent Supply Chain Management consultancy. This period also saw investment in promoting the LCP brand, the formation of a new management team and the establishment of a strong working relationship with Martin Christopher, Professor of Marketing and Logistics at Cranfield School of Management

At the start of the study the LCP structure comprised a small Board of four people and a focused operational management team of five individuals headed up by the Managing Director. Individuals and responsibilities were detailed as follows:

John Lockton	Managing Director
Alan Braithwaite	Executive Chairman and Technical Director
Richard Budd	Operations Partner
Phil Collinge	Development Programmes and Initiatives
Julian Mosquera	Supply Chain Consulting Approach

At the time of the study LCP was defined as a niche Supply Chain and Logistics Management Consultancy, which delivered its projects by assembling teams from a broad pool of consultants. This included both permanent staff and network associates who would be drawn upon for specific technical or sector skills. The consultants had been structured in five levels that ran from Principal Consultant through to Manager, Senior Consultant, Consultant and Junior Consultant.

The management team had undertaken a strategic review of the business in 1998. This had created a clearly articulated vision, targets and strategy for the business. The vision for the business was to become *'the leading Supply Chain and Logistics Management*

Consultancy in Europe, with a real global presence'. To realise this vision the management team had set a number of specific targets. These included establishing offices and practices in several countries outside the UK, developing a range of 'best in class' services and achieving high levels of profitability on these services.

This vision and defined targets had been consolidated into four main streams of business development, which were to form the strategy for the growth of the business. These were stated as:

- Formation of a value-creating business which stimulated a flair for innovation
- Creation of a European organisation with global reach
- Development of a broader and deeper service capability within the business
- Establishment of a business structure to stimulate, develop and support LCP people.

It was recognised that a key plank in the strategy would be the development of a stronger LCP brand to help reposition the business and enable the consultancy to enhance its growing reputation.

At the start of the study the business had offices in Berkhamsted and Colchester in the UK and Alexandria in Virginia, USA.

Objectives for the study

Following the approval of the Managing Director to undertake the study, the researcher refined the intervention protocol (Appendix 10.1, page 312), which drew from the case study protocol developed by Yin (1994). Given the Managing Director's initial observations on maintaining momentum and commitment to the study the protocol was viewed by the researcher as a key tactic in addressing these challenges and increasing the reliability of the study's findings.

In the case of this particular study the intervention protocol was considered to be important to set expectations on anticipated outputs for both parties (researcher and

research subjects). The protocol outlined the scope and procedures for the study and its development was guided by the objectives for the study defined as:

1. To investigate the process of developing consistency in LCP Corporate Brand Communications through a Participatory Action Research approach.
2. To measure the output of LCP Corporate Brand Communications using a sample of published communications taken before and after the researcher's intervention to see whether such an approach leads to improved '*system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973).
3. To document the conduct of the study to reflect upon the potential for such an intervention approach to extend the insights gained from a traditional case study.

As this study would rely heavily on the involvement and continued engagement of the senior management team, intervention cycles had to be carefully planned to ensure effective data collection and to meet the criteria of systematic method and orderliness (Reason, 1998). The stages in this process are detailed below using the subject headings adopted in the previous study.

Examining the process of developing corporate brand consistency

The study was conducted following the research design explained in Chapter Seven and followed a similar process to the intervention phases adopted for the previous study. These are described below in terms of the data collection and data analysis stages of each intervention cycle.

Data collection (Action phases)

This study featured four distinct intervention phases (Figure 10.1):

- **Phase one:** Initial meetings and face-to-face interviews with the Senior Management team and the marketing team
- **Phase two:** A further round of face-to-face working sessions with the Senior Management team to develop proposals for the corporate brand

- **Phase three:** Further corporate brand development sessions with the Senior Management team after the development of a new marketing plan and ongoing contact with the Managing Director
- **Phase four:** A series of in-depth face-to-face exit interviews with the Senior Management team to review the process of the study and understand what had been learned from the study

It should be stated that, owing to circumstances beyond the control of the researcher, the study was not completed fully in terms of RQ2 as the organisation delayed the intended overhaul of their communications material (on-line and print) until after the completion of the study. There were also delays to the process of the study due to time and business constraints faced by the senior management team, which extended the timeframe of the study considerably. However, the unforeseen extension to the period of the study offered other advantages in terms of a longer timeframe for the research participants to reflect on their learning and the impact of the study to the business.

The study also yielded rich data which comprised 60 hours of active intervention time and approximately 240 hours of reflection-on-action time with the data generated from each intervention, making a total of 300 hours for the study over its duration

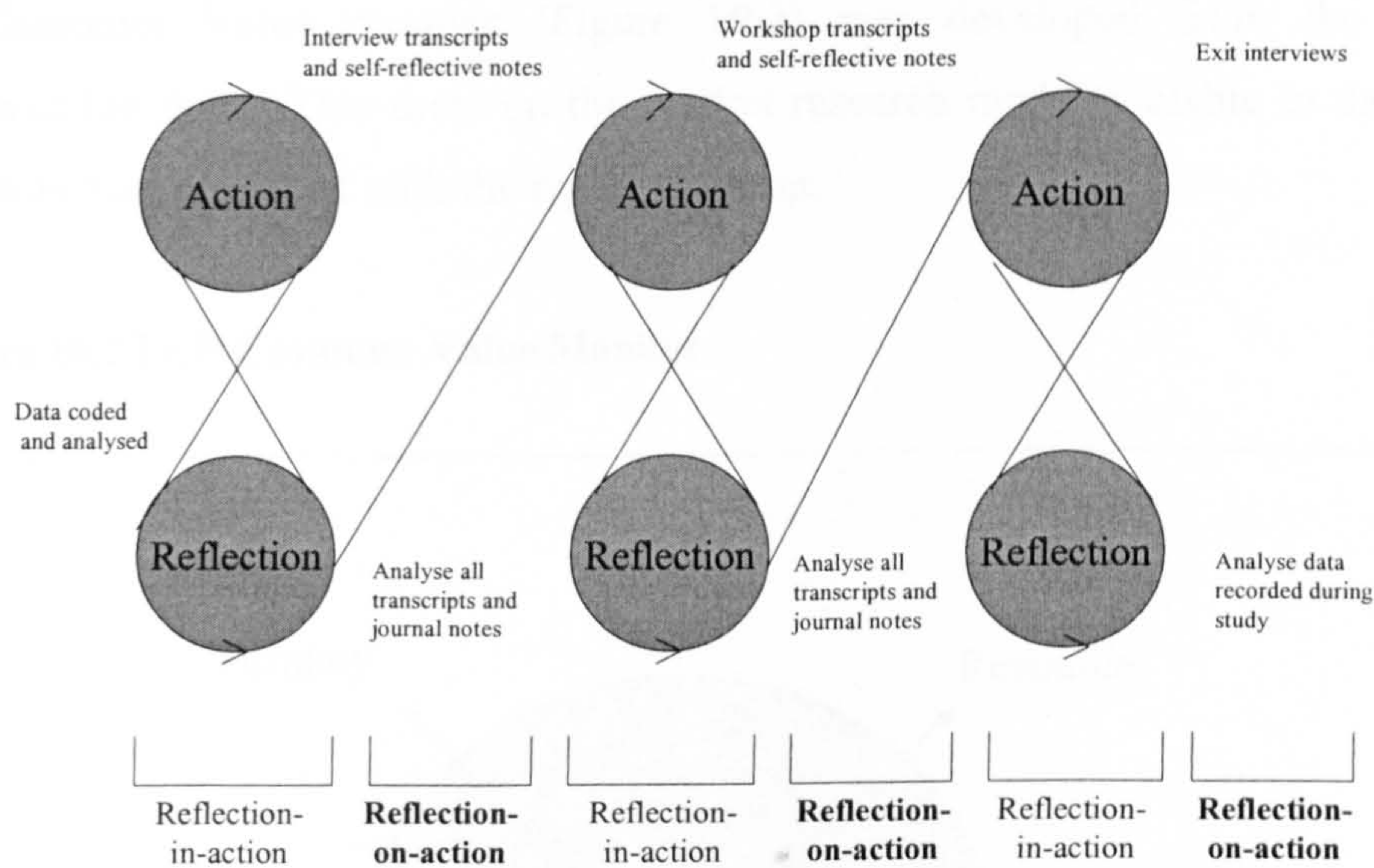
Phase one interventions

A series of initial interviews were conducted with the LCP management team at the LCP offices during April and May 1999. These interviews included representatives from the marketing and communications team and were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 10.2, page 315).

The objective of this phase was to establish the context for branding and discuss the key components of the LCP corporate brand. As part of this phase the researcher was also supplied with the market research conducted by LCP's marketing consultant. This data gave the researcher considerable information on current perceptions of the LCP brand from both inside and outside the organisation.

Consistent with the first phase of other studies within the programme each interview conducted followed a similar procedure that involved the recording for transcription by a third party. During the conduct of the interviews the researcher also made extensive notes (Appendix 10.4, page 327) to record key elements and also his own self-reflective comments and feelings throughout the interview. After each interview a contact summary sheet was produced for each subject to capture key issues.

Figure 10.1 Approach to data collection and analysis adopted for LCP study



Once the interview had been transcribed the researcher returned to his interview notes and added these self-reflective comments to the transcripts (a sample of this practice is shown in Appendix 10.3, page 317).

Reflection-in-action (Within case data analysis)

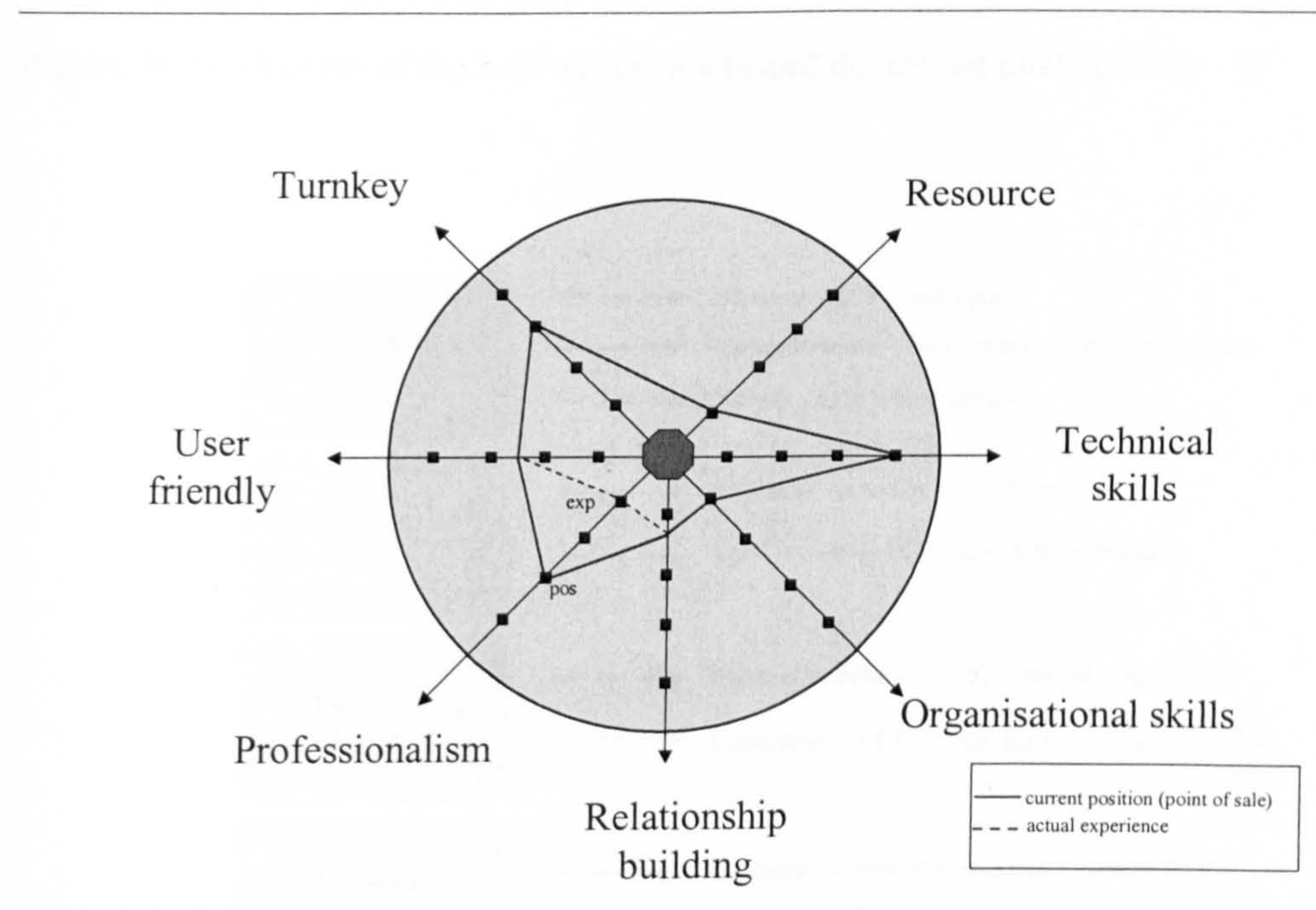
All transcripts from the taped interviews and journal notes were coded using a qualitative data software package (QSR nud.ist). Following a first run of coding on screen, the researcher went to hard copy and used marginal remarks to aid analysis and

add meaning and clarity to the notes. Coding was conducted utilising a coding frame based on the framework generated during the pilot study and adapted to reflect the data emerging from the phase one interventions.

A similar approach to data display was adopted in this study as the ESF study with the use of thematic conceptual matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This type of data display was considered most effective in identifying the various LCP brand attributes. (A sample thematic conceptual matrix from this process is detailed in Appendix 10.8, page 336).

A Customer Value monitor (Figure 10.2) was developed from the phase one intervention data. This drew on the market research made available to the researcher and was then modelled with the research group.

Figure 10.2 LCP Customer Value Monitor



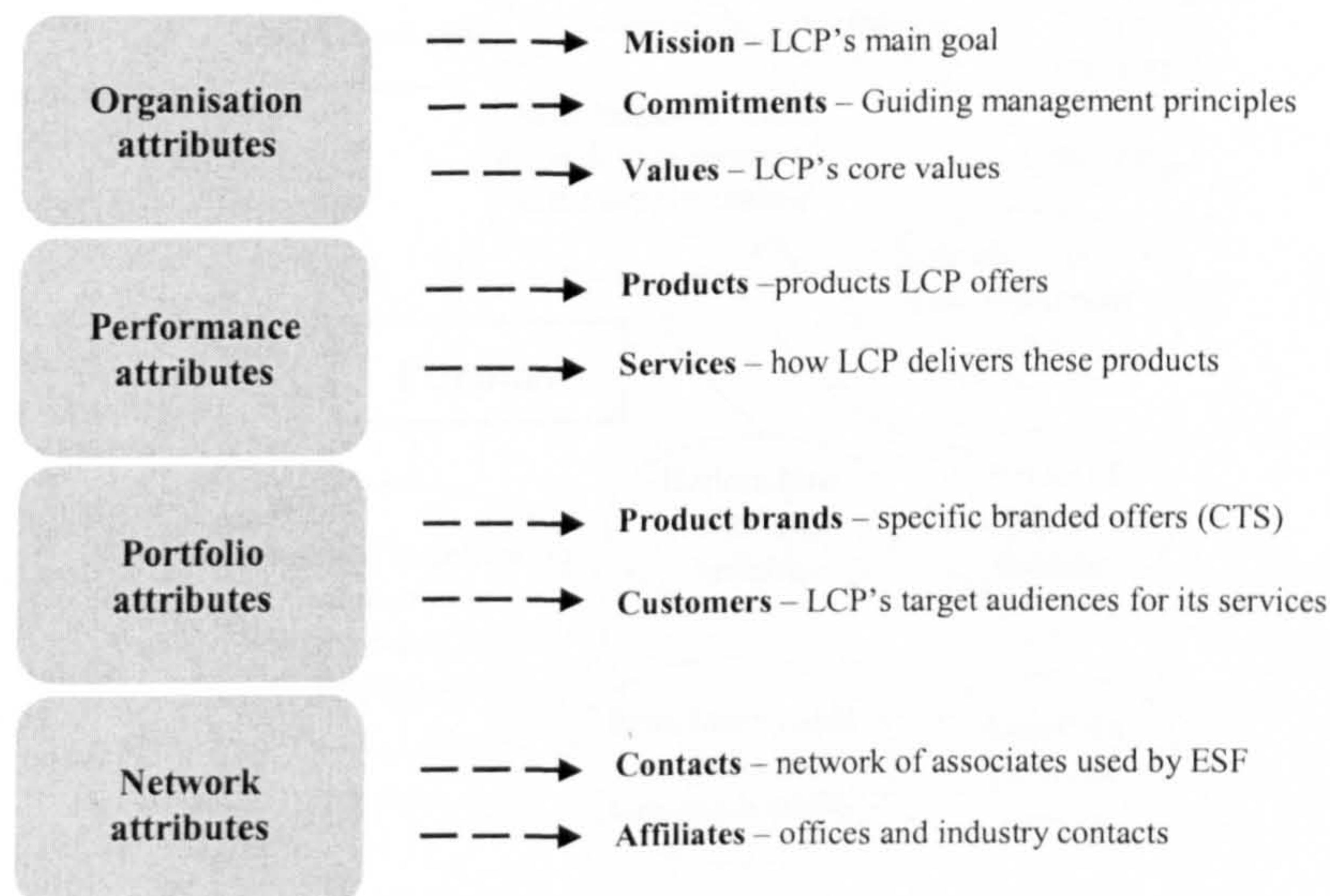
The monitor highlighted seven main components of customer value and this was used in a group session to discuss these drivers and LCP's current performance against these drivers (mapped as the solid line on the monitor).

Phase two interventions

Following the first phase of interventions the researcher analysed the data collected. In preparation for the second phase of interventions all data was coded using a coding frame based upon the framework generated from the pilot study, together with any emerging issues on the process of managing the corporate brand. The findings of this process were then used as input at a workshop with the group in June 1999.

During the session the research group debated one particular driver, professionalism and identified a disconnection between the projection of this quality at 'point of sale' and the actual experience when working with the company.

Figure 10.3 Definition of the LCP corporate brand developed during study

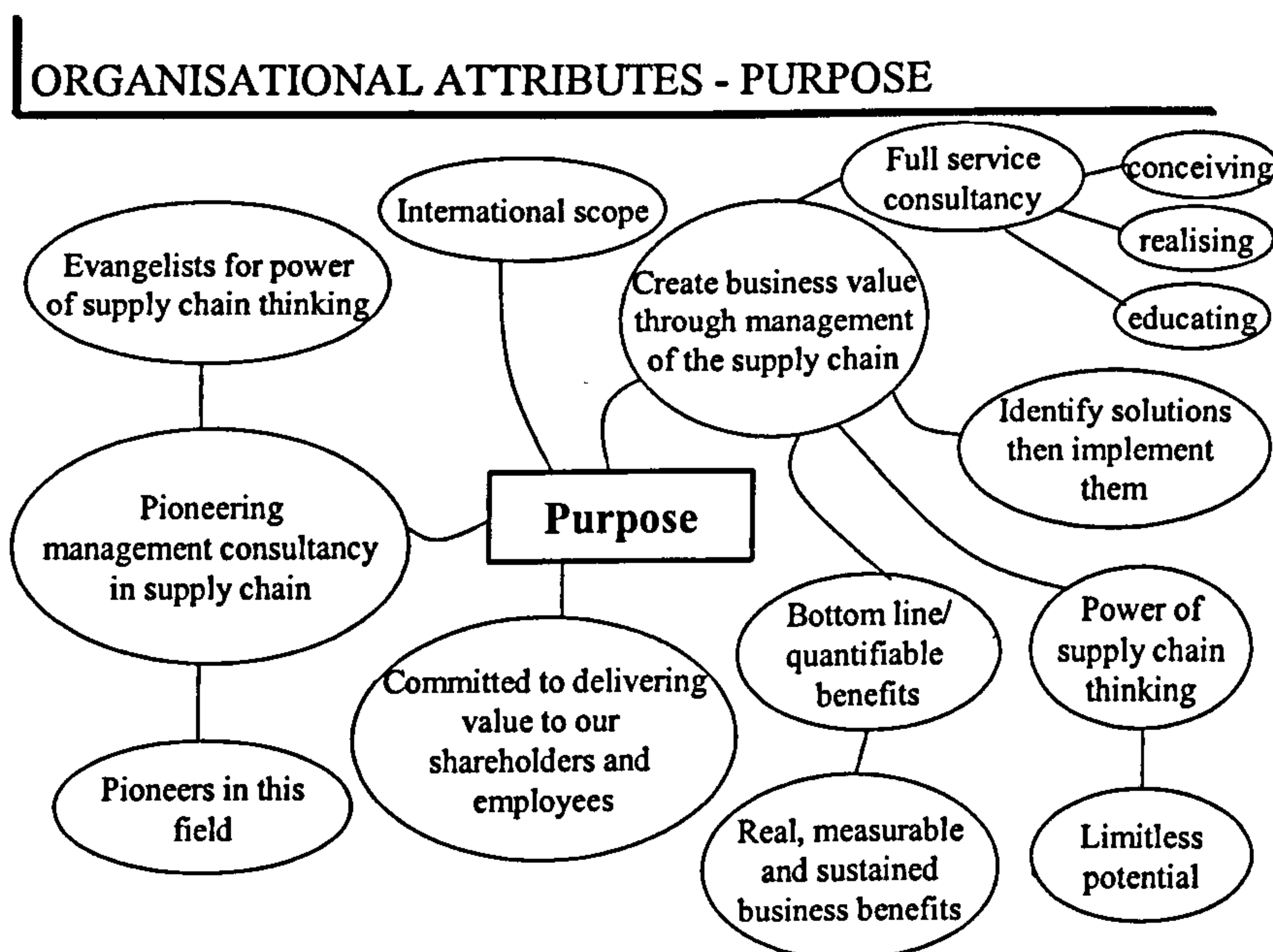


The monitor was therefore used to allow the group to plot this gap, indicated in Figure 10.2 as the gap between promise (*Point of Sale*) and reality of the service (*experience*).

Following further communication with the LCP Marketing Manager the researcher ran further workshops with the research group in June and July to begin to identify and develop the key LCP corporate brand attributes. This process was aided by the production of a series of attribute maps that were based on data collected in the phase one stage, enabling the research group to debate and adjust each of the attribute maps in a series of interactive sessions.

The output of these sessions (Figure 10.3) showed some differences in definition from the previous study in the areas of Organisation attributes and Network attributes, where the latter was described as both the network of contacts and affiliates associated with LCP.

Figure 10.4 LCP sample attribute map generated in workshop

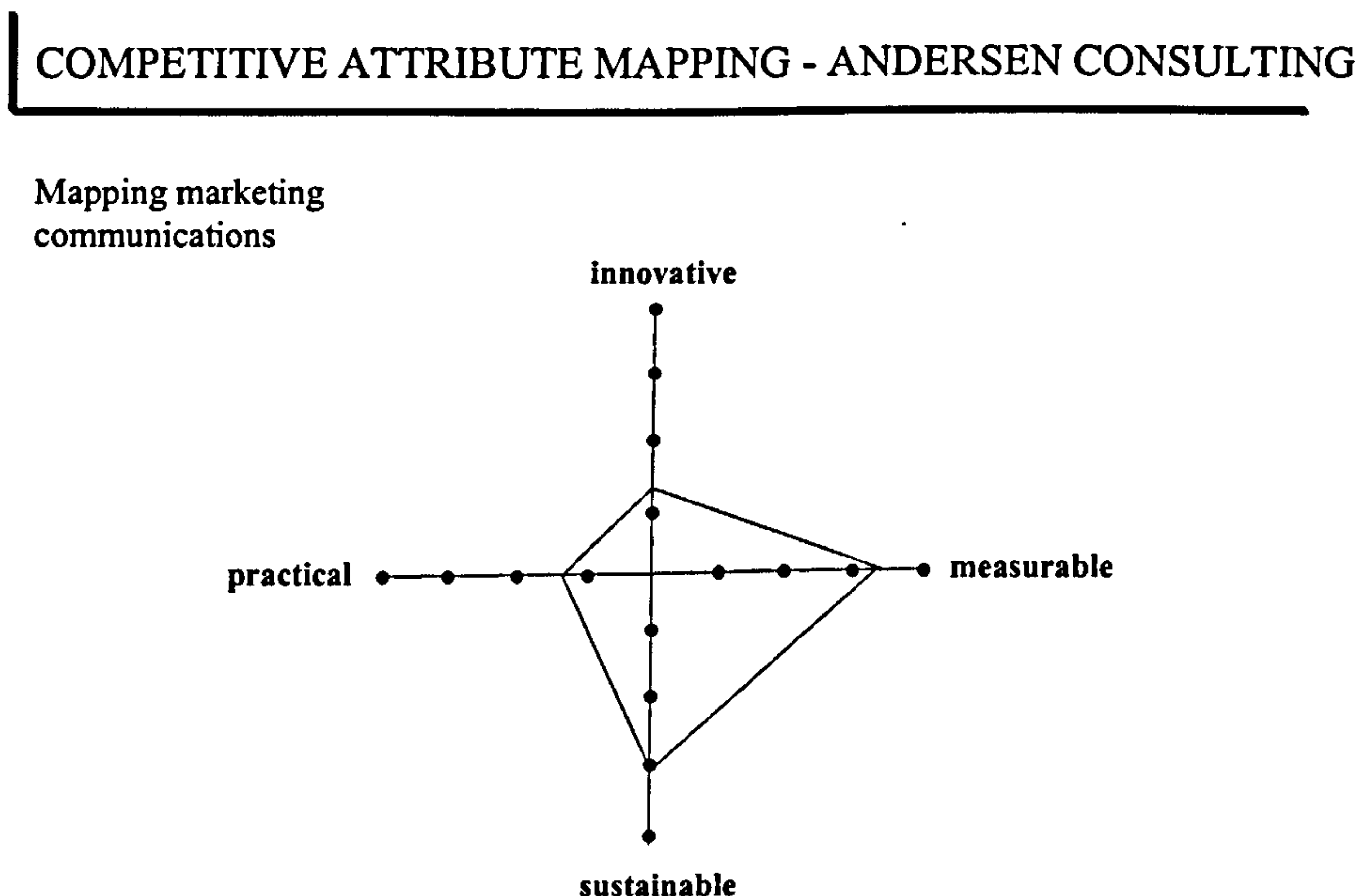


A main focus of these exercises was the development of consensus around the key organisational attributes, defined as the business mission, commitments and values.

These elements created an extended debate amongst the team, who used the attribute maps to develop and challenge their views on the accuracy and desirability of each attribute. A sample of the output of these sessions is shown in Figure 10.4 and further examples detailed in Appendix 10.5 (page 329).

A further issue identified by the research group during these sessions was that of competitive landscape. It was felt that the group needed to generate further information about competitors' propositions to ensure that the new LCP corporate brand proposition would be distinctive in the market. In response the researcher worked with the marketing team at LCP and conducted a review of competitors' corporate brand communications in preparation for a further workshop. At this workshop, held in August 1999, the research group identified four main attributes, which linked into the customer value drivers identified in a previous session, and used these attributes to map the main competitors' branded propositions.

Figure 10.5 LCP sample competitor attribute map produced in workshop



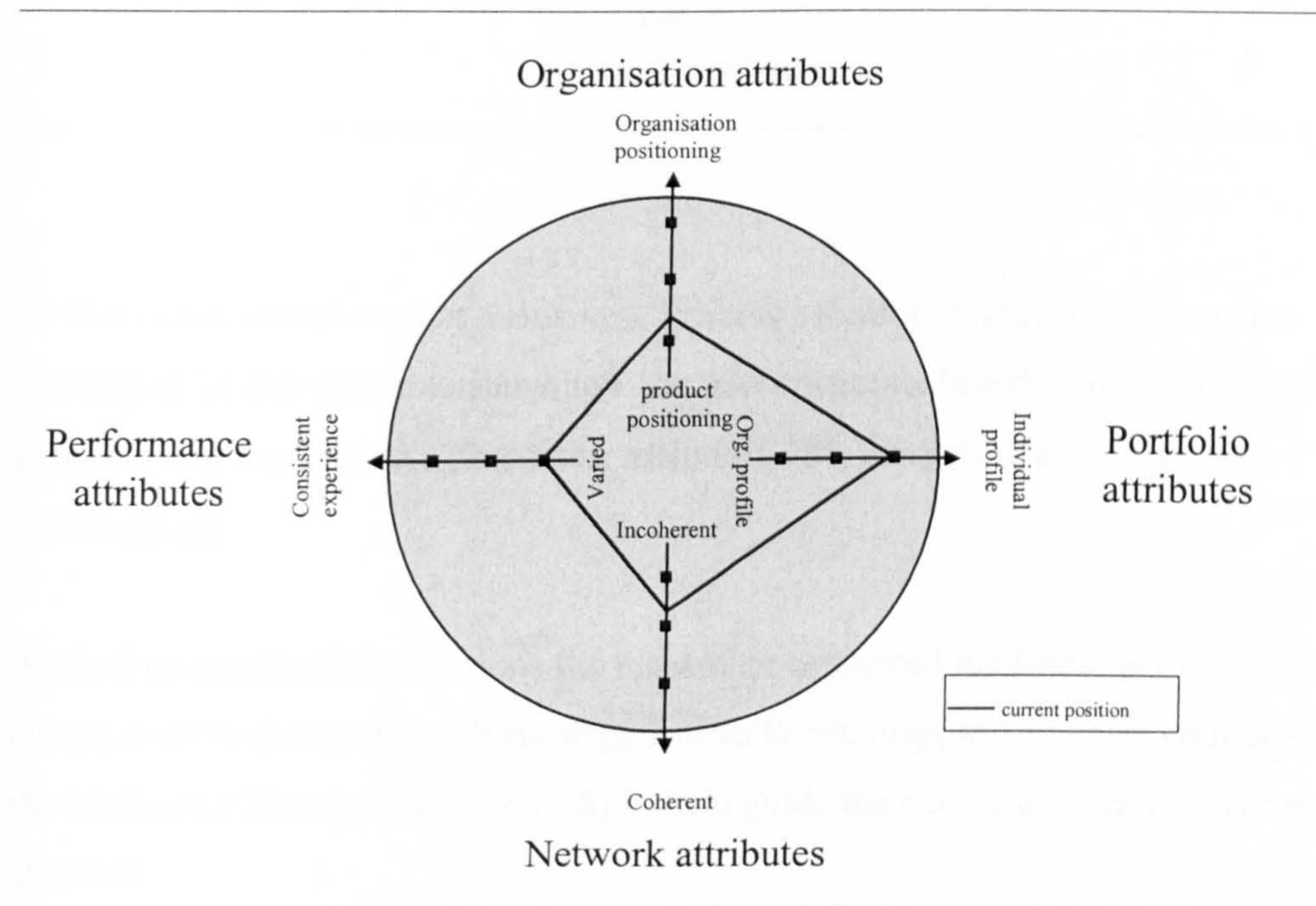
This process used monitors to map these attributes for each competitor and identified the difference in emphasis for each company's marketing communications. A sample of

the output of this session is shown in Figure 10.5 and further examples detailed in Appendix 10.7 (page 334).

Utilising the insight gained from these various workshops the group then held a series of rolling meetings facilitated by the researcher to begin developing corporate brand statements for the LCP brand.

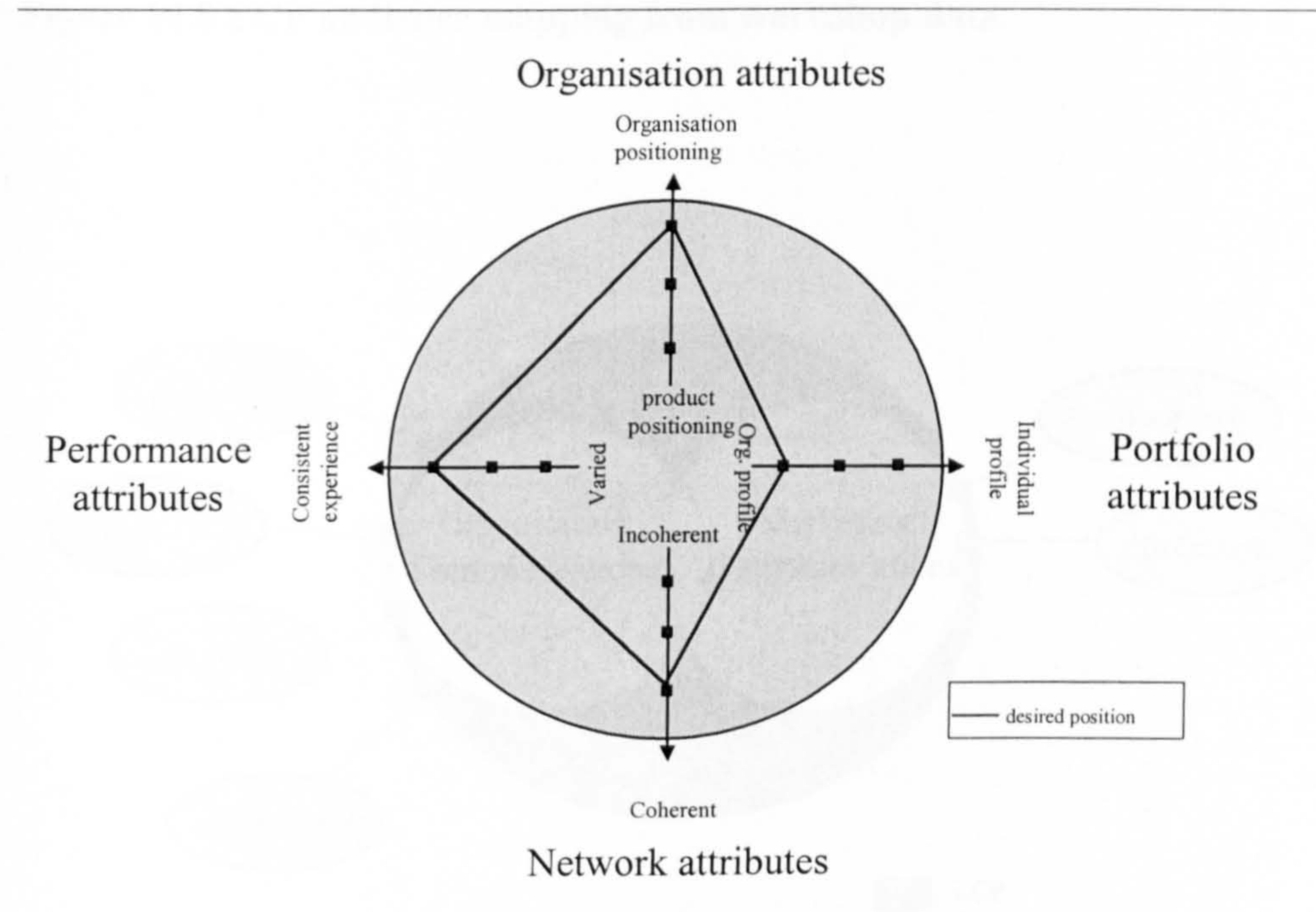
These sessions were held over a two-month period and, owing to business commitments, did not include the whole management team who had attended the main workshops. During these sessions a Corporate Brand Monitor was developed as a data display to indicate the current position of the LCP corporate brand and to help the group indicate the desired future position (Figures 10.6 and 10.7). These displays indicated the gap in terms of projecting the organisation and network attributes as part of the corporate brand projection, and highlighted the current lack of organisation profile in terms of the portfolio of services offered.

Figure 10.6 LCP presentation of current corporate brand developed from data



These sessions resulted in the drafting of a series of LCP corporate brand statements (detailed in Appendix 10.6, page 332). These statements were then formally presented at an LCP management conference at Chartridge, Buckinghamshire in September 1999.

Figure 10.7 LCP presentation of future desired corporate brand developed from data

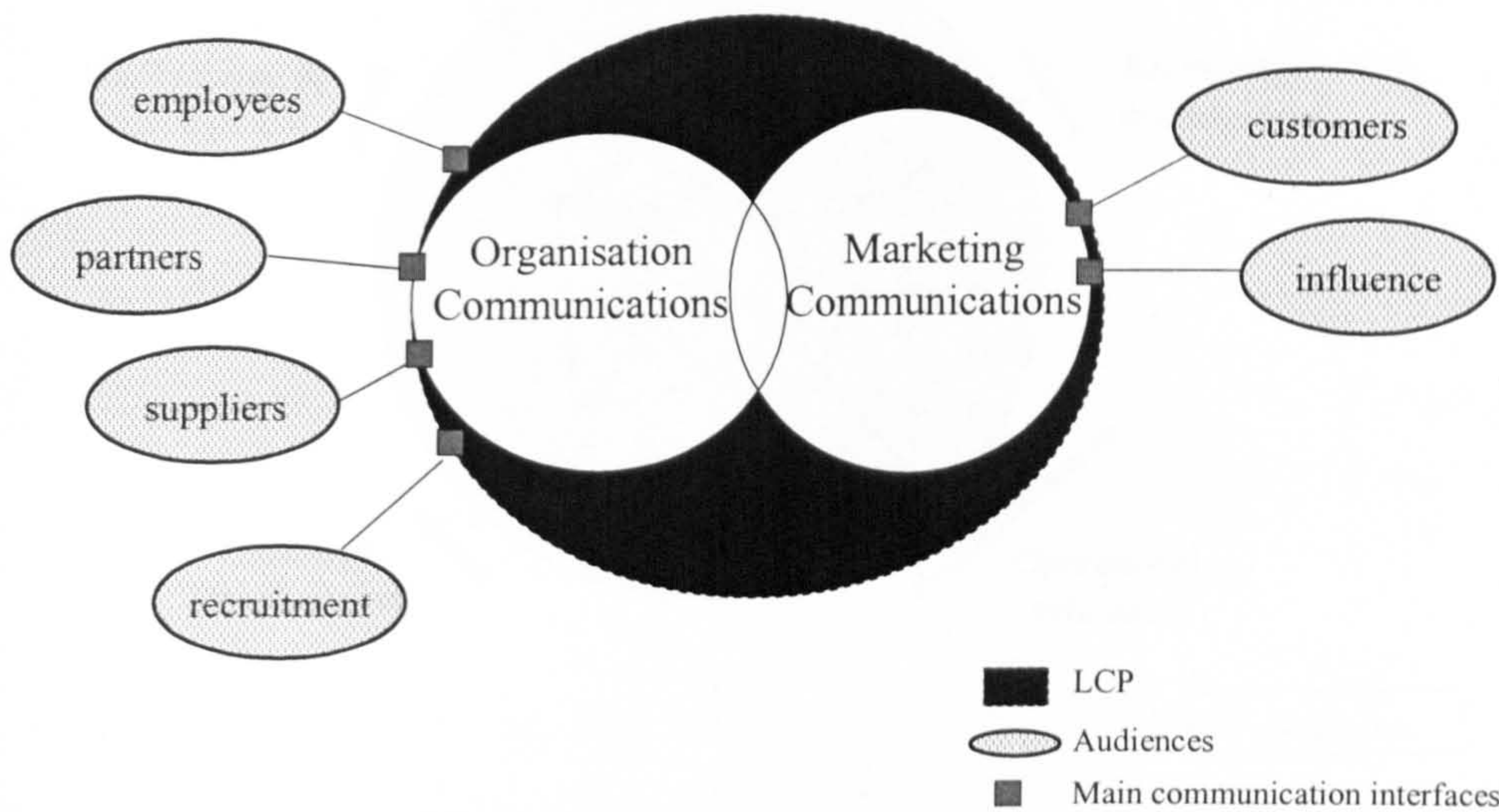


At this management session a Business Process Monitor (Figure 10.9) was also developed for discussion to show how the new corporate brand projection could be supported by key business processes, including HR, marketing and customer development.

As further input to these sessions the researcher presented the findings of the initial communications content analysis stage and audience mapping exercise conducted with the Marketing Manager (Figure 10.8) to help guide the debate over emphasis for each attribute.

One of the main findings from this phase was that the LCP communications reinforced the current brand attributes by emphasising the product portfolio and technical aspects of the LCP ‘offer’ to the exclusion of profiling the organisation and network attributes (Figure 10.6). This fact was debated at length by the research group and contributed to the evolution of the revised corporate brand statements.

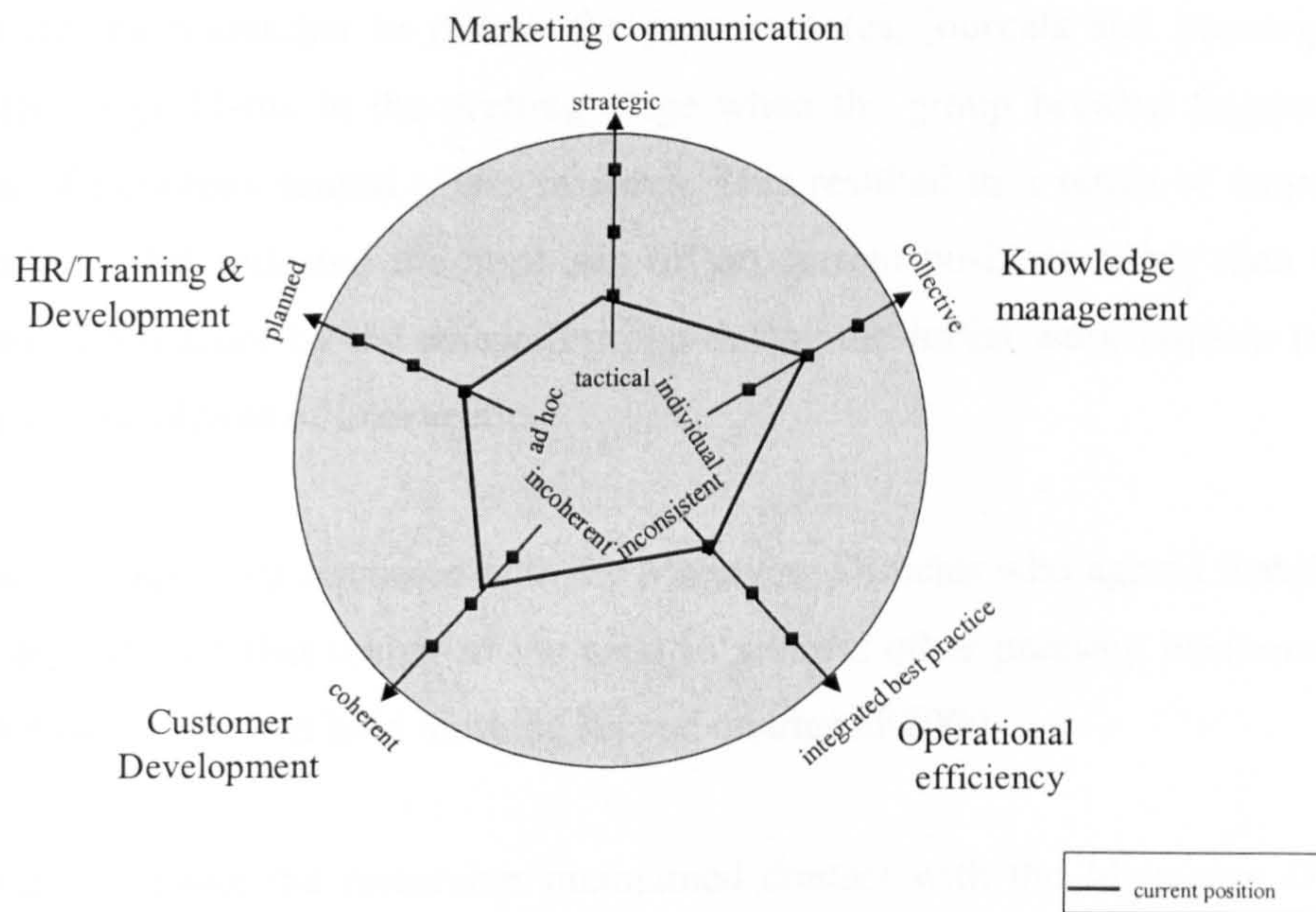
Figure 10.8 LCP audience mapping from workshop data



In addition the group discussed the audience mapping data and identified that the two types of communication targeted at different audiences were closely linked. The conclusion from this session was that consistency of brand communication was vital across these limited communication channels to ensure that the LCP corporate brand was recognised by as wide an audience as possible. This built on the findings of the previous study where communication channels were also limited, but also signalled the need for brand consistency.

After the last of these management sessions the researcher was informed by LCP that the Marketing Manager had resigned and that the Managing Director would become the primary point of contact for the rest of the study.

Figure 10.9 LCP Business Process Monitor indicating current alignment with corporate brand



Phase three interventions

The third phase of intervention signalled a departure from the original timescale set out in the original intervention protocol and covered an extended period when organisational change and challenging business conditions forced the LCP management team to shift their focus away from the study. Whilst this change in circumstances presented the researcher with some challenges in maintaining contact and momentum for the project it did throw up some unforeseen benefits. One of these benefits was an additional period of reflection, which enabled the researcher to monitor the development at the end of 1999 of the LCP strategic marketing plan, which was being prepared by Dr Tibble, the external marketing consultant.

During an initial review of the study to date, the draft corporate brand statements and the requirements for the marketing plan, it was noted that the brand development process had entered into a loop. This manifested itself in the fact that the corporate brand definitions developed by members of the research group had emphasised a number of existing organisational attributes which had been identified by research as causing negative perceptions of the business and ran contrary to the customer value drivers.

This led the researcher to review the process notes, journals and transcripts. These pointed to problems in the drafting stage when the group became fragmented and a series of iterations caused a loss of focus. This resulted in a series of corporate brand definitions that reflected the attributes of the current business rather than the desired attributes discussed by the research group during the initial workshops in the first and early second phases of intervention.

These findings were discussed with the Managing Director who agreed that this was the case and advised that owing to the need to address other pressing business issues the study would be put on hold until the second quarter of 2000.

During this hiatus the researcher maintained contact with the Managing Director via telephone and arranged update visits to Berkhamsted with each conversation noted and transcribed as journal notes.

The study was re-started in May 2000 and given additional momentum by LCP's decision to appoint an external communications consultant to develop a media strategy aimed at raising the profile of the business. The external consultant, Annie Garthwaite, was briefed on the progress of the study and invited to help contribute to the development of the corporate brand definitions working with the LCP research group. This was run as a further series of team workshops, which the researcher was invited to facilitate.

This process resulted in the development of an evolved series of corporate brand definitions that were monitored against the competitive attribute maps and customer value drivers for relevance and distinction. These definitions were then used as a basis for internal communications and external media training for the management team.

At this stage it was intended that the visual identity and all marketing materials would be redesigned to promote the new LCP brand. However, after a period of supplier selection in November 2000 LCP decided to delay the development of communication materials until 2001.

Phase four interventions

As a final phase the researcher returned to LCP to conduct a series of in-depth face-to-face interviews with the Senior Management team. The objective of these interviews was to allow each individual to reflect on what had been learned through the process and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the conduct of the study. The researcher decided to conduct these as individual sessions rather than one group session to allow for each individual to give his own viewpoint on the study and how it had affected the individual as well as the business.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 10.10, page 344) and each interview was taped for transcription by a third party. The researcher also conducted a further interview in London with Dr Tibble, the marketing consultant involved in the project, as it was felt that an outside viewpoint would also be beneficial in capturing learning and provide a more rounded perspective to the study.

The tape transcriptions were again prepared as electronic text only files for input into the QSR nud.ist software programme for analysis. A coding frame was developed for this stage of data analysis based on the four types of knowledge in Heron's (1981) extended epistemology. The data was analysed using the QSR nud.ist software on a line-by-line basis and displayed as a series of thematic conceptual matrices to enable the researcher to draw conclusions from the study (Figure 10.12).

Measuring Corporate Brand Communications consistency as an output

The following section details the approach to conducting content analysis of LCP Corporate Brand Communications. By the conclusion of the study LCP had not yet implemented the new corporate brand proposition across all published communications. This meant that the researcher was only able to conduct the pre-intervention output measure. However, as the content analysis still formed part of the intervention phase the results and conduct of the first stage are explained in the following section. Specific issues are covered under section headings of sampling, recording, data display and analysis.

Sampling

As part of the first phase intervention the researcher worked with the LCP Marketing Manager to identify the key channels for external and internal communication. This analysis identified a number of key 'formal' communications adopted to communicate with different audiences.

A sample of these materials was agreed and copies of documentation gathered during the researcher's first stage intervention. These documents were either sourced in electronic format or taken as hard copy and translated into electronic files for import into QSR nud.ist for data recording and reduction.

All data was taken from current published material produced by LCP for both internal and external audiences. This was agreed to provide a representative sample of all communications from a number of the key formal publications including the corporate brochure, corporate website, published case studies and selected company proposal documents sent to clients.

The content analysis approach was again guided by Weber (1990) and Krippendorf (1980), and followed their guidance that the aim of any sampling plan is to yield representative samples of the phenomena of interest. As in the previous study the

researcher investigated the narrative text (defined as all headings and body copy) from this sample of data. This text when downloaded as rich text format (measurement universe 768 text lines), and imported as data into QSR nud.ist software for coding and analysis

Recording and Data reduction

The first run of content analysis was conducted in May 1999. The coding procedure adopted a similar process to the ESF study. This is explained in the following section.

Definition of recording units

Consistent with the previous study, the unit of analysis (Weber, 1990) adopted was the sentence, as this was judged again to be the most suitable definition for measurement of Corporate Brand Communications concepts.

Definition of categories

Consistent with the approach in the previous study, the definition of categories was guided by Krippendorff's requirement for clearly defined and distinctive categories. For the initial analysis of the text a coding frame was based upon the corporate brand definitions developed from the pilot study results, and a fifth category was again added to cover all items that did not describe the four categories in the coding frame (termed 'non-brand elements'). To maintain consistency with previous and subsequent studies the analysis was conducted in two phases. For the initial classification each text line was coded using the coding frame developed during the study (Figure 10.3).

For the secondary classification a further stage of analysis was conducted to code the text within each category in terms of the different concepts that appeared.

Timeframe

The first analysis was conducted in May 1999. It was the researcher's intention that a second stage would be conducted at the completion of the study. However this was rendered impossible as a comparable, representative sample of new, published communications had not been published by the completion of the study.

Data display

Data from each stage of content analysis was displayed in two ways. Relative frequencies were displayed to show the relative emphasis, and therefore projection, of each category within the sample universe (Figure 10.10). Absolute frequencies were then contrasted for each category to show the consistency of communication, within each defined corporate brand category. Full details of the results for Content Analysis 1 are contained in Appendix 10.9 (page 337).

Figure 10.10 LCP relative frequency content analysis results for CA1 only

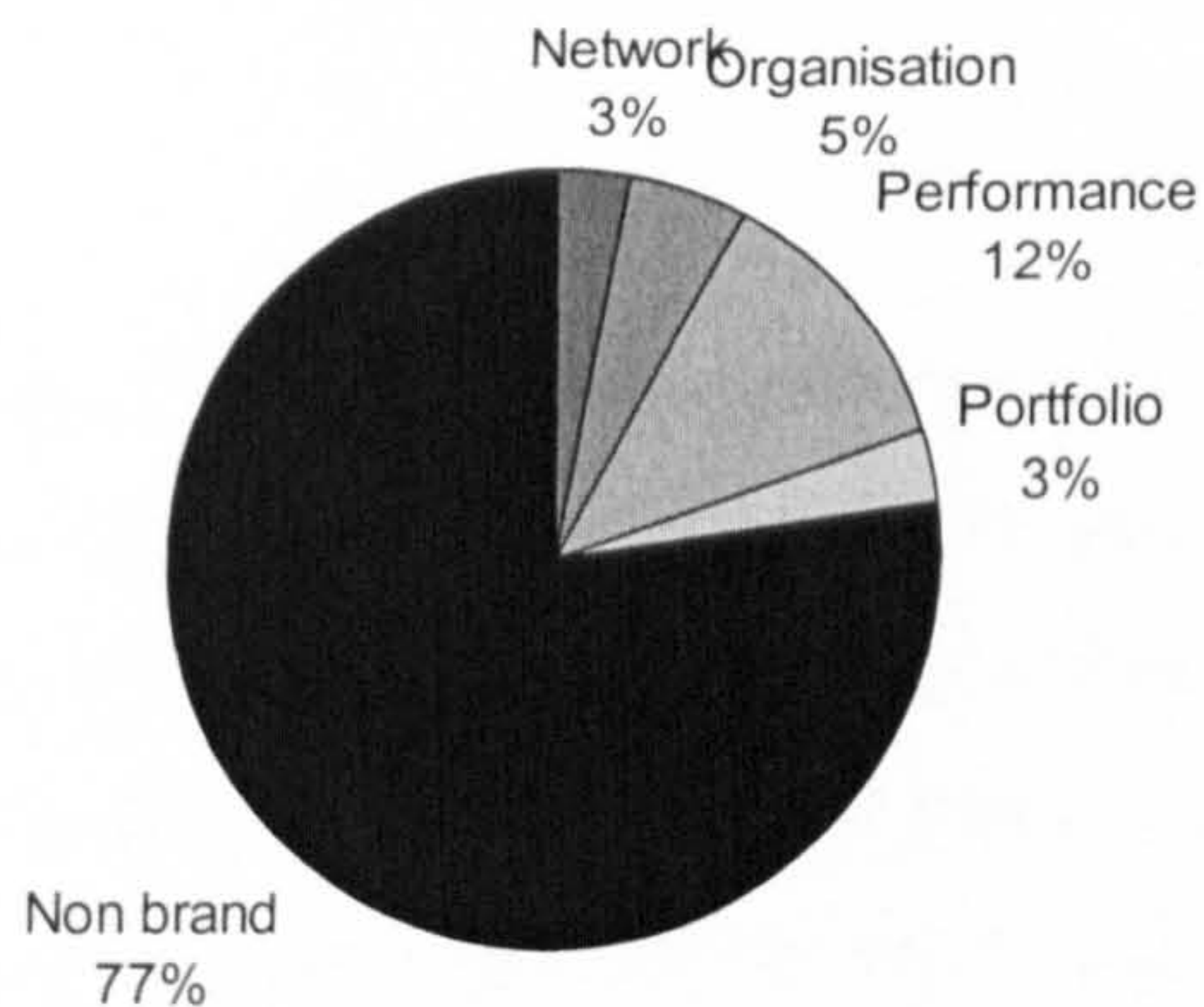


Figure 10.11 LCP study overview of Content Analysis 1 results

Content Analysis 1: May 1999

Total text units = 768 units

Brand Element	Number of text units	% of total sample
Organisation Elements		
Purpose	9 text units	1.2%
Commitments	16 text units	2.1%
Values	12 text units	1.6%
Total organisation elements		4.9%
Performance Elements		
Products	68 text units	8.9%
Services	20 text units	2.6%
Total performance elements		11.5%
Portfolio Elements		
Product brands	0 text units	0.0%
Customers	24 text units	3.1%
Total portfolio elements		3.1%
Network Elements	25 text units	3.3%

N.B. Content analysis 2 was not conducted as new data was not available at the completion of the study

Interpretation of findings

Relative Frequency

From the analysis only 22.8% of the total universe as defined related to brand content. Of this total approximately 50% was defined as relating to performance attributes, meaning that 50% of the branded communication content described what LCP did and its services. This reflected an organisation that had been trying to build profile for their product areas and services rather than for the organisation as a whole. This conclusion was supported by the comparatively low scores for organisational attributes, such as mission and values content and network content, that described the organisation and its relationships.

Absolute Frequency

These findings relate specifically to the measurement of brand consistency as set out in the research design. Individual commentary for each element of the results detailed in Appendix 10.9 (page 337) is explained in the following section.

Organisation Elements

Purpose - The content analysis pointed to an absence of any clear and consistent communication of LCP's business purpose. The results showed a very limited number of concepts, which only appear once in the sample.

Commitments - The analysis highlighted a fragmentation of message in this category with nine separate concepts mentioned in the sample and no concept appearing more than twice.

Values - The analysis highlighted similar findings as for the commitments category with a limited number of concepts each receiving one or two mentions within the sample.

The conclusion drawn from the analysis of the organisational attributes was that these were not clearly defined or articulated in the existing Corporate Brand Communications.

Performance elements

Products - The analysis pointed to the presence of a number of clearly defined product areas, including 'supply chain modelling' and 'cost to serve'. There were a number of other product concepts mentioned in the sample that were not as consistently communicated.

Services - Consistency in the product category was not matched in the service category. A number of concepts were communicated but most with a low frequency. This led the

researcher to conclude that the organisation was more comfortable in communicating what it did than how it worked.

Portfolio elements

Product brands – Given the nature of LCP’s business it was expected that the main entries in this category would be customer definitions rather than sub-brands. However there were only limited indications of the types of customer that LCP worked for and the majority of these were present only as client lists.

Network elements

Network – The analysis highlighted a number of mentions for academic links, particularly with Cranfield, and other institutions. These links were the only consistent concepts that featured in the sample.

Stability tests

For the first round of content analysis there were 20 text lines (a 96% accuracy level) that showed different coding in the test-test situation. The researcher then followed Krippendorff’s approach using single category reliability to identify that these differences in coding related to two categories (‘services’ and ‘products’). This resulted in a refined definition of the coding description for each category to ensure that Weber’s condition that coding categories be mutually exclusive was fulfilled. The 96% accuracy level calculated conformed with Weber’s view that a figure in excess of 80% gives a good indication of reliability.

Reproducibility tests

Reproducibility tests were conducted to assess whether the coding process could claim intercoder reliability. This was achieved at the first stage of the content analysis by sending the coding frame together with a 100 text-line sample to LCP’s marketing

consultant, Dr Steve Tibble. These results of the intercoder reliability tests were calculated using a co-efficient from Krippendorff (1980) for testing the reliability of small sample sizes (Scott's 1955 agreement co-efficient). This is stated as follows:

$$pi = \frac{\% \text{ of observed matches} - \% \text{ of expected matches}}{1 - \% \text{ of expected matches}}$$

Based upon an expected matches figure of 80% (Weber), the agreement co-efficient was calculated as follows:

Content Analysis 1: May 1999

$$pi = 1 - \frac{100 - 96}{100 - 80} = 0.8$$

This high level of coding agreements and high co-efficients was taken as a strong support for intercoder reliability

Reflection-on-action: study conclusions

The intervention cycle approach to multiple intervention studies (Figure 7.4) highlighted the need for a period of further analysis at the completion of the study. For this study, this was defined as the fourth intervention stage where, following the exit interviews, the researcher returned to the data and re-coded using a coding frame based upon Heron's (1981) extended epistemology of knowledge generation. This approach to data analysis and drawing conclusions followed the approach outlined in Chapter Seven (Figure 7.3).

All data collected from the study was coded for concepts emerging from the experience of the study, as recorded by transcripts and journal notes. These concepts were displayed using thematic conceptual matrices (Figure 10.12), which were developed to display the process of reflective interpretation and drawing of conclusions in the form of propositional knowledge generated by the study.

Figure 10.12 LCP study reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrices

Post intervention stage - May 2001

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>1.0 Competitive landscape as part of brand context</p>			
<p>1.1 Desire for clear process</p>	<p>Given fact that business was process orientated, demand from management for clear process of context setting</p>	<p>Branding not everyday occurrence for management – therefore needed to set co-ordinates in terms of competitors and what they offer</p>	<p>Vital to engage management in branding debate. Mechanism to do this is to establish competitors’ brand propositions</p>
<p>1.2 Need to consider multiple dimensions and viewpoints</p>	<p>As part of phase one work need to identify internal and external viewpoints of the LCP brand</p>	<p>Competitive landscape helps to contextualise how the management team viewed their own brand</p>	<p>Use internal views and external environment to begin to mirror the way the management team see the world with the external dynamics of their market</p>
<p>1.3 Introduction of competitive environment gives greater context to external image data</p>	<p>Management team had available recently commissioned external perception data. Introduction of competitor comparisons added to this data</p>	<p>Use of competitive context helped add richness to external research by showing how competitors’ propositions were trying to match to external customers’ value drivers</p>	<p>Process needs to contrast internal views with external environment and external image to highlight where the market proposition gaps exist and how the LCP brand might be developed</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>2.0 Modeling competitors brand attributes</p> <p>2.1 Identifying key attributes</p> <p>2.2 Use of spider charts as effective data displays</p> <p>3.3 Drawing distinctions with competitors</p>	<p>Use of customer value drivers and monitor to identify key drivers of customer values and then map these in terms of attributes communicated by competitors</p> <p>Development of spider charts to help management team identify the key attributes of each competitors' offer</p> <p>Use of competitor attribute mapping also helped the management team identify ways in which the LCP offer was distinctive from competitors</p>	<p>Establishes a clear framework for analysing competitors key attributes in the market</p> <p>Good process to help build consensus on what are the key attributes of each competitors offer and where the key market space Opportunity lies for LCP</p> <p>Need to provide a framework to work within when attempting brand definition. Useful to map out competitors' attributes before undertaking this process</p>	<p>Use of attribute modelling for competitors helps to clarify the competitive landscape for any branding project</p> <p>Process mapping helps team build consensus on where LCP's future market space lies</p> <p>Development of a structured process to examine competitors' attributes and how these relate to identified customer value drivers. Use of competitor attribute maps also helps management to identify what is distinctive about their own offer</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>3.0 Brand conditioning – need to monitor brand development for relevance and distinction</p>	<p>Development of new LCP brand definition undertaken through a cyclical process of meetings and group sessions over a protracted period of time</p>	<p>Need to establish a clear timetable for this process to avoid drift and lack of focus among the management team</p>	<p>Clear definition for the brand construction process and what is expected from the management team in terms of input and output</p>
<p>3.1 Brand Development cycle</p>	<p>Failure of initial intervention phase as brand definition got into a loop and ended in creation of revised brand definition which was too close to original and did not match customer value drivers as defined</p>	<p>Willingness of management team to stay within existing frame of reference for the brand. Need for better facilitation to highlight the need for relevance with external drivers of value</p>	<p>Need for brand development process that can check back with customer value drivers to ensure that new brand definition has resonance with external audiences</p>
<p>3.2 Monitoring process for relevance</p>	<p>Development of second phase work in 2000 more successful in monitoring new definitions in terms of competitors' communicated attributes</p>	<p>Need to establish clear process to monitor development of new brand statements by referring back to competitors' communicated attributes to ensure distinction</p>	<p>Need for brand development process that can check back on competitors' propositions to ensure that new brand definition occupies a distinctive position in the market</p>
<p>3.3 Monitoring process for distinction</p>	<p>Development of second phase work in 2000 more successful in monitoring new definitions in terms of competitors' communicated attributes</p>	<p>Need to establish clear process to monitor development of new brand statements by referring back to competitors' communicated attributes to ensure distinction</p>	<p>Need for brand development process that can check back on competitors' propositions to ensure that new brand definition occupies a distinctive position in the market</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>4.0 Brand as catalyst for organisational change</p> <p>4.1 Establishing a clear consensus to act</p>	<p>At start of research project management did have disparate views on the future positioning of the business. Process of research and development of customer value drivers helped to build consensus among management team</p>	<p>Need to develop a common understanding of the market dynamics and what lies at the core of the company's offer to the market</p>	<p>Brand construction needs to start from a point of identifying the internal and external drivers for change. This must happen to ensure that there is agreement to act</p>
<p>4.2 Identifying the core of the business</p>	<p>Process of establishing context and brand construction created extended dialogue over what the core attributes of the LCP offer actually were</p>	<p>Brand process allowed management space to debate the nature of their key organisational attributes in terms of Mission and Values</p>	<p>Brand construction process and in particular the identification of the core organisational attributes help management agree a shared direction and binding behavioural elements</p>
<p>4.3 Impact on recruitment</p>	<p>Exit interview highlighted influence of brand project on recruitment into the business. Now looking to recruit consultants with a defined values set</p>	<p>Creation of a better understanding and articulation of what the business stands for has helped define the sort of person LCP should be recruiting</p>	<p>Ability of the branding process to create continuity through reinforcement of core values in recruiting new staff to the business</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>5.0 Brand as expression of an organisation's unique business model</p>			
<p>5.1 Brand and fundamental business change</p>	<p>Extended process of intervention has seen the brand project track and contribute to the process of organisational change. The main impact of the brand project has been to provide focus to changes in business process and organisation</p>	<p>Role of brand in helping to articulate the essence of the business and to reflect the nature of the organisation</p>	<p>Brand can act at a more fundamental organisational level by helping to articulate the changing nature of the business operating model</p>
<p>5.2 Issue of cause and effect</p>	<p>One question in reviewing the conduct of the study is cause and effect. Did the brand project drive organisation change or was it shaped by that change? Exit interviews suggest that the brand was being developed to reflect future changes in the business</p>	<p>The evolution of the LCP brand needed to reflect the changing nature of the LCP business as it developed and became more focused</p>	<p>Potential for the brand to adopt a more fundamental position within the business by operating as the expression of the organisation's unique business model. This helps to drive and reinforce business decisions as the business develops</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>6.0 Maintaining momentum in intervention study</p> <p>6.1 Creating valid information</p> <p>6.2 Generating commitment to real change</p> <p>6.3 Ensuring timing is right for study</p> <p>6.4 Ensure clear point of contact within organisation</p>	<p>Success in helping group develop valid information about competitive environment and customer value drivers</p> <p>Study during phase two interventions got locked in a cycle where the development of a new LCP brand did not move the business forward</p> <p>LCP were in the process of significant business change. This slowed the process of developing the brand and has meant that new communication materials have yet to be published</p> <p>Departure of marketing manager during first phases of study meant main point of contact was MD who had other business responsibilities</p>	<p>Intervention process started well with clear process and generation of good data</p> <p>Need for researcher to allow free and informed choice but to ensure facilitation creates real commitment to change. Also need to ensure that whole management team are available for each session</p> <p>When negotiating access and approval to study need to establish that the time is right to conduct such a study</p> <p>Researcher needs to establish communication needs at start for a successful collaboration with the organisation</p>	<p>Need to create engagement with management team on the important issues</p> <p>Need to ensure that the whole research group are enrolled in the process of developing new brand definition</p> <p>Improve dialogue at start of study to ensure that the study will reach a conclusion within a given timeframe to ensure that the researcher will obtain adequate data</p> <p>Involvement of senior management is an important contributor to the success of the project but also need key contact within the organisation who can help progress the timetable</p>

<p>6.5 Extended engagement did offer unexpected benefits</p>	<p>The two year timeframe of the study did allow both the researcher and the management team at LCP a greater time to reflect on the ability of the brand project to drive behavioural change in the business</p>	<p>The extended timeframe became a benefit in allowing the researcher to conduct the intervention at a slower pace and therefore allow the management team to reflect on process over a longer timeframe</p>	<p>Study allowed researcher to identify the impact on the business of developing a more focused LCP brand proposition and how this was helping to drive organisational change in the business</p>
<p>Concept</p>			
<p>7.0 Improving system effectiveness</p>			
<p>7.1 Raising awareness of branded communications</p>	<p>Content analysis stage successful in raising group awareness of branded communications</p>	<p>Importance of quantified data to engage research group</p>	<p>Need for analytics to help research group identify problems with system</p>
<p>7.2 Linking communication with external reputation</p>	<p>Content analysis seen as credible as it reinforced external perceptions of organisation which group wanted to shift</p>	<p>Measuring effectiveness with content analysis of communications highlighted that current communications were highlighting the wrong attributes</p>	<p>Use of content analysis as a diagnostic tool to show link between projected attributes and those perceived by audiences – via existing market research</p>
<p>7.3 Sampling external and internal communications</p>	<p>Need to ensure that sample includes both internal and external communications to be representative</p>	<p>As LCP had limited communications budgets needed to leverage all communications internally and externally</p>	<p>Sampling of communications to drive valid information must include a representative sample from inside and outside business</p>
<p>7.4 Extending understanding of systems effectiveness beyond formal communications</p>	<p>Study limited by focusing solely on formal communications. Did not reflect changed behaviour noted in exit interviews</p>	<p>Exit interviews indicated changes in behaviour that pointed to improved system effectiveness but not captured by study's communication measures</p>	<p>Need to consider broader measures of informal communications and behaviour to assess full impact on system effectiveness</p>

The main findings were then discussed as matrices with the research group to create triangulation of the data and ensure that all practical knowledge gained on the part of the research subjects had been documented. The main findings of this process are discussed below.

Importance of auditing competitive landscape as part of the brand context process

The phase one intervention was again important for the research group to establish the main parameters for corporate branding. One key factor that emerged from the data during this phase was the need to audit the competitive landscape before developing the LCP corporate brand definition. This process of mapping competitors' key attributes helped to provide a framework for the management team to identify where the LCP corporate brand proposition was positioned with reference to the competition. Given that the research group were, as a majority, not experienced marketers this stage helped the group to build consensus by understanding the market context and how the LCP offer needed to be distinctive within its market.

This process also pointed to the need for the research group to consider multiple dimensions as part of the study. Each individual member had their own views on the LCP brand and the group needed the stimulus of both internal and external image data to help frame their views. The addition of the competitive context also helped the research group to incorporate their own views within a broader external market context.

Use of monitors to show the key corporate brand attributes for competitors as a process to assess options for developing the corporate brand

Use of competitor attribute mapping monitors, in the form of spider charts, to model the core attributes of competitors' brand propositions was considered a strong benefit by the research group. This helped build understanding among the group of the competitive landscape and where LCP fitted into the landscape in terms of corporate brand projection.

Given the fact that this project was concerned with shifting the projection and experience of the LCP brand, the development of a process to frame this requirement by reference to competitors' key attributes was an important step in developing consensus among the research group. This was achieved in terms of establishing LCP's current position and desired future market position in response to the customer value drivers.

Adoption of a structured process that utilised data on customer value drivers and mapped competitors' brand attributes also encouraged the research group to identify and debate what elements of the LCP corporate brand were distinctive and needed to be communicated.

Need to monitor progress of brand development for relevance and distinction

The conduct of the intervention study and the reflections generated by the exit interviews highlighted a clear need for the research group to continually monitor the development of the brand for relevance and distinction.

One of the identified problems with the phase two interventions was the loop that the process created of developing a corporate brand definition that was too close to the existing brand. This was concluded as a weakness in the process to maintain the focus of the research group on ensuring that the new brand definitions developed matched the customer value drivers identified during the initial phase. The researcher's facilitation unwittingly allowed the group to focus on attributes that did not extend the brand proposition far enough in hindsight. However these process difficulties also highlighted a further key learning from the study. This was the need to understand the close linkage between external brand projection and internal culture change. In the context of this study the process of brand redefinition retained elements of an 'artisan' culture which had been identified as a weakness of the corporate brand, pointing to the need for the research group to accept the need for change on both an emotional and rational level.

This pointed to the need for the corporate brand construction process to include the discipline of checking brand development for relevance with external audience's value drivers and distinction against competitors' brand propositions throughout the process.

Role of brand as a catalyst for organisational change

A review of the data points to a number of ways in which more active management and awareness of the corporate brand helped foster and focus organisational change. During the initial context phase of the intervention the development of customer value drivers and mapping of competitors' main attributes helped the research group to build a consensus on the future development of the LCP brand. This consensus to act is vital in ensuring that there was a common, shared understanding of the need to evolve the corporate brand.

The second phase of the study, where the research group began to define the key attributes of the LCP corporate brand, was also important in helping the research group identify attributes that were common and core to the organisation. Use of attribute maps helped the group to debate those core organisation attributes that represented both the belief systems of the management team and the business acted as a corporate body.

The unexpected extension of the study period also highlighted how these core attributes had begun to be embedded in the behaviours and processes of the organisation. This was manifested in terms of the new focus on senior recruitment and the restructuring of the business into sector specialist teams. Analysis of the exit interviews would suggest that the latter change was not solely driven by the new corporate brand articulation, but that this had helped to consolidate and drive these changes.

In conclusion, one of the unexpected benefits of the extension of the study to a two year period was that it allowed the research group to recognise that the study had helped to foster a change in mindset and management behaviours within the organisation.

Development of a more fundamental view of the corporate brand as an expression of an organisation's unique business model

A further benefit of the extended process of intervention has allowed the research group to examine how the corporate brand study has tracked and contributed to the process of organisational change. The main impact of the corporate brand project has been to provide focus to changes in business process and organisation.

The ability to study the development of the corporate brand in parallel with development of the organisation caused the research group to conclude that the corporate brand was operating at a more fundamental level as the agreed expression of the organisation's changing business model. This raised an important question of cause and effect. Did the corporate brand drive the development of the business model or was it acting as a reflection of these changes?

The conclusion from the analysis is that the corporate brand was acting as an expression of the new business model that LCP were evolving towards, and that this, in part, explained the delays in the process of establishing the new LCP corporate brand proposition as it had to match the reality of the business operations.

Need to maintain momentum in the process – role of researcher in conducting effective interventions

A final conclusion drawn from the study related to the role of the researcher and his ability to conduct effective interventions in the process.

During the exit interviews the researcher asked each participant in the research group for their views on the process and conduct of the study. The researcher had previously noted that one of the core competencies of the LCP management team was the ability to develop process, and thus their insights in this area would be valuable.

Analysis of the feedback pointed to the need for stronger facilitation of the process. The common view given to the researcher was that it was important for the facilitator on the study to drive the process forward and help the research group to avoid creating a self-fulfilling loop where the evolved brand definitions reflected the current situation rather than the desired future proposition. This raised an interesting question as to how far the researcher could facilitate the process without compromising the validity of the findings.

In hindsight, the researcher concluded that stronger facilitation could have helped guide the process to ensure that the research group were moving forward. However the extended timeframe for the study did make it difficult to maintain momentum and retain the focus of the research group.

It should also be noted that these process problems revealed key insights from the study in that it enabled the research group and the researcher to extend the period of the study and examine the reasons behind problems in the study process. This contributed to the generation of richer data and allowed a greater period of reflection for all parties involved in the study.

As with the previous study the reflection-on-action data displays were then held for review after the conduct of the final study, which is detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter Eleven: AEGON Insurance Group Study

During the conduct of the researcher's intervention study with LCP approaches were made to two further organisations for a third full study. Given that the pilot and subsequent two full studies had been conducted with organisations that had partnership-based ownership structures the researcher decided to search for a final case with a publicly-listed company. The intention here was to aim for variety in cases to help with issues of generalisability.

Negotiation of access

The researcher had previous knowledge of the AEGON Insurance Group from consultancy work carried out by the researcher for a previous employer in the 1990s. The researcher used this previous contact as a route to make an initial approach to the organisation, which was made in writing in January 2001. This approach outlined the background to the researcher's thesis and explained the nature of the qualitative research already conducted with previous cases, highlighting the insight gained by research subjects in these previous studies as a practical output that could arise from undertaking the study.

The researcher received a response from the Vice President, Group Communications, Gerard van Dongen, and an initial meeting was scheduled for late January in London. At this meeting the researcher gave a fuller presentation of the fieldwork carried out to date and emphasised the possible knowledge to be gained from the study for both the organisation and the researcher. The researcher also submitted copies of recent papers presented at academic conferences and a journal publication. The AEGON representative agreed to take these papers away and consider the proposal further.

In February 2001 the researcher was requested to attend a further meeting in London with another member of the AEGON Group Communications team, Dr Gijsbert Siertsema. As a doctoral graduate who had studied at Oxford he was very supportive of the research proposal and the potential knowledge that the AEGON team could gain

from the study. He also informed the researcher that, whilst this was a particularly busy period for the organisation, there were plans to review the Group Communications strategy in Summer 2001 and this research could make a practical contribution to the development for this plan. It was therefore agreed that the research proposal would be discussed with senior management in April 2001 and a response given thereafter.

At the end of April 2001 the researcher contacted AEGON again to be told that a decision had not been made and would be clarified in May, subject to the researcher supplying further details of the study together with a timescale for the project. The researcher contacted the organisation again in May and was told that the research proposal had been accepted, and that the programme could commence in July 2001.

It should be noted that the process from initial approach to commencement of research lasted over six months and involved an on-going dialogue between the researcher and organisation, with regular phone calls and e-mail correspondence to check status and answer questions swiftly and efficiently. This extended dialogue did, however, allow the researcher to build trust with the AEGON representatives through a willingness to explain the research process and demonstrate practical outputs that could be an outcome of the study.

Suitability of selected organisation for study

Suitability of the organisation for an Action Research approach was again assessed against Peters and Robinson's (1984) four key criteria for Action Research. The main points arising from this assessment are discussed in the following section.

Problem focus

The AEGON Insurance Group was in the process of undertaking a strategic review of its Group communications during the second half of 2001. Part of this review was stimulated by the need to address issues of rising international profile, which required a

need for a clearer corporate brand definition and projection. This review allowed the opportunity for the researcher to intervene and assist in this process.

Action orientation

The increased international profile of the AEGON Group, as a result of a series of well-publicised and successful acquisitions, had placed considerable demands on the Group Communications team in The Hague, which had not increased the numbers of its department to cover this rising workload.

The researcher's prior knowledge, gained from working with the company in the past, meant that the researcher was known to AEGON and trusted to intervene and help in resolving practical issues of importance to the Group Communications team and the Group management. In this instance the prior knowledge of the researcher of the organisation was invaluable in gaining access to study without placing further demands on the limited resources of the Group Communications team at AEGON.

Cyclical process

There was management support within the organisation for a review of the corporate brand as part of the Group strategic communication planning review. In addition, as was the case with the ESF study, the location of the Group Communications team in The Hague called for the phases of intervention to be carefully planned and efficiently conducted.

The previous experience and knowledge gained from the ESF and LCP studies was used to demonstrate to the AEGON team that the research study could be carried out effectively with a series of carefully planned intervention stages and efficient communication between the researcher and research subjects.

Collaboration

The project had the support of senior management and the Group Communications team. In addition, the Group Communications team reported in directly to the Chairman of the Executive Board who was very interested in the development of the corporate brand and management of corporate reputation for the Group. The Vice-President of Group Communications was designated as the sponsor of the project and a senior member of the Group Communication team was allocated as the main contact for the study.

It was concluded that the four main criteria established by Peters and Robinson's (1984) were met and that the target organisation offered unique and privileged access to study the Corporate Brand Communications processes of a major international organisation.

Background to the study

AEGON N.V. is the holding company of one of the world's ten largest listed life insurance groups, ranked by market capitalisation and assets. It is a publicly-listed group with its shares quoted on the stock exchanges in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, London, New York (NYSE), Tokyo and Zurich. The Group was founded in 1983, from the merger of two Netherlands companies, AGO and Ennia, each with histories extending back 150 years.

The AEGON Group operates through locally managed units in three major markets: the Americas - including the United States, Canada and Mexico - the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It is also present in a number of other countries, including Hungary, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Luxembourg, the Philippines, Taiwan and has representative offices in China and India.

At the time of the study the Group employed over 24,000 people worldwide and had its headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. The majority of the AEGON Group's business was in the areas of life insurance, pensions and related savings and investment

products, markets that are large, fast growing and reliably profitable. At the time of the study the Group was also active in accident and health insurance, general insurance, and had some limited banking activities.

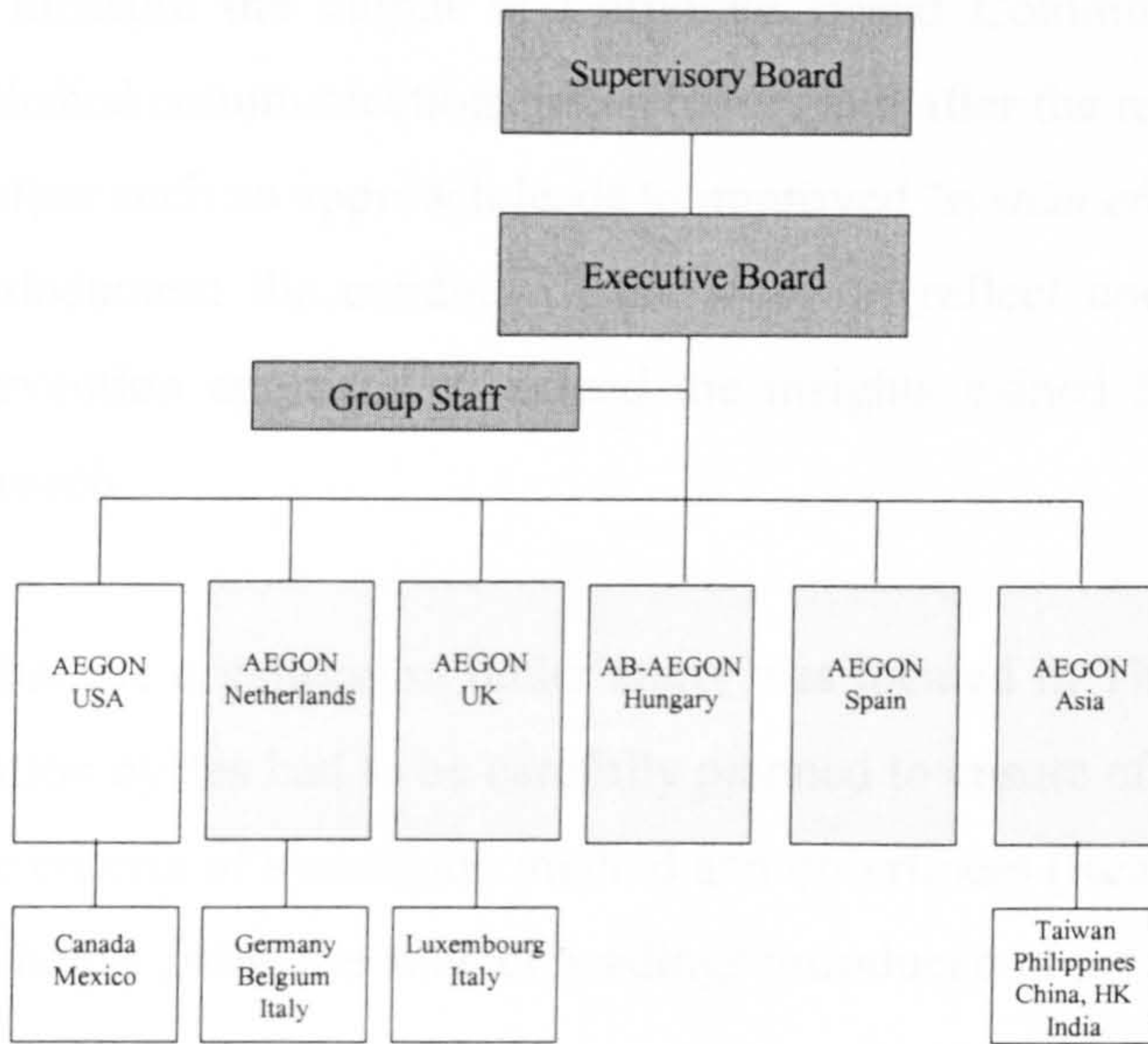
During the late 1990s the Group had risen in prominence as a result of a series of major acquisitions including Providian Insurance (1997) and Transamerica (1999) in the United States and Scottish Equitable (1995) and Guardian Royal Exchange (1999) in the UK. These acquisitions had also delivered significant shareholder value and had made AEGON nv a well-respected financial stock with a reputation for consistent, disciplined strategy and one of the strongest growth rates in its sector.

A key contributor to this success had been recognised as the strategy of operating the business on a decentralised basis with a lean corporate headquarters staffed by only 100 people in The Hague. These staff consisted of Group Communications, Tax, Treasury, Business Development, Corporate Actuarial, Legal, Investor Relations and Group Secretariat (Figure 11.1).

At the beginning of 2000, AEGON had increasingly begun to recognise that a modern company's licence to operate is defined both by its ability to create value for shareholders and policyholders and its concern for wider corporate, social and environmental responsibilities. These responsibilities were recognised by the inclusion of the Group in the Dow Jones Sustainability Group Index for the first time in 2000.

The Group structure had grown over recent years through a combination of major acquisitions, high autonomous growth rates in major markets and a series of in-fill acquisitions.

Figure 11.1 AEGON Group Structure



The Group also prided itself on the international nature of its operations in terms of business and operating style, management, culture and ownership structure. This had created a de-centralised organisation with an operating structure that allowed each of these businesses to operate autonomously with very low-key input and guidance from the Group.

Objectives for the study

Following approval to undertake the study from AEGON senior management, the researcher prepared an intervention protocol (Appendix 11.1, page 346), which built on the cumulative learning from the approach adopted for previous studies. The intervention protocol was again considered important to establish the phases of study and set expectations on anticipated outputs for both parties (researcher and research subjects). The protocol outlined the scope and procedures for the study and its development was guided by the objectives for the study defined as:

1. To investigate the process of creating consistency in Corporate Brand Communications through a Participatory Action Research approach.
2. To measure the output of Corporate Brand Communications using a sample of published communications taken before and after the researcher's intervention to see whether such an approach leads to improved '*system effectiveness*' (Argyris, 1973).
3. To document the conduct of the study to reflect upon the potential for such an intervention approach to extend the insights gained from a traditional case study approach.

Given that the organisation under study was located in The Hague in the Netherlands, intervention cycles had to be carefully planned to ensure effective data collection and to meet the criteria of systematic method and orderliness (Reason, 1998). These stages are detailed below using the subject headings introduced in previous studies.

Examining the process of developing corporate brand consistency

The conduct of the study again followed the research design explained in Figures 7.1 and 7.4, and is described below in terms of the data collection and data analysis stages of each intervention cycle.

Data collection (Action phases)

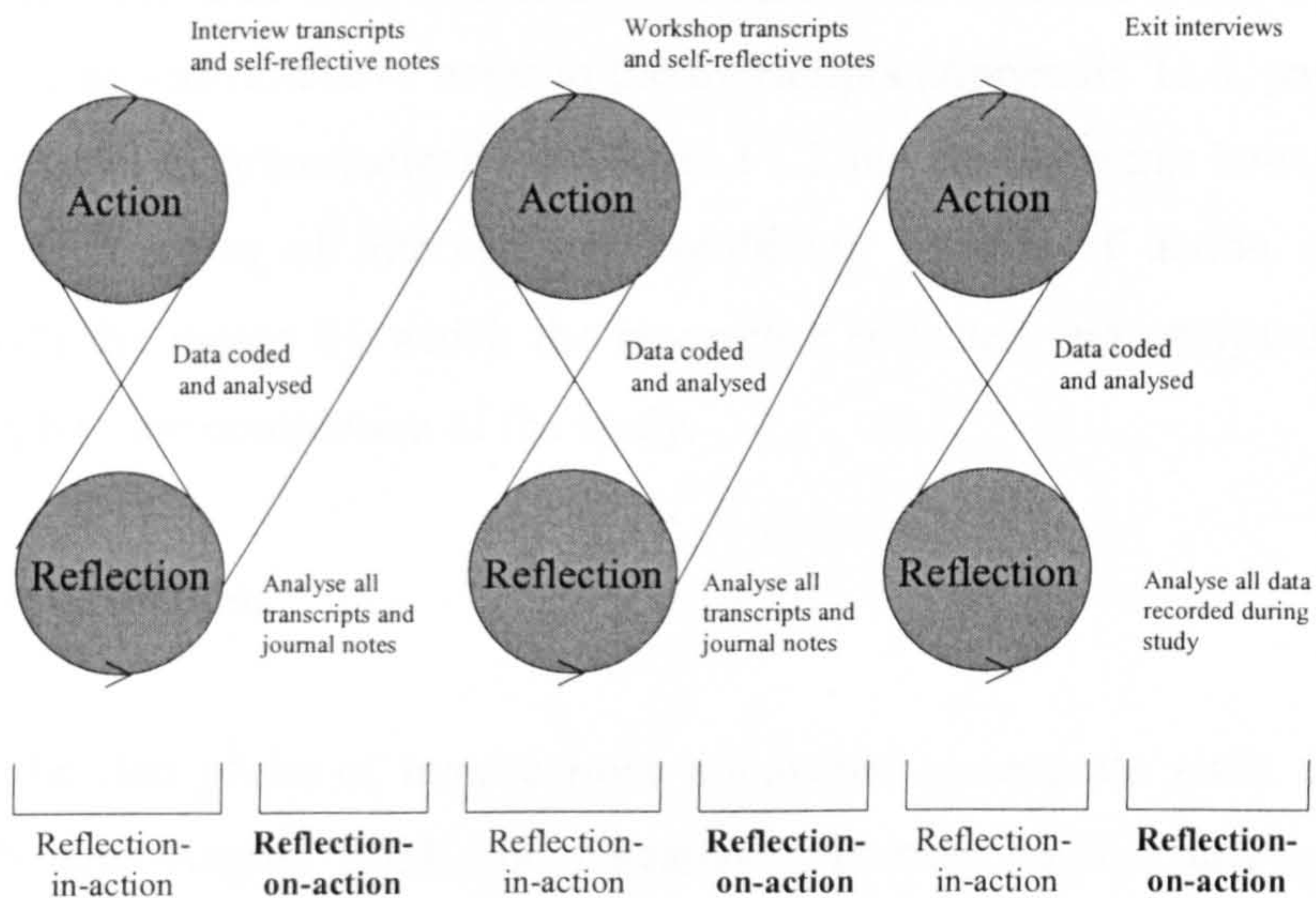
The study featured four distinct intervention phases:

- **Phase one:** Initial meetings and face-to-face interviews with the Senior Management team and all members of the Group Communications team
- **Phase two:** A further round of facilitated working sessions with the Group Communications team to develop proposals for the corporate brand
- **Phase three:** Brand development workshop sessions with the Group Communications team and follow-up meetings with the Senior Management team to identify implementation issues

- **Phase four:** Conduct of exit interviews with the Group Communications team to review learning from the study and development of the case write up.

This study yielded rich data and comprised 60 hours of active intervention time and approximately 240 hours of reflection-on-action time with the data generated from each intervention, making a total of 300 hours for the study from initial contact through to completion.

Figure 11.2 Approach to data collection and analysis for AEGON study



Phase one interventions

A series of initial interviews were conducted with the Senior Management team in The Hague during July and August 2001. These interviews included representatives from most of the Group departments and used a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 11.2, page 349). The objective of this phase was to establish the context for Corporate Brand Communications, discuss the key components of the AEGON corporate brand

and the approach to its management, in line with the conduct of phase one interventions in previous studies.

Each interview conducted followed a consistent procedure that included the use of a semi-structured questionnaire and involved the recording of each session for transcription by a third party. During each interview the researcher also made extensive notes to record key elements and self-reflective comments and feelings throughout the interview. After the interview a contact summary sheet was produced for each interview to capture the key issues (Appendix 11.3, page 351).

Once the interview had been transcribed the researcher returned to his interview notes and added these self-reflective notes to the transcripts (Appendix 11.4, page 352). This process is shown diagrammatically in Figure 11.2 and demonstrates how the study was conducted as a cycle of interventions combining periods of action and reflection together with the means by which the researcher collected and analysed data at each stage through to the completion of the study.

Phase two interventions

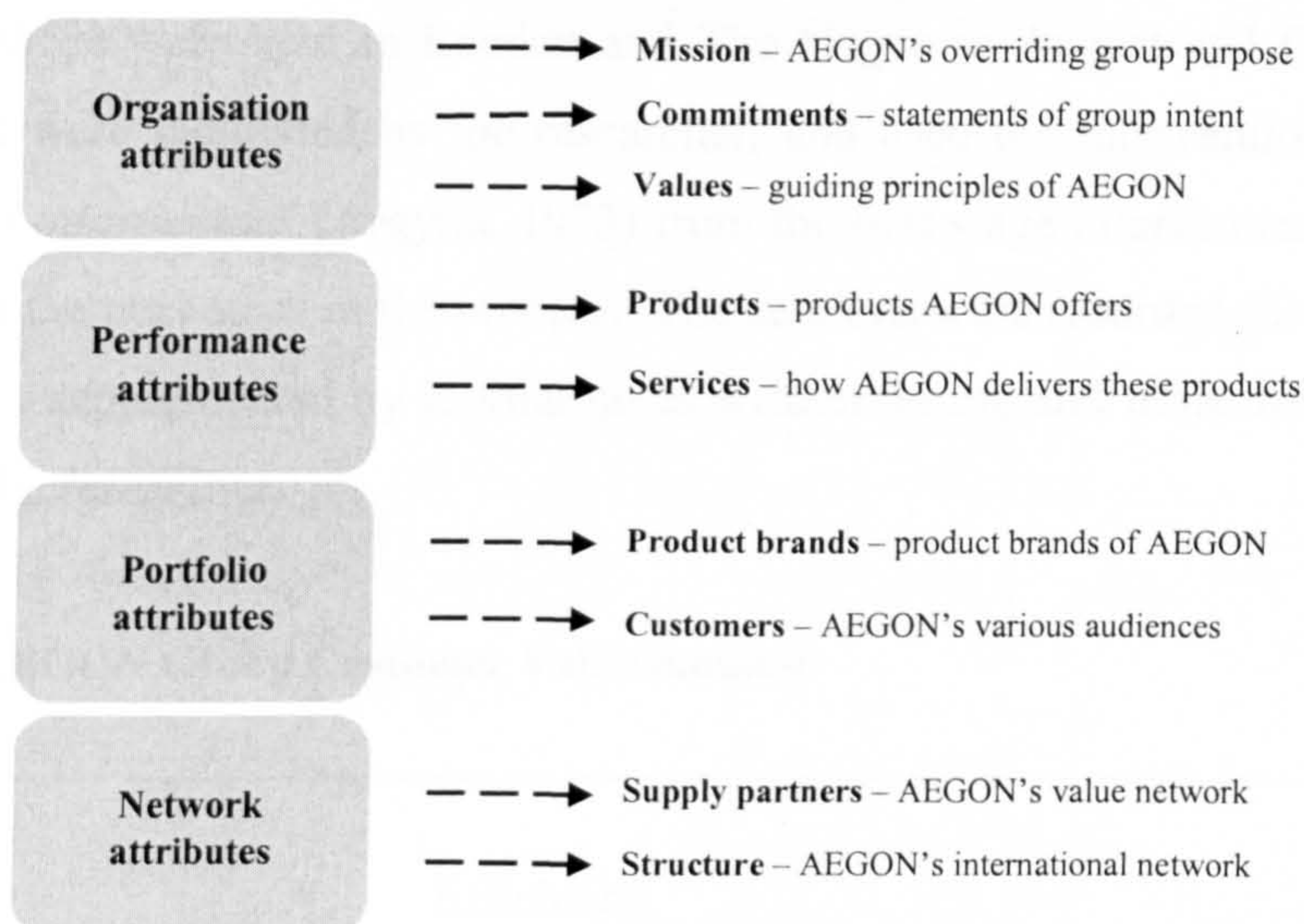
Following the first phase of interventions conducted in separate visits to The Hague during July and August 2001, the researcher returned to the data collected. In preparation for the second phase of interventions all data was coded using a coding frame based upon the framework developed from the pilot study together with any emerging issues on the process of managing the corporate brand.

Reflection-in-action (Within case data analysis)

All transcripts from the taped interviews and journal notes were coded using a qualitative data software package (QSR nud.ist). Following a first run of coding on screen, the researcher went to hard copy and used marginal remarks to aid analysis and add meaning and clarity to the notes. Coding was conducted utilising a coding frame

(Figure 11.3) drawn from previous studies and adapted to reflect the data emerging from the phase one interventions.

Figure 11.3 Corporate brand framework developed from first stage interventions



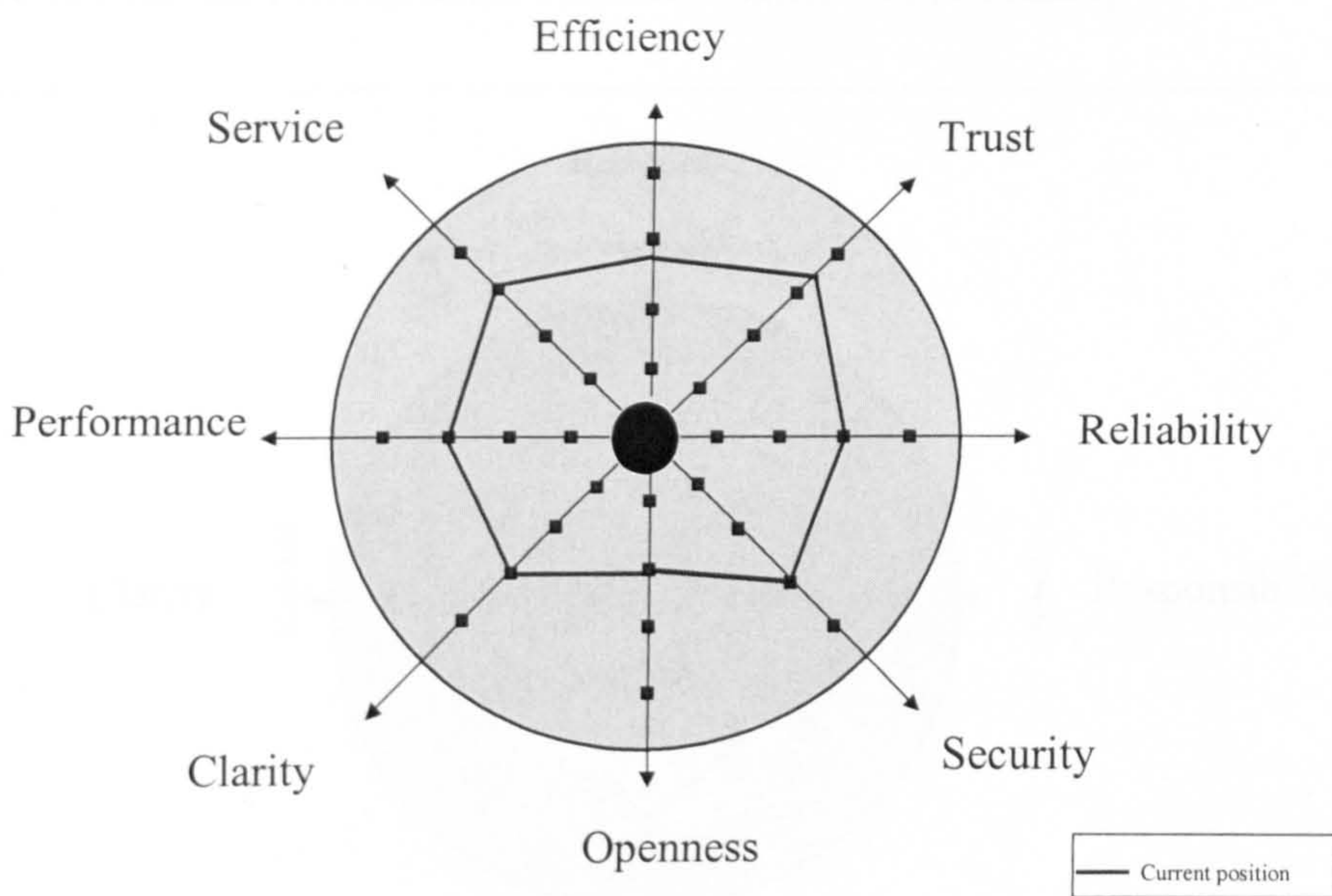
Whilst three of the attributes category definitions generated by the research group were consistent with previous studies, there was some divergence with the Network attributes. In the context of this study the AEGON Group network was defined as its international structure of businesses plus its value chain relationships (i.e. how it delivers products and services to customers via agents and intermediaries).

A similar approach to data display was adopted in this study as the previous studies with the use of thematic conceptual matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994), which were deemed the most suitable tool for displaying data relating to concepts. As part of this process a second stage of within case data analysis of the transcripts and journal notes was undertaken to identify the main ways in which the organisation delivered value to its key constituents. The findings from this stage of analysis were displayed in the form of a Customer Value Monitor (Figure 11.4). This highlighted eight main drivers of

customer value and AEGON's current situation as identified by interview respondents. This monitor together with the data generated from the thematic conceptual matrices and the communications (content analysis) audit were then prepared as PowerPoint slides (Appendix 11.6, page 359) for input into a series of structured workshop sessions with the Group Communications team.

These workshops were held in London and The Hague in August and October 2001. The sessions were facilitated by the researcher, and used the intervention protocol to deliver 'valid information' (Argyris, 1973) from the first stage intervention as input for discussion of the next steps in the process. The sessions were recorded for transcription and were also supplemented by journal notes written during and immediately after the sessions by the researcher.

Figure 11.4 AEGON Group Customer Value monitor



The main focus of the first session was the perceived absence of clear definitions of the organisation attributes of the Group. This was felt by the research group to be a weakness that needed to be addressed. One element in particular was some concern as

to how to link work on the development of these organisation attributes with the stated strategic principles of the business. These four principles or 'strategy pillars' as they were known within AEGON had been established and widely communicated for a number of years.

At the conclusion of the first workshop it was agreed that further workshops were needed to help generate consensus on these organisational attributes, particularly the mission or purpose statement and corporate values. Given the strength of these strategic pillars the researcher returned to the data generated by the study to date to see if further process tools could be developed to aid this process. Returning to the data the researcher examined a process that could look for alignment between these strategic pillars and the beliefs and actions of the organisation. This led to the creation of two distinct new process monitors developed from the monitors utilised in the previous studies.

Figure 11.5 AEGON Group Belief Systems Monitor from workshop

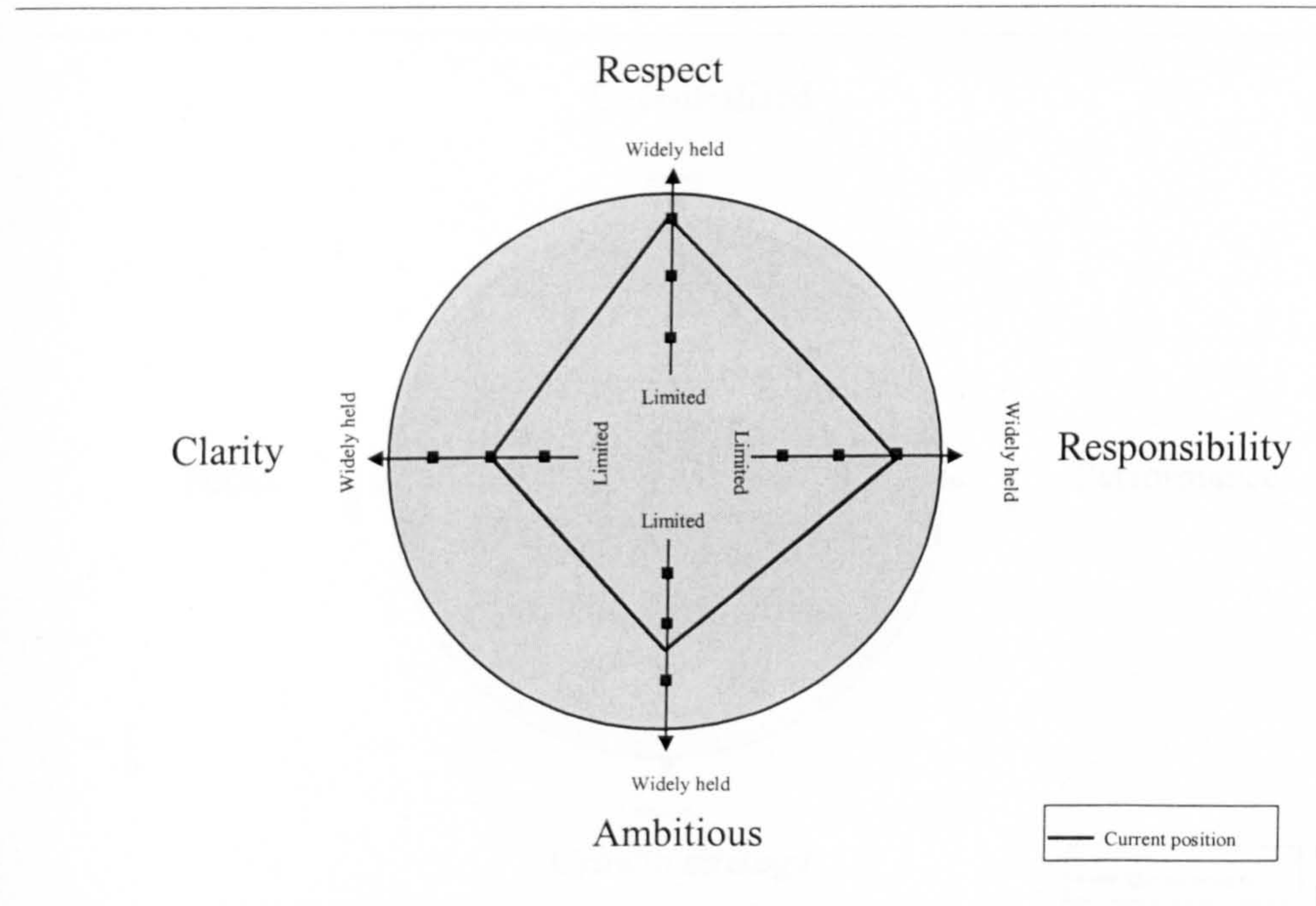


Figure 11.6 AEGON Group Behaviours Monitor from workshop

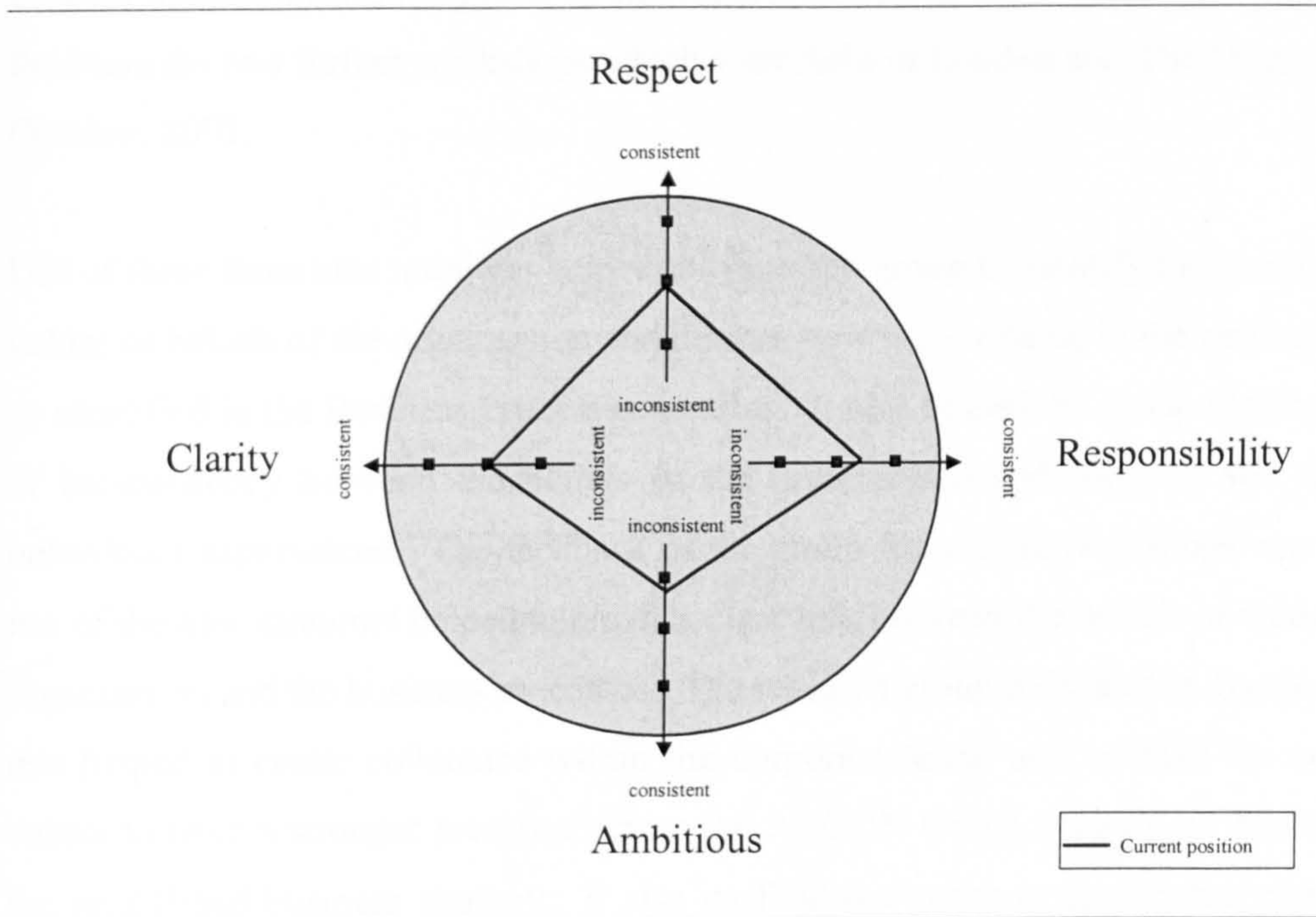
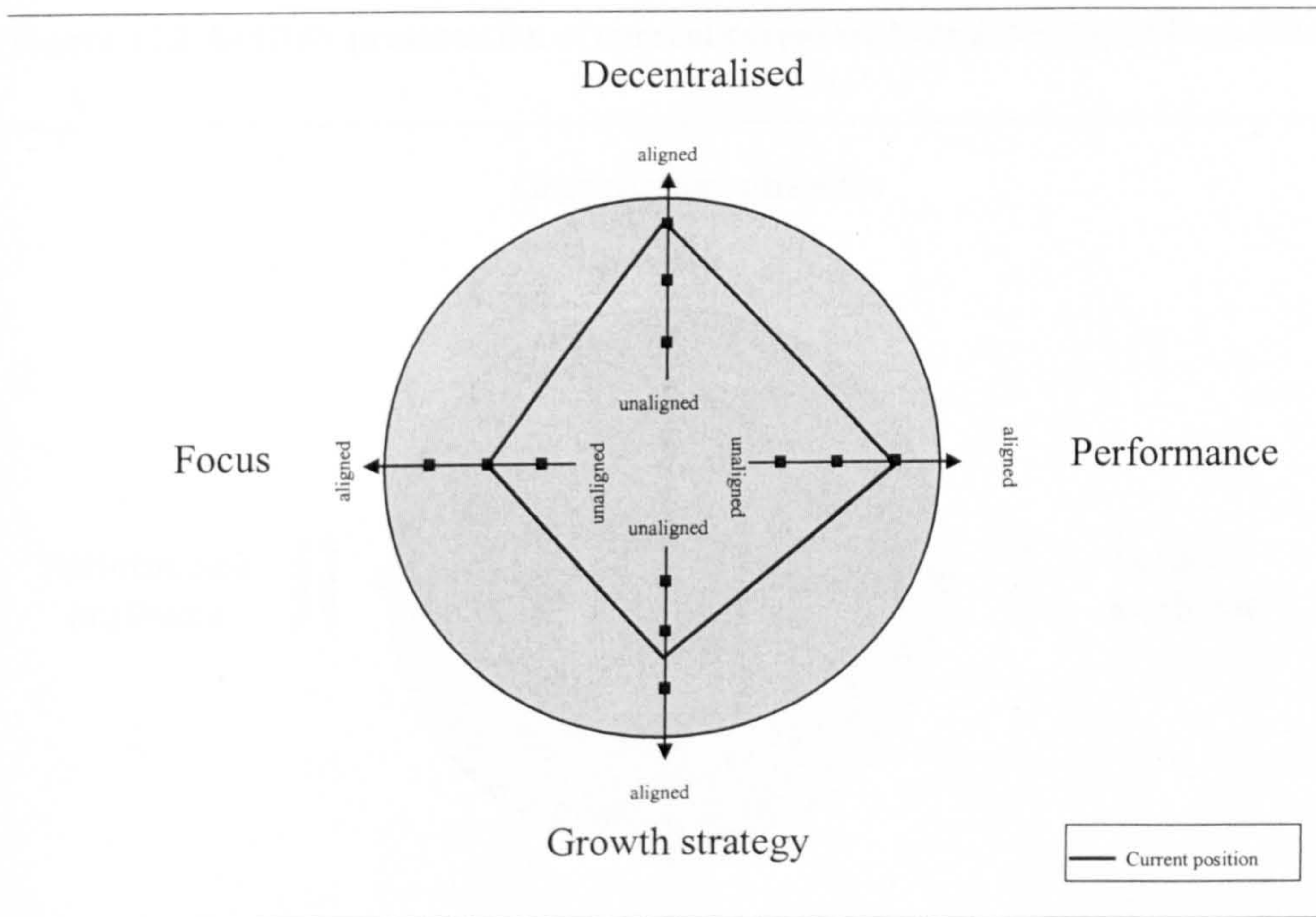


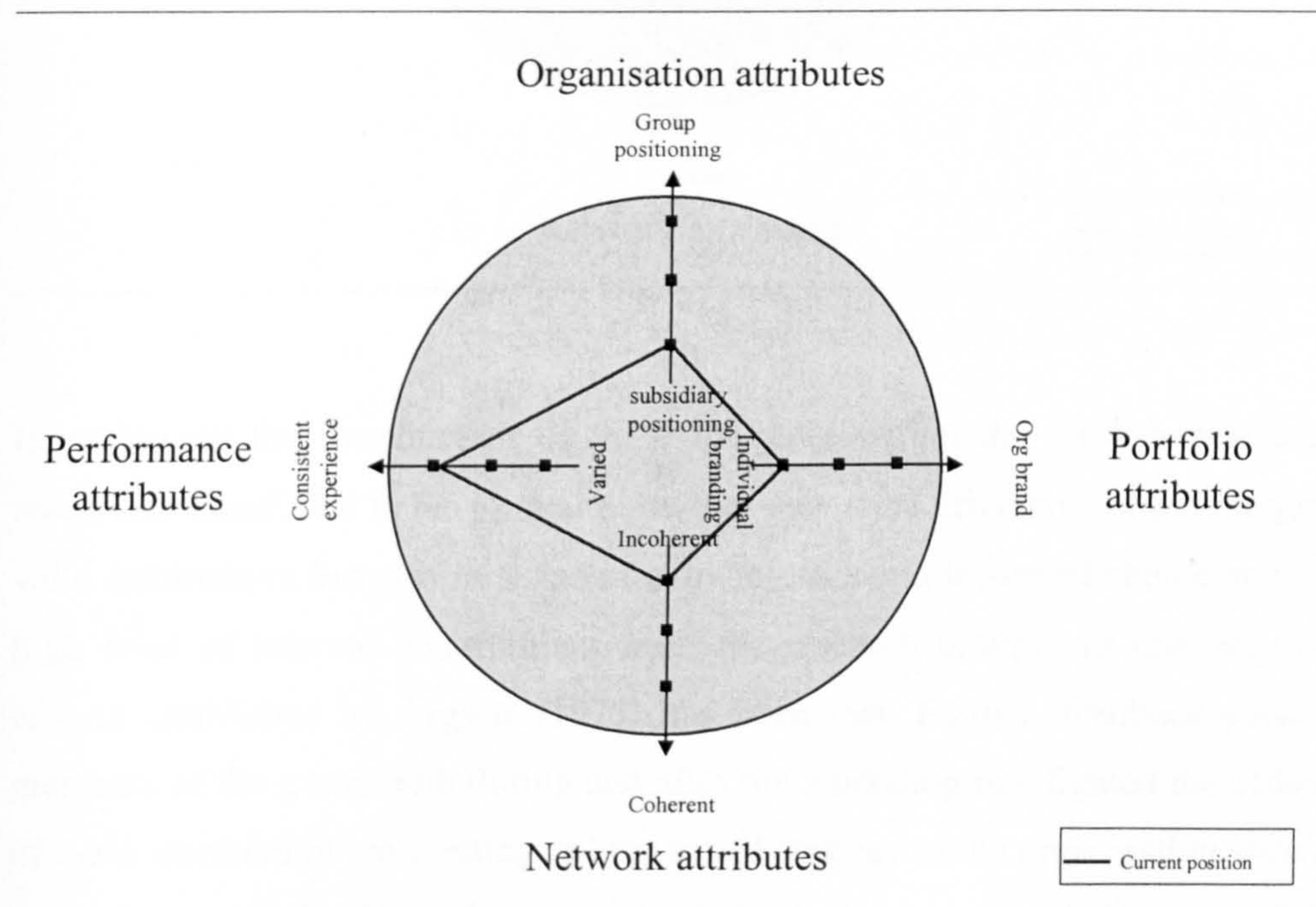
Figure 11.7 AEGON Group Business Processes Monitor from workshop



The three new monitors, Belief Systems, Behaviours supplemented by the Business Process monitor utilised in previous studies (Figures 11.5, 11.6, 11.7) were then used as the basis for two further workshops which were held in London and The Hague in early October, 2001.

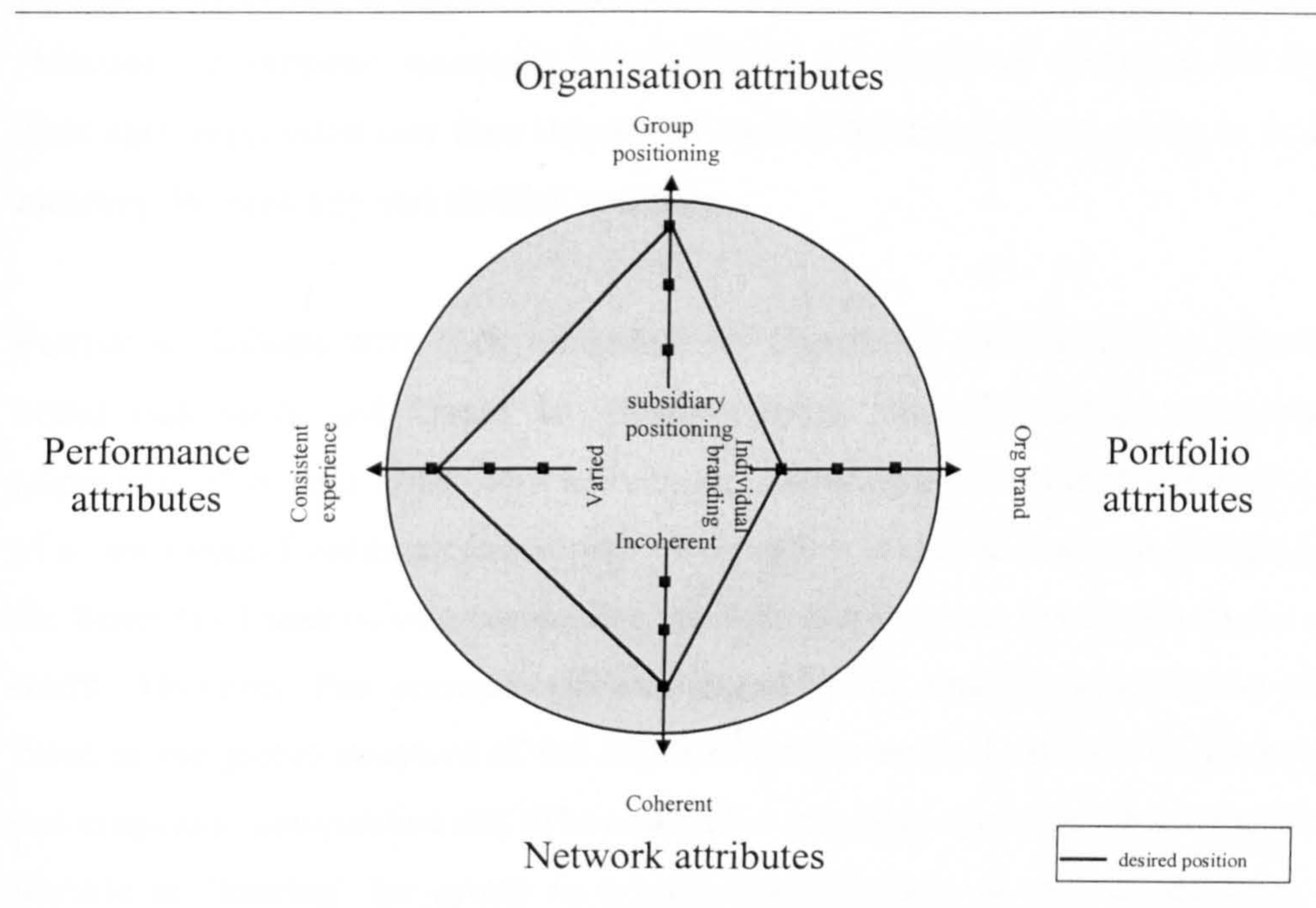
Use of these three new monitors helped the research group to identify the core corporate values or beliefs of the organisation and discuss how these related to the strategic pillars as identified in the Business Processes monitor. It also helped the group highlight areas of inconsistency between the beliefs of the organisation and some of the corporate behaviours experienced. The feedback of the group from these workshops was that the use of the new monitors helped to create a clear link between the beliefs or values of the organisation and the business processes. The research group indicated in discussion that this helped to create coherence within the corporate brand and enabled the corporate values to have a stronger presence across the AEGON Group because of this link with the established business strategy. It also enabled the group to display the current and desired future state of the corporate brand projection (Figures 11.8 and 11.9).

Figure 11.8 AEGON presentation of current corporate brand developed from data



Use of the Corporate Brand Monitors helped the group to identify the current attributes of the brand that were being projected. Given the de-centralised nature of the Group this emphasis centred on the performance elements, projected to both customers and other stakeholders such as shareholders and partners. The monitors also enabled the group to build a consensus on the attributes that needed improved definition and clearer articulation. Consistent with previous studies, these were identified as the Organisation and Network attributes.

Figure 11.9 AEGON presentation of future desired corporate brand developed from data



In reviewing the introduction of these monitors within the workshop situation, the researcher concluded in his journal notes that they were effective not only in generating valid information but also in terms of allowing free and informed choice and gaining a high level of internal commitment from the research group. In this way the three criteria established by Argyris (1973) had been met. Further, feedback sessions with members of the group both during and after the workshop highlighted the effectiveness of these monitors in 'connecting up' the stated strategy of the organisation with some of its fundamentally held beliefs, a connection that had not previously been established.

Phase three interventions

Based upon this analysis the researcher worked with the AEGON Group Communications team to develop a series of corporate brand statements, which articulated this desired corporate brand positioning. These statements were developed in discussion during the workshops and drew from the new monitors developed in the previous workshop (Appendix 11.7, page 364).

In developing these statements the research group referred back to the Customer Value monitor created out of the first phase interventions. This led to the generation of a new 'Mission' or 'purpose' statement for the Group, articulated as '*Creating better futures*'. This core expression was then developed further by the research group to examine its meaning for each key stakeholder audience.

Further workshops were then scheduled for December and January to develop these brand statements and create an implementation plan for Group Communications (Appendix 11.8, page 368). This activity was scheduled to run parallel with the creation of a new Group Communications plan. During this stage the research group considered the benefits of undertaking competitor attribute mapping, as developed in the previous study. However, this exercise was considered by the research group to be of limited value as the global structure of the AEGON Group made it difficult to identify a clear and consistent competitive set. The researcher was also conscious that he needed to be flexible in 'leading' the group in a particular direction as this would have worked against the criteria of 'valid information' and 'free and informed choice' as dictated by the theoretical framework for the study (Argyris, 1973).

For the first workshop held in December 2001 the researcher produced a further PowerPoint presentation, which summarised all activity undertaken by the research group to date. In consultation with the main contact in the research group the researcher developed an outline for the workshop, which involved further discussion of the corporate brand statements and consideration of how these statements could be implemented as part of the Group Communications strategy to create greater

consistency in AEGON Group communications. During this workshop the research group generated further insight into the nature of the Group's relationship with different internal and external audiences. This involved an identification of various communities of interest in the Group and identified constituencies whose behaviour could impact the future performance of AEGON. This is shown in Figure 11.10.

These definitions were considered by the research group to be especially important given the nature of the Group structure, where Group Communications did not have a direct relationship with customers but did have responsibility for communicating with employees, partners, media and financial analysts.

This work was developed further with two additional workshops run with the research group in The Hague in January and April 2002 (the three-month gap between these two sessions was due to the workload of the research group members). At these workshops the researcher was required to facilitate the discussions on how the developed corporate brand statements could be implemented as part of an overall Group Communications plan.

During these sessions the research group explored ways to develop the corporate brand statements into a framework of 'approved' corporate brand language. This included the identification of associated words, which expressed the key meanings of the corporate brand definitions and an assessment of words that were considered by the group to be outside this definition (Appendix 11.9, page 378).

The output from these workshops, and developed by the research group, was a definition of the scope of language that was defined by the group as conforming to or supporting the core corporate brand definition.

Figure 11.10 Audience definitions developed in workshop

AEGON Group brand and its audiences



Phase four interventions

Given the extended time period for the study and a change in the researcher's work situation^{1*} the fourth stage of interventions was altered from a face-to-face session. Instead, the researcher prepared an electronic semi-structured questionnaire, which was sent to all members of the research group (Appendix 11.11, page 388). This was then followed up with telephone conference calls to discuss key learnings with the individuals involved. Feedback from this process was recorded in note form and documented as further journal notes for analysis as part of the reflection-on-action phase.

¹ * *The researcher changed his full-time job, which made it impossible to travel to The Hague within the study timeframe*

Reflection-on-action

As a final stage of data analysis the researcher returned to all data collected and recorded during the study to re-code as post-project reflection. To ensure systematic order all transcripts and journal notes were translated from Microsoft Word files into 'text only' files and imported into a new QSR nud.ist file for post-project analysis. This analysis was intended to capture all main findings from the study, which were then shared with the research group. The coding frame adopted was based on Heron's (1981) extended epistemology (Figure 4.2) and used to capture the main concepts highlighted by the study of the process. Findings were again displayed as thematic conceptual matrices. The main findings are discussed in the conclusion section to this chapter.

Measuring Corporate Brand Communications consistency as an output

The following section details the approach to conducting content analysis of the AEGON Group's Corporate Brand Communications. The specific stages of this process are discussed under the headings of sampling, recording, data display and analysis.

Sampling

As part of the first phase of intervention the researcher worked with the AEGON Group Communications team to identify the key channels for external and internal communication. This analysis identified a number of key 'formal' communications used to communicate with different audiences. A sample of these materials was agreed and copies of documentation gathered during and immediately after the researcher's first stage intervention. These documents were sourced in electronic format for ease of translation into QSR nud.ist for data recording and reduction.

All data was taken from current published material produced by AEGON Group Communications for both internal and external audiences. This was agreed to provide a representative sample of all published material and included a number of the key formal

publications including the Annual Report, corporate website, internal magazine and selected Group press releases.

This approach was again guided by Weber (1990) and Krippendorf (1980) and, as in previous studies, the researcher investigated the narrative text (defined as all headings and body copy) from this sample of data. This text was downloaded onto a laptop computer as rich text format (measurement universe 1290 text units for CA1 and 1070 text units for CA2) and the data imported into QSR nud.ist software programme for coding and analysis.

It should be noted that in contrast to previous studies the total universe of text units was significantly higher. This was deemed necessary as it reflected the relative size and stature of the organisation. This higher profile reflected a corporate need to communicate both more frequently and to a broader range of audiences including financial, shareholders and other key opinion formers (media and financial analysts).

Recording and Data reduction

The analysis was again conducted under similar conditions at two distinct intervals in August 2001 during the first stage of the intervention and in June 2002 at the end of the researcher's intervention. The first run of content analysis was conducted in August 2001 using data gathered from a cross-section of corporate communication material published by AEGON Group Communications. The coding procedure was then conducted in a similar process to the preceding studies. This is explained below.

Definition of recording units

Consistent with previous studies the Weber (1990) measure adopted was the sentence, as this was judged again to be the most suitable definition for measurement of communication content and offered consistency with the researcher's previous studies.

Definition of categories

Consistent with the approach in previous studies, the definition of categories was guided by Krippendorff's requirement for clearly defined and distinctive categories. For the initial analysis of the text a coding frame was based upon the corporate brand definitions developed in the pilot study and evolved for this study (Figure 11.3). As with previous cases a fifth category was added to cover all items that did not describe the four categories in the coding frame (termed non-brand elements). All text was again prepared for import into a qualitative data analysis programme, QSR.nud.ist to provide a consistent approach to coding.

To maintain consistency with previous studies the analysis was conducted in two phases. For the initial classification each text line was coded using the coding frame explained in Figure 11.3. For the secondary classification a further stage of analysis was conducted to code the text within each category in terms of the different concepts that appeared.

Data display

Data from each stage of content analysis was displayed in two ways. Relative frequencies were compared for the two stages of analysis to show the relative importance of each category within the sample universe. Absolute frequencies were then contrasted for each category to show the consistency of communication, within each defined corporate brand category (Appendix 11.10, page 380).

Figure 11.11 Overview of AEGON content analysis results

Content Analysis 1: August 2001

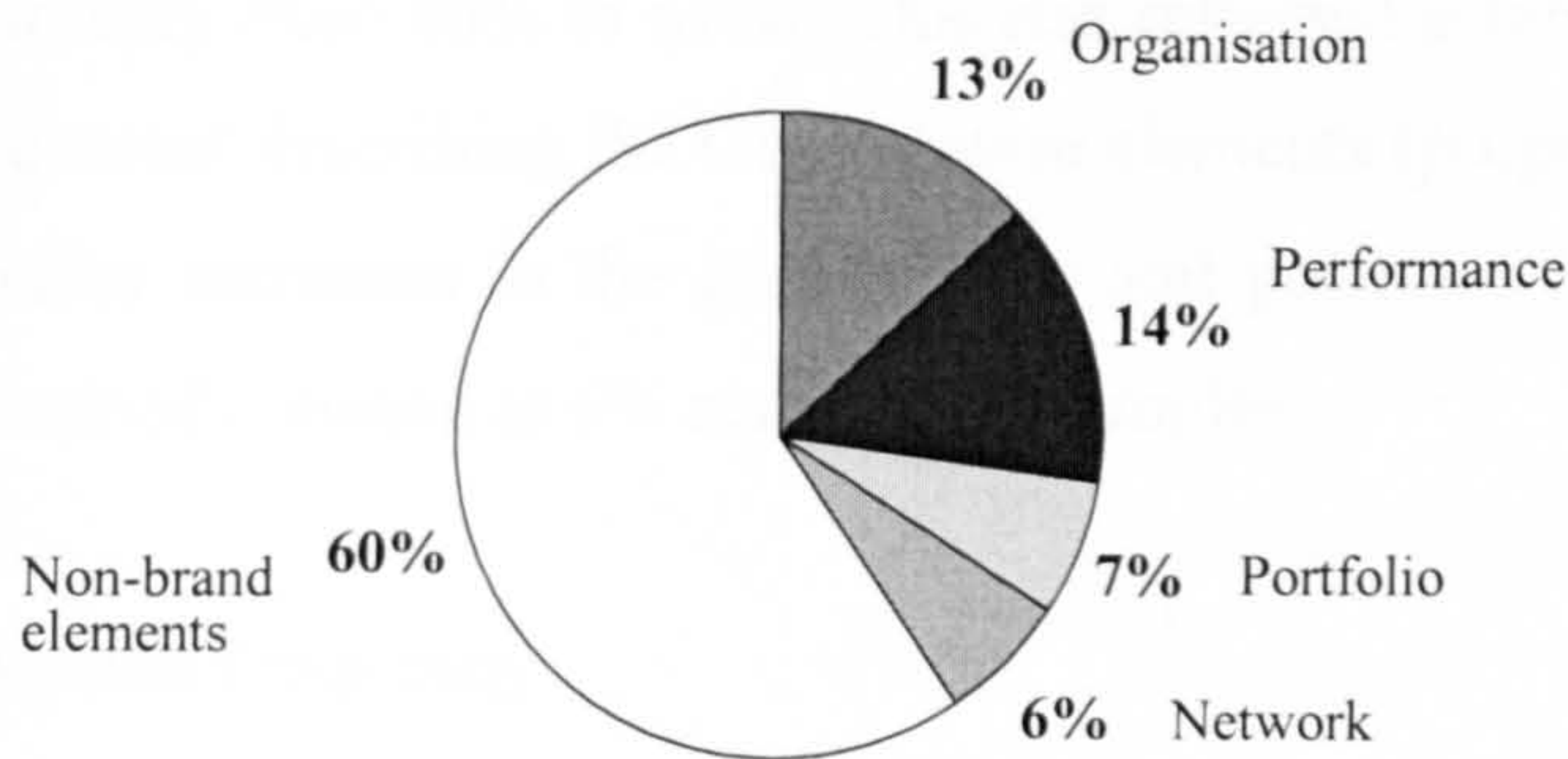
Brand Element	Number of text units	% of total sample
Organisation Elements		
Purpose	3 text units	0.2%
Commitments	151 text units	12.0%
Values	24 text units	1.8%
<i>Total organisation elements</i>		13.0%
Performance Elements		
Products	128 text units	9.8%
Services	62 text units	4.6%
<i>Total performance elements</i>		14.4%
Portfolio Elements		
Product brands	58 text units	4.4%
Customers	33 text units	2.5%
<i>Total portfolio elements</i>		6.9%
Network Elements	81 text units	6.2%

Content Analysis 2: June 2002

Brand Element	Number of text units	% of total sample
Organisation Elements		
Purpose	97 text units	8.0%
Commitments	90 text units	7.7%
Values	168 text units	14.0%
<i>Total organisation elements</i>		29.7%
Performance Elements		
Products	97 text units	8.0%
Services	88 text units	7.7%
<i>Total performance elements</i>		15.7%
Portfolio Elements		
Product brands	82 text units	7.0%
Customers	20 text units	2.0%
<i>Total portfolio elements</i>		9.0%
Network Elements	64 text units	5.5%

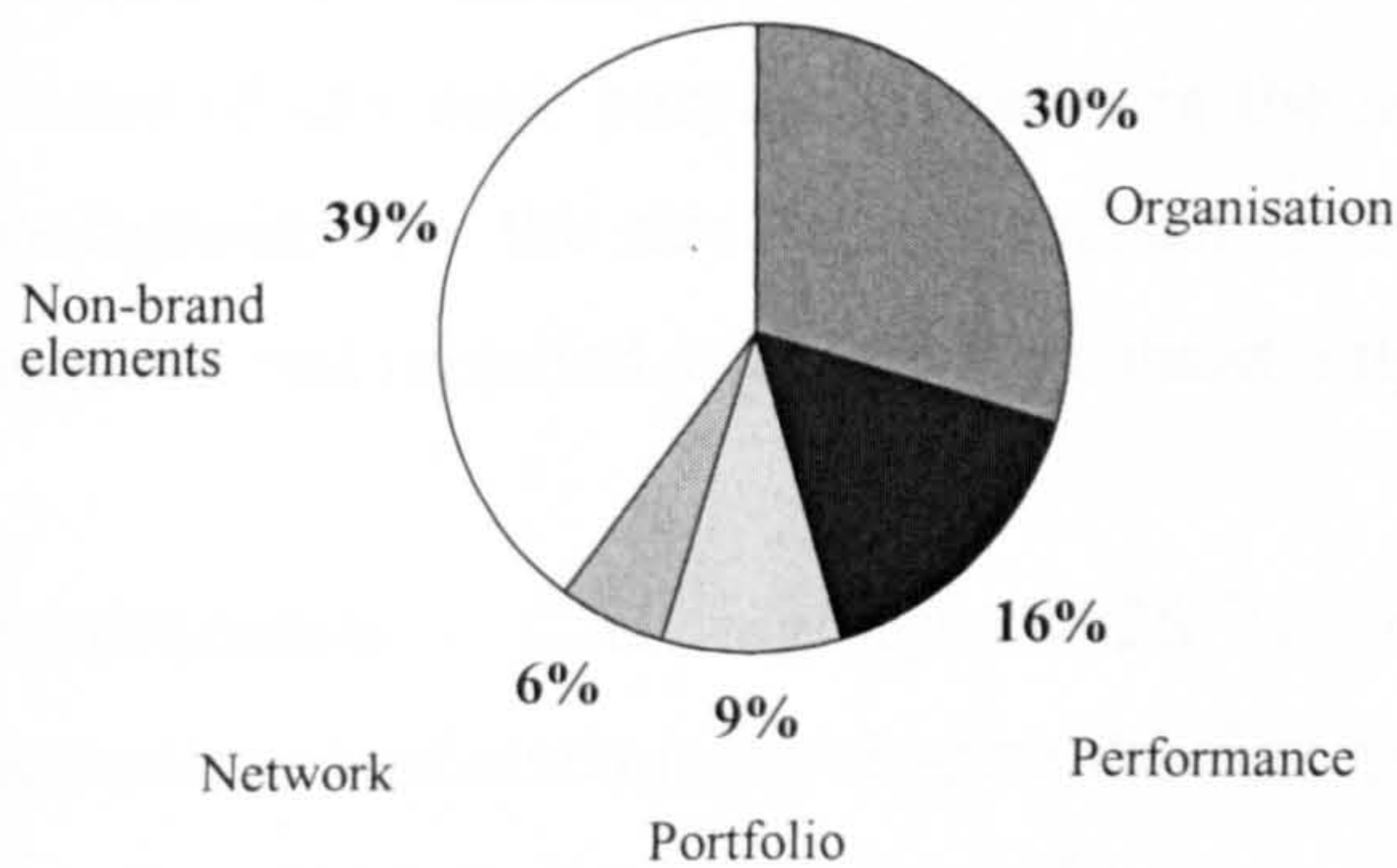
Figure 11.12 AEGON relative frequency content analysis results

Content Analysis 1: August 2001



The pie chart above shows initial coding results from the sample expressed as a pie chart to show the relative importance of the defined corporate brand elements. Almost two-thirds of the sample comprises communication content that is non-brand related.

Content Analysis 2: June 2002



The post-intervention chart shows a higher proportion of total communication relating to the corporate brand (non-brand communication content has fallen to 39%). Organisation elements have substantially increased and the percentage of performance and portfolio elements of the whole has increased, whilst the network element has remained consistent in both samples.

Interpretation of findings

Relative Frequency

The proportion of total communications content related to the corporate brand had risen markedly from 40% to 61%. This rise reflected a substantial increase in the proportion of content describing the Organisation elements (purpose, commitments and values) and smaller increases in the performance and portfolio elements. The Network elements remained constant at 6% across both samples.

Absolute Frequency

These findings related specifically to the measurement of corporate brand consistency as set out in the research design. Separate commentary for absolute frequency measures for each element of the results (presented in Appendix 11.10, page 380) is described in the following section.

Organisation elements

Purpose - The findings from the initial Content Analysis (CA1) showed a marked absence of any clear purpose concepts in the sample. In contrast, CA2 showed a high concentration on the developed Mission Statement (*Creating better futures*). This statement was recorded as appearing consistently across the sample.

Commitments - CA1 highlighted 26 separate concepts, indicating considerable fragmentation of statements, despite the fact that four concepts recorded a number of text units. CA2 showed an increased focus on a more limited number of concepts with a more equal spread of text units across these concepts.

Values - CA1 showed a limited number of text units and no clear focus on any particular concepts. CA2 recorded a substantial increase in consistency and frequency of concepts recorded. The results also highlighted the emergence of the four concepts

developed during the study by the research group. The particular concentration of text units on one concept (respect) appeared to indicate a more rapid adoption of this value as a core concept in Corporate Brand Communications. It was noted that the responsibility concept also recorded a high number of text units in the second sample. CA2 also indicated a much clearer focus on core values concepts with only one other concept apart from the four developed values featuring in more than one text unit.

Performance elements

Products - CA1 indicated a high level of fragmentation with 17 separate concepts, each recording low numbers of text units. CA2 showed a shift towards a limited number of concepts with five concepts recording higher numbers of text units. This greater frequency and consistency in CA2 indicated a greater level of focus in contrast to CA1.

Services - CA1 highlighted a similar pattern to the products category with a high number of concepts recording low numbers of text units. CA2 showed a concentration on five concepts, which each recorded higher numbers of text units. These findings indicated a greater focus on a number of core concepts within this category.

Portfolio elements

Product brands - The CA1 results recorded a wide range of mentions for individual product brands but within no clear corporate framework. Data in CA2 indicated a concentration on three main concepts with 'diverse portfolio' recording the highest number of text units. This concentration was interpreted as indicating the development of a clearer corporate framework for describing the various product brands of the Group within a multi-brand or diverse portfolio strategy.

Customers – Although the total number of text units in this category was low for both samples there was a distinct shift detected between the two samples. For CA1 there was only one concept which recorded more than one text unit. In contrast, CA2 data showed

three concepts which all recorded a greater frequency of text units indicating an emphasis on certain key messages about the customers of the AEGON Group.

Network elements

One concept ('de-centralised organisation') recorded the highest number of text units in both samples. However, there was a strong indication of greater focus in CA2 with four concepts recording a higher number of text units each in contrast to CA1 where data indicated greater fragmentation across 11 separate concepts.

Validation of findings

Before considering what inferences can be made from this data, attention was again given to issues of reliability and validity. Krippendorf (1980) states that a reliable procedure should yield consistent results from the same set of phenomena, regardless of the circumstances of application. The main aim of testing reliability again in this case was to establish whether the data obtained from the process provided a trustworthy basis for answering the Research Question (Figure 9.10). Both Weber and Krippendorf highlight three types of reliability: stability; reproducibility; accuracy. These were outlined previously in Figure 9.11 and are discussed in the following section.

Stability tests

Stability tests were conducted on each stage of the data analysis to ensure that the coding process was invariant over time. This was conducted as a test-test situation with the data coded twice by the researcher within a one-week period. These tests yielded the following figures:

Content Analysis 1 - 96% accuracy
Content Analysis 2 - 92% accuracy

Based on a total sample size of 1290 text units the stability test for CA1 identified 51 text lines that showed different coding in the test-test situation. For CA2 from the total sample size of 1070 text units there were 85 text lines that showed different coding in the test-test situation. The researcher then followed Krippendorff's approach using single category reliability to identify that these differences in coding related to two categories ('values' and 'product brands'). This resulted in revised definitions of the coding description for certain concepts in each category. One particular example of this concerned the concept of 'respectful entrepreneurship' in the values category. Having highlighted the variance in test results a decision was taken to include this concept as both an indicator of 'respect' and 'ambition' concepts.

As with previous studies the researcher used the Weber criteria of 80% as an indication of reliability.

Reproducibility tests

Reproducibility tests were conducted to assess whether the coding process could claim intercoder reliability. This was achieved for both stages of the content analysis by sending the coding frame together with a 100 text-line sample to Gijsbert Siertsema at AEGON. These results of the intercoder reliability tests were calculated using a coefficient from Krippendorff (1980) for testing the reliability of small sample sizes (Scott's 1955 agreement co-efficient). This is stated as follows:

$$pi = \frac{\% \text{ of observed matches} - \% \text{ of expected matches}}{1 - \% \text{ of expected matches}}$$

Based upon an expected matches figure of 80% (Weber), the agreement co-efficient was calculated as follows:

Content Analysis 1: August 2001

$$pi = 1 - \frac{100 - 94}{100 - 80} = 0.7$$

Content Analysis 2: June 2002

$$pi = 1 - \frac{100 - 97}{100 - 80} = 0.85$$

Each of these high levels of coding agreements and high co-efficients were taken as a strong indicator of intercoder reliability.

Accuracy tests

Krippendorff states that in situations where messages are coded into categories, the standards against which accuracy can be established are rarely available. As such, the reliability of the data in this study was deemed to rest with the stability and reproducibility tests detailed above.

Validity

Both Weber and Krippendorff highlight the importance of validity in content analysis, as it provides assurance in research findings and enables the researcher to draw inferences with a high degree of confidence. Krippendorff notes that content analysis procedures that do not consider suitable means of validity leave their findings open to accusations of lack of rigour. To ensure consistency with previous studies the findings from this study were again analysed adopting Krippendorff's typology (Figure 9.10).

Data oriented validity

Krippendorff highlights the need to consider how well the method of analysis represents the information inherent in the data. For this study this was again interpreted as the degree to which the representation of the data in analysis corresponded to the initial framework developed from the pilot study. Data oriented validity was therefore reviewed under the following headings:

Semantical validity - assesses the degree to which the research method is sensitive to symbolic meanings. Given the context for this study, the explicit nature of the Research

Question and the rigour of the sampling and data analysis process, a strong claim could again be made that the findings show semantical validity.

Sampling validity - Krippendorff states that a sample is valid to the extent that its composition corresponds to the composition of the universe for which it is intended to stand. The rationale for the selection of a range of corporate communication material was discussed with the research group to make the sample representative of communication to all key organisation audiences.

Product oriented validity

Krippendorff's second category of validity, also known as pragmatical validity (Weber, 1990), was reviewed under the following headings:

Correlational validity - This is of particular concern when the phenomenon of interest mediates between both the production and reception of images. As stated in previous studies this particular approach concentrated on the production of messages only.

Predictive validity - content analysis is judged to have predictive validity if its inferences can be shown to exhibit high agreement with the phenomena being studied. Once again, these findings can be related back to the framework developed for the study and the Research Question (RQ2).

Construct validity

Construct validity is used to assess the degree to which an analytical procedure functionally represents relations in the context of the data. However, as indicated previously, Krippendorff states that when a content analysis procedure is designed *de novo*, as in this case, it is almost impossible to establish construct validity without the aid of past experience or availability of concurrent indicators. It was therefore deemed by the researcher to be sufficient that the sampling and analytical approach was consistent with those adopted for the content analysis stages of the two previous studies.

In conclusion, in measuring Corporate Brand Communications consistency as an output, this study has explained the context for the study, procedures adopted and highlighted the main findings. The interpretation of these findings has also been considered in relation to the twin concepts of reliability and validity. The research method was designed to check both intra-observer and inter-observer reliability and the main conditions for Krippendorff's typology of validity have been met.

Reflection-on-action: study conclusions

The intervention approach for this study (Figure 11.2) highlighted the need for a period of further analysis at the completion of the study. This was again defined as the period where the researcher in the post-intervention phase reviewed all data collected throughout the conduct of the study. This involved collating all transcripts and project journals, which were converted into Rich Text Files and imported into QSR nud.ist files for analysis. Coding was conducted to identify all concepts that emerged from the study of the Corporate Brand Communications process. The researcher was again guided by Heron's (1981) extended epistemology in seeking to identify presentational knowledge.

As with previous studies this procedure was considered important as it is guided by the Argyris (1983) view of intervention as helping the client system while developing new contextual models to explain the context of the study, and the participatory approach explained earlier. All main concepts identified in the coding were again displayed using thematic conceptual matrices to capture presentational knowledge, reflective learning and then propositional knowledge generated from this analysis.

The tabulations from this analysis are detailed in Figure 11.13 and interpretation of these main findings is discussed on the following pages.

Figure 11.13 AEGON study reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrices

Post intervention stage - May 2002

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>1.0 Linking corporate brand to the business</p>	<p>Business has a strong and well-defined business model articulated in strategy but no clear linkage back into the philosophy of the business leaving group open to accusations of being one-dimensional</p>	<p>Organisational structure has been at the heart of group development not the corporate brand which has not been articulated</p>	<p>Corporate brand developed must be based on and reflect the unique business structure or model for the group. This is about helping to put the organisation into the brand and the brand into the organisation</p>
<p>1.1 Defining business culture</p>	<p>Noted pattern emerged in study of culture being described in three ways – beliefs, behaviours and business processes. This typology did highlight links between corporate behaviour and actual corporate beliefs</p>	<p>These three dimensions can be used to describe the culture of the group in a meaningful or tangible way</p>	<p>Application of three-fold culture definition that encompasses belief systems, behaviours and business processes as a means to define the organisational attributes of a corporate brand and make connections</p>
<p>1.2 Identifying mis-alignment</p>	<p>Use of process monitors for the three different culture dimensions helped the research group to identify misalignments</p>	<p>Good means of helping research group build valid information to identify where problems and inconsistencies are occurring</p>	<p>Culture is reinforced by the interplay of these three elements. Process monitors can be used here as both an articulation and an alignment tool – to generate corporate brand definitions and to check for alignment of brand behaviours</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>2.0 Corporate brand as communications framework</p>	<p>Number of communications initiatives are undertaken at group level but strong feeling that these are not fully co-ordinated. This lack of connection is further enhanced by the de-centralised structure of the group</p>	<p>Need for a clear framework provided by the corporate brand definition to help guide and structure activities</p>	<p>Corporate brand definitions can be used as a filter to judge communications activities against</p>
<p>2.1 Providing focus to communication strategy</p>	<p>Changing nature of the group as it expands its scope and reach demands greater focus in its group communication activities. Need to counterbalance the de-centralised nature of operations with some common group beliefs and approaches</p>	<p>Corporate brand can provide sense of focus and commonality to these activities. Role of organisational attributes in this, particularly Mission and Values is key</p>	<p>Organisational attributes developed as part of the corporate brand definition provide three clear benefits – clarity, inspiration and call to action</p>
<p>2.2 Role of organisational attributes in corporate brand definition</p>	<p>Use of three different cultural factors to describe the group and its operations – beliefs, behaviours and processes – helped provide a means for the research group to explain the points of difference for AEGON against competitors</p>	<p>Need to consolidate this framework as a means of understanding and articulating how the business can be incorporated within the brand</p>	<p>Adoption of three factor audit of the group does provide a mechanism for identifying the unique organisational attributes of the corporate brand – and provide a clear linkage between the corporate brand and business model via the business processes</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>3.0 Audience definition</p>	<p>AEGON group must communicate with multiple audiences who can process information from a variety of different sources. Need to distinguish these audiences and define desired brand relationship with each</p>	<p>Communications at group level deal with primary audiences and only have secondary impact on end customers</p>	<p>Need to include audience mapping as part of corporate brand communication process</p>
<p>3.1 Creation of new typologies</p>	<p>Traditional internal/external audience definitions are too restrictive as group can be communicating with targets through multiple channels and in multiple needs states</p>	<p>Increasing impact of cross-over stakeholders who can have multiple relationships with group must be reflected in brand management process</p>	<p>Development of new typology of community audiences with economic relationship with group and constituency audiences who have an economic influence on group</p>
<p>3.2 Complex value chains require consistency of message</p>	<p>Role of intermediaries in delivering AEGON products/services to end consumers and role of key influence audiences (e.g. financial analysts) in influencing commitment to AEGON</p>	<p>Concept of customer value is still important but clarity of focus and message is required to overcome these complex value chains</p>	<p>Development of organisational attributes as part of corporate brand definition must recognise different audiences and have relevance to each key audience</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>4.0 Role of communication in corporate branding</p>	<p>Clear potential recognised among group to use corporate brand as a platform for planning group communication</p>	<p>Efficacy of corporate brand definition to provide basis for communication strategy</p>	<p>Emergence of three key drivers of corporate brand communications – act as a focus, framework and filter for strategic activities</p>
<p>4.1 Role of internal communications</p>	<p>Importance in acting as a binding element. Group communications currently control these channels but do not use them strategically for brand management</p>	<p>As part of brand confirmation process need to use all formal and informal internal communication channels</p>	<p>Internal communications channels (print and electronic) form a vital part of the brand confirmation stage of corporate brand management</p>
<p>4.2 Potential of verbal branding</p>	<p>Extending the scope of branding beyond existing understanding of visual elements to include use of language. Identifying potential for a corporate way of communicating using AEGON stories</p>	<p>Role of language in corporate branding not been fully considered by group before – emerged through the study as a powerful tool</p>	<p>Potential for communications consistency to assist in corporate brand management through a clear articulation and delivery of corporate brand language</p>
<p>4.3 Brand guardianship</p>	<p>Extending the role of group communications beyond guardians of the logo to guardians of the AEGON language as agents of the Executive Board</p>	<p>Extending the scope of brand management to encompass verbal elements as part of the brand guardians role</p>	<p>Clearer understanding of the role and potential to manage the verbal expression of the corporate brand using strategic corporate communications</p>
<p>4.4 Significance of organizational attributes in system improvement</p>	<p>Largest increase in attributes measured occurred in organisation attributes category</p>	<p>Organisation attributes was area with least degree of clarity therefore framework of study helped group to develop clarity particularly over purpose and values</p>	<p>Potential to improve consistency and clarity of communications through development of core organisation attributes</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>5.0 Conducting Action Research within AEGON</p>	<p>Group communications team and group staff very busy. Agreement to access for study therefore granted on the basis that there was a clear need and desired output for the group from the study</p>	<p>Negotiation of twin outputs – academic and practical to suit the needs of the organisation</p>	<p>Timing of researcher approach to organization is key. Must be a clear need recognised for change and this forms part of initial engagement</p>
<p>5.1 Role of pre-understanding and access</p>	<p>Researcher's previous experience of the group helped to gain trust of research subjects in agreeing access to conduct the study</p>	<p>Knowledge of organisation's business is important. Equally important is the pre-understanding of the individuals and operating ethos of the group</p>	<p>Pre-understanding of the organisation and the issues it faces helps to gain trust of research subjects and generates enthusiasm and support for the study. This forms part of the enrolment stage</p>
<p>5.2 Securing commitment and action</p>	<p>Process of data gathering and workshops helped to provide on-going feedback to the research group. Use of monitor charts and content analysis provided valid information to help group make decisions and secured commitment</p>	<p>Need to maintain momentum to study with managed schedule of interventions and clear outputs at each phase – planning essential given geographic constraints to study</p>	<p>Development and use of tools help to enable free and informed choice amongst research subjects. Information generated and insight gained creates empowerment for the research group</p>

Identification of 3B's of corporate branding

Probably the most interesting finding in terms of both practical and propositional knowledge, generated from the study by the researcher and research group, was the identification of three clear elements that help shape the definition and development of the organisational elements of the corporate brand.

In the context of this study the research group operated with a firmly established operating model in terms of business processes, but had no clear way to connect this up to corporate brand presentation. This, in turn, had created a situation where the presentation and audience understanding of the AEGON Group was considered, and validated by external commissioned research, to be one-dimensional.

In addressing this issue the research group developed a means of defining the culture of the Group in terms of three elements, the prevailing beliefs, or philosophy, of the Group; the way the Group behaved; the main business processes and strategies of the Group. These three elements were then used by the research group to model the key organisational attributes for the Group.

This enabled the research group to identify a number of connections between these three elements that had not been previously connected or formally linked. This led both the research group and the researcher to conclude that these 3B's of corporate branding played a vital role in the development of a strong and distinctive corporate brand articulation for AEGON Group. Exit interviews with the research group also indicated that the process of linking the beliefs and behaviours with the strategic processes had also helped in assisting senior Group management in accepting and adopting the new corporate brand definitions.

Development of new monitors to assess and foster brand development

During the study the development of new monitors based on the Customer Value monitor introduced by the researcher was felt by the research group to be a good

practical step in aiding the development of the corporate brand articulation. The beliefs and behaviours monitors were used alongside a Business Processes monitor to help the research group identify the key organisational attributes and as a means to measure the current behaviour of the Group against these attributes.

The monitors were therefore accepted as having a twin role in terms of aiding definition and helping to check for alignment. In terms of the conduct of the study, adoption of these monitors helped the research group to generate and display valid information and enabled free and informed choice (Argyris, 1973) among the research group.

Corporate brand as framework for Group communications

The study identified that a number of communications initiatives are undertaken by the Group and its operating units but in the past these have been difficult to co-ordinate in a consistent manner. The rapid growth and de-centralised nature of the Group have also been strong forces for localisation and fragmentation of communication activities. The development of a corporate brand framework with a clear and logical link to the group's business strategy was felt by the research group to provide a clear framework for future communication activity.

The benefits of this process were considered by the research group to be the clarification and acceptance of a consistent verbal expression or way of speaking about the Group to all audiences, both internal and external.

Development of new audience typologies based upon engagement

A further conclusion from the study was that the AEGON Group deals with a complex set of relationships with audiences, having to communicate with a variety of different audiences through multiple communication channels. As part of the development of the key organisational attributes, the research group developed insights into what these attributes and the broader corporate brand definition should mean to each of these audiences. This highlighted some weaknesses with traditional internal versus external

definitions as the Group dealt with stakeholders who had multiple relationships with the Group. In these cases the traditional definitions were felt by the research group to be too simplistic and restrictive. Another finding was that the Group managed complex value chains with intermediaries playing an important role in the customer value chain and analysts and media playing a similar role in the stakeholder value chain.

The use of content analysis in the study as an input was widely recognised by the research group as an important factor in highlighting ineffectiveness and inconsistencies with the approach adopted prior to the study.

A further finding was the importance in Corporate Brand Communications for the Group to develop an engagement strategy for dialogue with each stakeholder audience. This led to the development by the research group of a new audience typology, which clustered audiences in terms of 'community' and 'constituency'. This typology highlighted differing levels of engagement with the Group and helped to identify the best way of developing a strategic communications plan for each identified audience.

The power of verbal branding through co-ordinating internal and external communications

As the study progressed there were clear indications among the research group of a growing awareness of the potential to use language and communication to reinforce the corporate brand. This moved the concept of Corporate Brand Management beyond the traditionally held view of visual or design management to a more strategic deployment of verbal expressions of corporate brand-building from the newly defined Mission and Values developed by the research group during the study.

This also had the effect of fostering the belief amongst the research group that their role extended beyond the confines of communications to encompass a broader remit as guardians of the AEGON corporate brand. A vital element in this understanding was the importance of internal communication as a means to fulfil this guardian role. This involved a fundamental review of existing internal communication policies with the

development of a more strategic approach based upon the corporate brand definitions developed by the research group.

Enhancing 'system effectiveness' in terms of communications output

The results of the content analysis stage point to an increase in 'system effectiveness' (Argyris, 1973) as measured in terms of corporate brand consistency in published communications. As this measurement was conducted shortly after the completion of the project the researcher noted the impact that this study appeared to have had on the planning of Group Communications messages.

The use of content analysis as a measure of system effectiveness was also welcomed by the research group as a good tool for developing a strategic approach towards Corporate Brand Communications. In particular the use of data from CA1 was judged to be a good input (valid information) to the process.

Role of researcher as an agent of intervention

As part of the reflection-on-action process the researcher also analysed the data for learning gained during the process of researcher intervention in studying the system of Corporate Brand Communications. This data was also displayed in the form of a thematic conceptual matrix (Figure 11.13), which was then discussed with the research team. The main learning from the group on the role of intervention was as follows.

In negotiating access to conduct the study it was acknowledged during the post-intervention phase that the researcher's level of preunderstanding from previous experience of AEGON was vital in helping him secure access to undertake the study. The Group Communications team were busy and resource-constrained, meaning that there was little perceived 'additional time' to devote to the study. However, the researcher's preunderstanding, combined with an acceptance from the research subjects that there were practical gains to be made from initiating the study, in the form of a strategic communications plan and a new corporate brand definition, created a

favourable environment for the study. To achieve this environment of trust and co-operation the researcher had to enter into a period of protracted negotiation with AEGON and document a clear intervention plan that explained the benefits of the study for the research group. This has been identified as the 'engagement' stage of intervention.

Further analysis of the researcher's journal notes highlighted that this preunderstanding was not limited to just an understanding of AEGON's business sector. Equally important was the understanding of the prevailing ethos and personalities within the organisation. This knowledge was actively used by the researcher to build trust with the research subjects and help foster a shared understanding of the study and its twin benefits. This was identified as the 'enrolment' stage of the study.

Post intervention analysis also pointed to the need to plan each phase of intervention carefully, ensuring that the research subjects understood requirements of them at each stage of the study. The development of a number of display tools such as monitors and the use of content analysis to analyse communications output also helped the research group to gain confidence and generate commitment to action at each stage. This was identified as the 'enabling' stage.

Although the post intervention exit interviews were conducted two months after the intervention, owing to the researcher's thesis time constraints, indications from the exit interviews with the research group were that the study had generated greater confidence in the research group to actively manage the verbal articulation of the AEGON corporate brand. This was identified as the 'empowerment' stage of the study.

Upon completion and closure of this study the researcher returned to the data for all three studies to begin the process of cross-case analysis and drawing conclusions, which are explained in the following chapter.

Chapter Twelve: Cross-Case analysis and Study conclusions

Cross-Case analysis

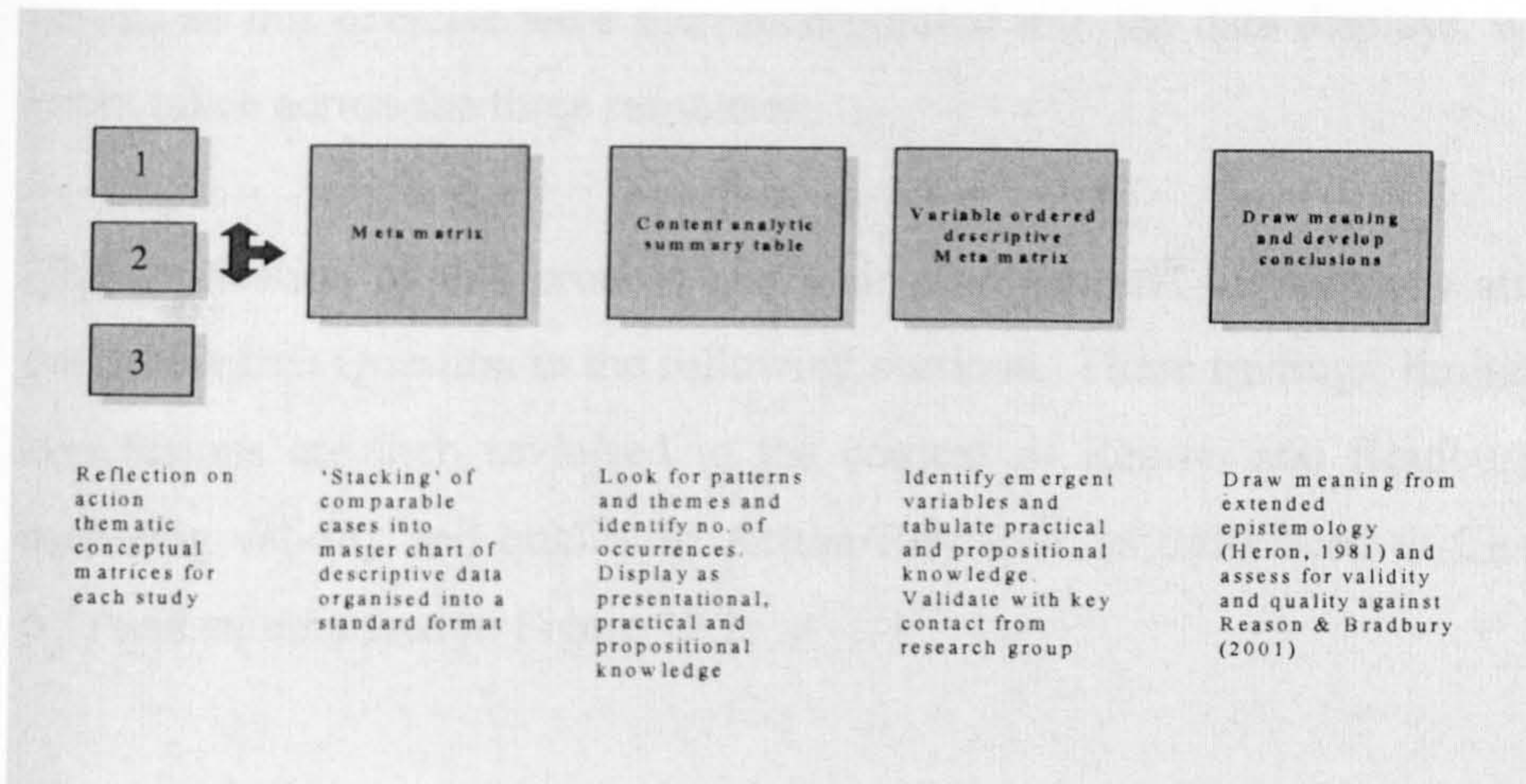
At the completion of the AEGON study the researcher began the process of consolidating findings and drawing conclusions from the three intervention studies. This started with the development of Cross-Case displays. The goal of this exercise was to enhance generalisability and to deepen understanding and explanation of the learning generated in each study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The following section explains the researcher's approach to Cross-Case display, data reduction and the process of drawing and verifying conclusions from these displays.

Cross-Case display and Data reduction

Given the nature of the Research Questions and the intervention framework used consistently for each study the researcher adopted a '*mixed strategy*' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to Cross-Case display. This involved the '*stacking*' of comparable cases, relating to each Research Question, into a Meta-Matrix, which was defined as a master chart assembling descriptive data from each study in a standard format (as per the reflection-on-action matrices generated from each study). This approach was driven by the principle of inclusion to ensure that all relevant data was represented. From this display the data was partitioned into a set of variables (concepts), which removed the distinction between cases, and instead concentrated on identifying key variables that emerged from the data as a holistic body of evidence.

A Conceptually Ordered Display was again selected as the most suitable approach with data entered in the form of a Content-Analytic Summary Table. At each stage of data entry (defined as each identified variable or concept) the researcher returned to the data generated from each study to consider whether this variable had occurred in more than one study. Where this was the case the number of occurrences was entered in parentheses in the relevant table cell. This practice was not an attempt to quantify findings, but merely to aid the researcher's analysis of the data.

Figure 12.1 Cross-Case analysis and drawing conclusions



Miles and Huberman (1994) note that there are many different strategies for generating meaning from qualitative data displays. In adopting particular tactics for generating meaning the researcher was conscious of the need to ensure conceptual and theoretical coherence. This dictated an approach that was guided by Heron's extended epistemology to identify with the research groups the practical and propositional knowledge that was generated from the studies.

Drawing and verifying conclusions

Once the initial Content-Analytic Summary tables were generated for each Research Question, the researcher analysed each display with the objective of noting patterns and themes emerging from the data and further refined these displays into a series of Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrices (Figure 12.1). As part of the verification process the Summary tables and Meta-Matrices were then sent out to the key contact from each study for comment and further discussion. This tactic is consistent with the view that getting feedback from informants is a valid method for generating meaning as well as being consistent within the participatory nature of the study.

The key contact defined from each study was asked to review the data displays and give their own interpretation on the significance of each of the findings contained in the display. The researcher then re-contacted each person to discuss the findings via a telephone interview, after each contact had sent back their response to the request in

writing. One informant did this in hard copy format and the other two via e-mail. The results of this exercise were then incorporated into the data displays, with the average score taken across the three responses.

The application of this process and main findings and implications are discussed for each Research Question in the following sections. These findings, limitations and study conclusions are then reviewed in the context of Reason and Bradbury's criteria for assessing validity and quality in Action Research, as introduced in Chapter 6 (Figure 6.1) and summarised in Figure 12.2.

Figure 12.2 Reason and Bradbury criteria for assessing validity and quality

Questions for assessing quality in Action Research

Is the Action Research:

- *Explicit in developing a praxis of relational-participation?*
- *Guided by reflexive concern for practical outcomes?*
- *Inclusive of a plurality of knowing?*
- *Worthy of term significant?*
- *Emerging towards a new and enduring infrastructure?*

Source: Reason and Bradbury, 2001

Developing a more empirically robust framework for the management of Corporate Brand Communications (RQ1)

As a first stage the researcher returned to the reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrices for each study and compiled the data into a single Meta Matrix. From this matrix the researcher developed a Content-Analytic Summary table (Figure 12.3) to look for patterns and themes emerging from the preliminary data display. This approach enabled the researcher to cluster findings in terms of the main stages that described the process of the three studies.

This process of data reduction was conducted over a period of three days with data synthesised into a Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix (Figure 12.3). This data

display identifies a series of emergent variables and displays the practical and propositional knowledge generated from the three studies. Based on this analysis the researcher has attempted to draw meaning and develop conclusions. These are discussed in the implications section on the following pages.

Figure 12.3 Content-Analytic Summary table for Research Question 1

Developed from Meta-Matrix of three intervention studies

	<i>Within study</i>	<i>Beyond study</i>	
Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Including competitive landscape in phase one studies	Useful tactic to increase interest and build consensus by focus on external environment (2)	Useful means of creating engagement by focus on external environment (2)	Vital to engage participants in branding debate. Mechanism to do this is to establish competitors' brand propositions (2)
Need to consider multiple dimensions and viewpoints in early stages	As part of phase one work need to identify internal and external viewpoints of the organisation's brand (3)	Use internal views and external environment to begin to mirror the way the group view the world with the external dynamics of their markets (3)	Multiple viewpoints help to contextualise how the research group perceive their own brand (3)
Use of market research data as input	Use of additional available research stimulus helped add richness to the study by providing valid information (2)	Introduction of additional research outside of the study helps generate valid information and provides further context for the study (2)	Data can be assembled to contrast internal views with external environment and image to highlight where the gaps exist and how the corporate brand might be developed (3)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Modelling competitors' key attributes	Mapping corporate brand attributes communicated by competitors with customer value drivers helps group to understand competitive environment and discuss different approaches (2)	Useful exercise as it creates objectivity by focusing on competitors attributes (2)	Use of attribute modelling for competitors helps to clarify the competitive landscape for any corporate branding project (2)
Use of spider charts as effective data displays	Development of charts helped group identify key attributes of competitors' communication (2)	Development of data displays to meet certain tasks as part of the analytical phase of the study (3)	Process mapping helps group build consensus on where organisation's future market space lies (2)
Drawing distinctions with competitors	Use of competitor attribute mapping also helped the research group identify ways in which the organisation's communication could be distinctive from competitors (2)	Use of competitor attribute maps helps research group to identify what is distinctive about their own corporate brand (2)	Development of a structured process to examine competitors' attributes and how these relate to identified customer value drivers (2)
Corporate Brand Development cycle	Development of new corporate brand definition undertaken through a cyclical process of meetings and group sessions over a protracted period of time (3)	This process of corporate brand construction is time-consuming. Need to establish a clear timeframe to avoid drift and lack of focus among the research group (3)	Need to establish a clear definition for the brand construction process and what is expected from the group in terms of input and output (2)
Monitoring corporate brand development process for relevance	Stages of developing the corporate brand articulation need to include cycle of re-checking against customer value drivers (2)	Process needs to build in these checks to ensure that the brand construction phase marks a development in corporate brand definition (2)	Need for corporate brand development process to refer back to customer value drivers to ensure new brand definition has resonance with audiences (2)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Monitoring corporate brand development process for distinction	Research group need to monitor development of new brand definitions against competitors communicated attributes (2)	Process needs to build in these checks to ensure that the brand construction phase marks a development in corporate brand definition (2)	Need for corporate brand development process to refer back on competitors' attributes to ensure that new brand definition occupies a distinctive position in the market (2)
Establishing a clear consensus to act	Need to develop a common understanding of market dynamics and the core of the organisation's operations (3)	Process of generating valid information on current situation and identification of customer value drivers can help to build consensus among group (3)	Corporate brand construction needs to start by identifying the internal and external drivers for change. This ensures that there is agreement to act (3)
Identifying the core attributes of the organisation	Discussions of context and brand construction created an extended dialogue over what the core attributes of organisation (2)	Process should allow group space to debate the nature of key organisation attributes in terms of purpose and values (2)	Identification of the core organisation attributes can help group agree a shared direction for corporate brand communication (3)
Catalyst for wider organisational change	Creation of a better understanding and articulation of what the organisation stands for helped stimulate other areas of the organisation – recruitment (1)	Potential to extend scope of study to consider wider impacts on other corporate processes such as recruitment and training (1)	Ability of the study to create continuity through reinforcement of core values in recruiting new staff to the business (1)
Linking corporate brand to the business	Organisational structure has been at the heart of group development, not the corporate brand which has not been clearly and consistently articulated (2)	Process needs to build recognition for link between corporate brand projection and business structure (2)	Corporate brand developed must be based on and reflect the unique business model for the group. This is about putting the organisation into the brand and the brand into the organisation
Defining business culture	Emerging pattern of culture described in 3 ways – beliefs, behaviours, business processes (2)	Use these three dimensions to describe the culture of the organisation (1)	Use of three-fold culture definition to define organisation attributes of brand (1)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Identifying mis-alignments in the process of corporate brand development	Use of process monitors effective in helping research group build valid information, identify problems and inconsistencies (2)	Process monitors can be used as both articulation and alignment tool to generate corporate brand definitions and check for alignment behaviours (2)	Culture is re-inforced by the interplay of 3 elements which can be displayed using process monitors to highlight issues and generate commitment (2)
Corporate brand as communication activity framework	Lack of strong co-ordination across all communication activities. This lack of connection is further enhanced by the de-centralised structures (2)	Potential for a clear framework provided by corporate brand definition to help guide and structure communication across organisation (3)	Corporate brand definitions can be used as a filter to assess communication activities across a de-centralised organisation (2)
Significance of organisation attributes in corporate brand definition	Use of three different cultural factors to describe organisation and its operations – beliefs, behaviours and processes – provides a means for the research group to explain the points of difference against competitors (1)	Framework can be used as a means of understanding and articulating how the business can be incorporated within the corporate brand (1)	Adoption of three factor audit provides a mechanism for identifying the unique organisation attributes of the corporate brand and provides linkage between the corporate brand and business model (1)
Audience segmentation within corporate brand process	Organisations communicate with multiple audiences who process information from a variety of sources. Need to distinguish audiences and define desired relationship with each (2)	Need to include audience mapping as part of corporate brand communication process (2)	Important stage of corporate brand development process is the distinction of different audiences and definition of the corporate brand relationship with each audience (3)
Creating new audience typologies to explain the corporate brand relationship	Traditional internal/external audience definitions found to be too restrictive as organisation is communicating with targets through multiple channels (2)	Development of new typology of stakeholder audience which informs development of corporate brand communication (2)	Development of new typology of community audiences that have economic relationship and constituency audiences who have an economic influence (2)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Complex value chains require consistency of communication	Complex value chains are created by crossover stakeholders and complex relationships between audiences (3)	Concept of customer value is important factor but clarity of focus and consistent communication is also required (3)	Development of organisation attributes as part of corporate brand definition must recognise different audiences and address relevance (2)
Establishing a context for corporate brand communication	Absence of formalised forums or process to review the status and dynamics around the corporate brand (2)	Development of clear forum and management process needed to address this issue (2)	Need to establish a clear process and forum for addressing corporate brand communication issues (2)
Increasing demands on organization for increased transparency	Expectations on organisations to be more open have risen and are placing increasing pressure on organizations (2)	Development of more structured corporate brand communication process can address these demands (2)	Requirement for organisations as part of the corporate brand process to be explicit about their organisation attributes in their communication (2)
Focus on external market dynamics	Study provided the opportunity for the research group to review external dynamics around the corporate brand (2)	Importance of external environment as a context for undertaking review of corporate brand (2)	Importance of creating a process that allows for examination of external factors as part of the initial review process (3)
Corporate Brand definitions	Areas of disagreement in early stages of study generated by differing levels of understanding about branding concepts such as reputation and network (2)	Develop processes for checking understanding of corporate brand definitions in terms of meaning and scope (2)	Importance of building group consensus on the key definitions of elements that comprise the corporate brand (3)
Development of organisation attributes	Identification of three key attributes as purpose, commitments and values – comprise a category termed ‘organisation attributes’ (2)	Development of clear definitions for this category aid understanding of research group and generate commitment to these elements (3)	Broader definition of key organisation attributes provides an improved understanding of the key attributes of the organisation (3)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Refinement of 'Network' definition	Extension of definition to include dependent relationships of the organisation (2)	Need for researcher to invest time in the first phase of intervention to check for understanding of these definitions (3)	Broader definition of network attributes allows for definition of network mechanisms and key relationships of organisation (2)
Use of data displays to provide insight to brand development process	Use of data monitors successful in helping group generate valid information (3)	Importance of generating data in forms that enable the research group to understand and make decisions (3)	Importance of developing specific tools to enable understanding and build commitment throughout the intervention process (3)
Common starting points for corporate branding	Requirement to build consensus in the initial stages of intervention to provide focus and commitment of research group (3)	Importance of creating early alignment among the research group to build credibility for the study (3)	In planning intervention researcher must actively consider strategies for building consensus in the first phase of intervention via data displays such as Customer Value Monitor (3)
Implications beyond communication	Need to establish linkage between corporate brand communication and behaviour of organisation (2)	Impacts of corporate brand extend beyond communication to cover behaviour and the two concepts can be mutually reinforcing (2)	Understanding that corporate brand communication processes must fit within broader context of organisation behaviour (3)
Using corporate brand development processes to reveal inconsistencies in organisation behaviour	Experience of studies was that the disconnects in behaviour and stated intentions of corporate brand could be highlighted by examination of the performance definitions (2)	Corporate brand definition process can be used to identify areas of the organisation that do not conform to the performance attributes articulated as part of the corporate brand definition (2)	Broader applications of the approach to Corporate Brand Communications to identify areas where there is mis-alignment of behaviour within the organisation (3)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Need to build understanding of operational processes as part of corporate brand process	Identification of need to examine the underlying business processes that can lead to corporate brand fragmentation and inconsistency (2)	Brand management system needs to look beyond communication to understand organisational issues that can create brand inconsistency (3)	There are links between corporate brand communications and operations of the business which can act to reinforce the corporate brand or contradict it (3)
Identification of link between corporate branding and business processes	Lack of harmonisation of operational processes was identified as a key contributor to the absence of a consistent corporate brand presentation (2)	Brand management system may need to expand its scope to address causes of current fragmented branding (3)	Research group must be prepared to explore more fundamental root causes behind problems with the corporate brand communications system (3)
Identification of linkage with organisation structure	Studies identified as a means to build alignment and consistency across vertical silo organisation structures (2)	Applications of study can extend into issues of organisation structure (2)	Scope for corporate brand system to extend into implications for managing across vertical organisation structures (2)
Application of data displays to help inform this linkage process	Generation of Business Process monitors helped identify current areas where business processes worked against corporate brand consistency (3)	Act as a guide to help system identify and consider causes and implications of particular actions by discussing impacts to business structure and processes (3)	Studies must consider broader aspects and implications of corporate brand and it's potential impacts on the organisation (3)

Figure 12.4 Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix for RQ 1

Data reduced from Content-Analytic Summary Table (Appendix 12.1)

Emergent Variable	Propositional knowledge	Practical knowledge	Significance
Context stage			
Establishing a context for Corporate Brand Communication	Need to establish a clear process and forum for addressing Corporate Brand Communications issues	Development of clear forum and management process to address this issue	H
Need to consider multiple dimensions and viewpoints in early stages	Multiple viewpoints help to contextualise how the research group perceive their own brand	Use internal views and external environment to begin to mirror the way the group view the world with the external dynamics of their markets	H
Use of market research data as input to initial orientation phase	Data can be assembled to contrast internal views with external environment and external image to highlight where the market proposition gaps exist and how the corporate brand might be developed	Introduction of additional research outside of the study helps generate valid information and provides further context for the study	M
Focus on external market dynamics	Importance of creating a process that allows for examination of external factors as part of the initial review process	Importance of external environment as a context for undertaking review of corporate brand	M
Inclusion of competitive landscape in context stage	Vital to engage participants in branding debate. Mechanism to do this is to establish competitors' brand propositions	Useful means of creating engagement by focus on external environment	M
Modelling competitors' key attributes	Use of attribute modelling for competitors helps to clarify the competitive landscape for any corporate branding project	Useful exercise as it creates objectivity by focusing on competitors' attributes	L

Emergent Variable	Propositional knowledge	Practical knowledge	Significance
Construction stage			
Corporate Brand definitions	Importance of building group consensus on the key definitions of elements that comprise the corporate brand	Develop processes for checking understanding of corporate brand definitions in terms of meaning and scope	H
Significance of organisation attributes in corporate brand definition	Adoption of three factor audit provides a mechanism for identifying the unique organisation attributes of the corporate brand and provides linkage between the corporate brand and business model	Framework can be used as a means of understanding and articulating how the business can be incorporated within the corporate brand	H
Identifying the core attributes of the organisation	Identification of the core organisation attributes can help group agree a shared direction for Corporate Brand Communications	Process should allow group space to debate the nature of key organisation attributes in terms of purpose and values	H
Development of organisation attributes	Broader definition of key organisation attributes provides an improved understanding of the key attributes of the organisation	Development of clear definitions for this category aid understanding of research group and generate commitment to these elements	H
Defining business culture	Application of three-fold culture definition as a means to define the organisation attributes of a corporate brand	Use these three dimensions to describe the culture of the organisation	H
Refinement of 'Network' definition	Broader definition of network attributes allows for description of network mechanisms and key relationships of organisation	Need for researcher to invest time in the first phase of intervention to check for understanding of these definitions	M
Drawing distinctions with competitors	Development of a structured process to examine competitors' attributes and relationship to customer value drivers	Use of competitor attribute maps helps research group to identify what is distinctive about their own corporate brand	L

Emergent variable	Propositional knowledge	Practical knowledge	Significance
Common starting points for corporate branding	In planning intervention researcher must actively consider strategies for building consensus in the first phase of intervention via data displays such as Customer Value Monitor	Importance of creating early alignment among the research group to build credibility for the study	H
Establishing a clear consensus to act	Corporate brand construction needs to start from a point of identifying the internal and external drivers for change. This ensures that there is agreement to act	Process of generating valid information on current situation and identification of customer value drivers can help to build consensus among group	M
Use of data displays to provide insight to corporate brand development process	Importance of developing specific tools to enable understanding and build commitment throughout the intervention process	Importance of generating data in forms that enable the research group to understand and make decisions	M
Confirmation stage			
Increasing demands on organisation for increased transparency	Development of more structured Corporate Brand Communication process can address these demands	Requirement for organisations as part of the corporate brand process to be explicit about their organisation attributes in their communication	M
Development of corporate brand statements	Process of corporate brand definition needs to work from confirmation of key organisation attributes outwards	Step by step process required to identify each of four attributes in turn	H
Corporate Brand Development cycle	Need to establish clear definitions from the brand construction process and outline what is expected from the group in terms of input and output	This process of corporate brand construction is time-consuming. Need to establish a clear timeframe to avoid drift and lack of focus among participants	M

Emergent variable	Propositional knowledge	Practical knowledge	Significance
Identifying mis-alignments in the process of corporate brand development	Culture is reinforced by the interplay of these three elements which can be displayed using process monitors to highlight issues and generate commitment	Process monitors can be used here as both an articulation and an alignment tool – to generate corporate brand definitions and to check for alignment of brand behaviours	H
Linking corporate brand to the business	Corporate brand developed must be based on and reflect the unique business structure or model for the group. New definition for corporate brand as expression of an organisation's unique business model	Process needs to build recognition for link between corporate brand projection and business structure	M
Consistency stage			
Aim of Corporate Brand Management should be consistency of communication	Development of effective Corporate Brand Communications rests on definition of a limited set of distinguishing organisation attributes	Need to develop process to define the key distinguishing or characterising attributes of the organisation and use these within a communication framework	H
Audience segmentation within corporate brand process	Important stage of corporate brand development process is the distinction of different audiences and definition of the corporate brand relationship with each audience	Need to include audience mapping as part of Corporate Brand Communication process	H
Creating new audience typologies to explain the corporate brand relationships	Development of new typology of community audiences that have economic relationship with organisation and constituency audiences who have an economic influence	Development of new typology of stakeholder audiences which informs development of Corporate Brand Communication	M

Emergent variable	Propositional knowledge	Practical knowledge	Significance
Complex value chains require consistency of communication	Development of organisation attributes as part of corporate brand definition must recognise different audiences and address relevance issue for each audience	Concept of customer value is important factor but clarity of focus and consistent communication is required	M
Corporate brand as communication activity framework	Corporate brand definitions can be used as a filter to assess communication activities across a de-centralised organisation	Potential for a clear framework provided by corporate brand definition to help guide and structure communication across organisation	H
Continuity stage			
Implications beyond communication	Understanding that Corporate Brand Communications processes must fit within broader context of organisation behaviour	Impacts of corporate brand extend beyond communication to cover behaviour and the two concepts can be mutually reinforcing	M
Using corporate brand development processes to reveal inconsistencies in organisation behaviour	Broader applications of the approach to Corporate Brand Communications to identify areas where there is mis-alignment of behaviour within the organization	Corporate brand definition process can be used to identify areas of the organisation that do not conform to the performance attributes articulated as part of the corporate brand definition	H
Need to build understanding of operational processes as part of corporate brand process	There are links between Corporate Brand Communications and operations of the business which can act to reinforce the corporate brand or contradict it	Brand management system needs to look beyond communication to understand organisational issues that can create brand inconsistency	H
Willingness to move beyond corporate branding and link to business processes	Research group must be prepared to explore more fundamental root causes behind problems with the Corporate Brand Communications system	Brand management system may need to expand its scope to address causes of current fragmented branding	H

Emergent variable	Propositional knowledge	Practical knowledge	Significance
Identification of linkage with organisation structure	Scope for corporate brand system to extend into implications for managing across vertical organisation structures	Applications of study can extend into issues of organisation structure	M
Catalyst for wider organisational change	Ability of the study to create continuity through application of organization attributes in recruiting new staff to the business	Potential to extend scope of study to consider wider impacts on other corporate processes such as recruitment and training	L
Application of data displays to help inform this linkage process	Studies must consider broader aspects and implications of corporate brand and it's potential impacts on the organisation	Act as a guide to help system identify and consider causes and implications of particular actions by discussing impacts to business structure and processes	M
Conditioning stage			
Monitoring corporate brand development process for relevance	Need for corporate brand development process to refer back to customer value drivers and ensure that new brand definition has resonance with external audiences	Process needs to build in these checks to ensure that the brand construction phase marks a development in corporate brand definition	M
Monitoring corporate brand development process for distinction	Need for corporate brand development process to refer back on competitors attributes to ensure that new brand definition occupies a distinctive position in the market	Process needs to build in these checks to ensure that the brand construction phase marks a development in corporate brand definition	M
Use of market research data as input to monitor progress with corporate brand development	Data can be assembled to contrast internal views with external environment and external image to monitor corporate brand development	Introduction of additional research outside of the study helps generate on-going valid information and provides good checkpoint for further corporate brand development	M

H = High

M = Medium

L = Low

Discussion and implications of findings relating to RQ1

RQ1 asks whether a Participatory Action Research approach to the study of the system of Corporate Brand Communications can lead to the development of a more empirically robust framework for the phenomenon.

In drawing conclusions from the findings presented in Figures 12.3 and 12.4 the researcher has noted the emergence of a series of stages that are described as the 'emergent management stages' relating to Corporate Brand Communications. Each of these emergent stages is described below in terms of the main findings of the studies, their implications and the contribution of these findings to the current operationalising models in the literature ('Micro models', Figure 3.1), reviewed in Chapter Three.

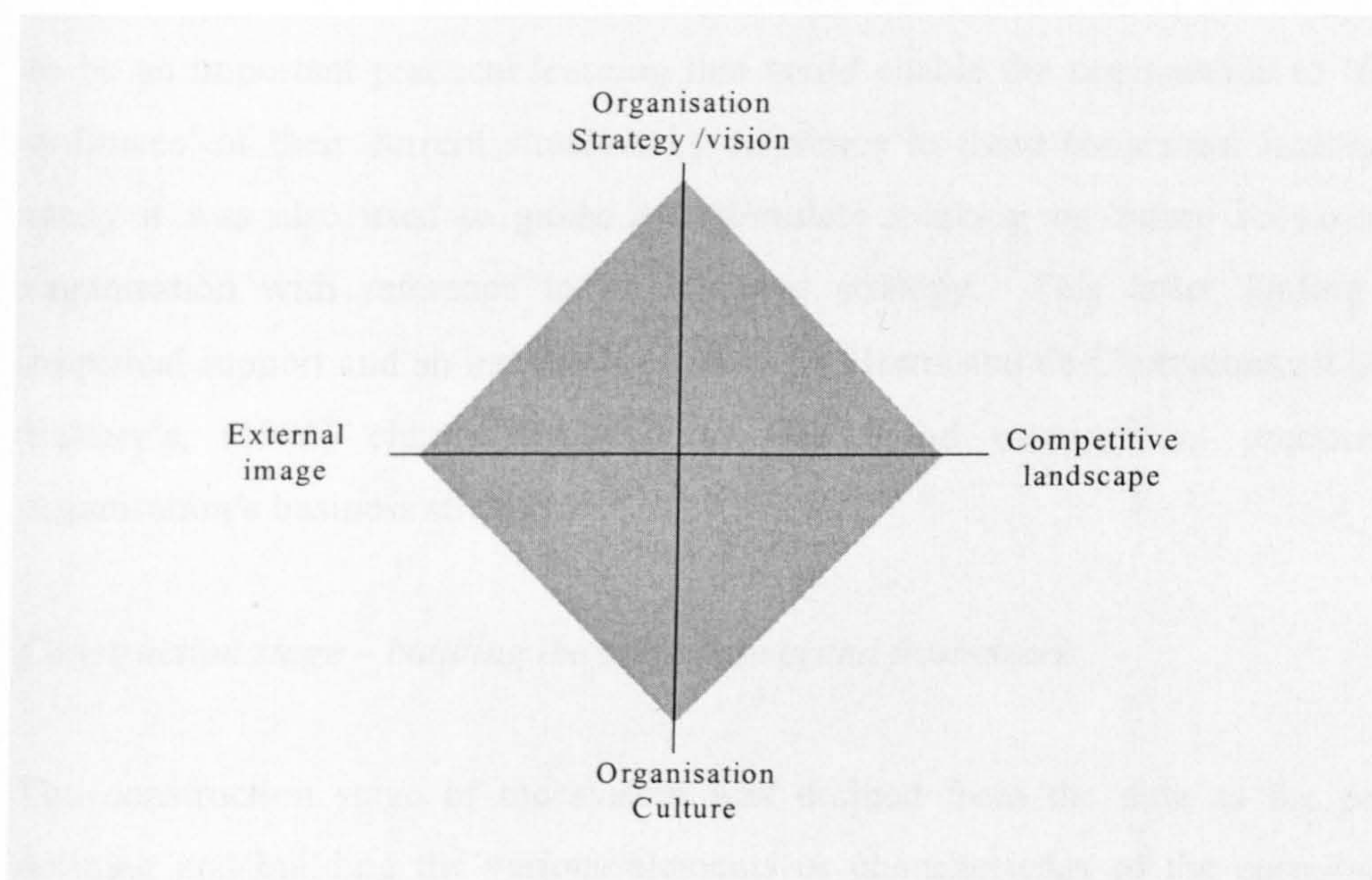
Context stage – setting co-ordinates for managing Corporate Brand Communications

This stage was characterised by the research group seeking to build understanding for the context surrounding the Corporate Brand Communications system. A main finding from all three studies was the absence of a clear forum or process for conducting this review, with the early intervention phases typified by the research groups working to assess the current strengths and weaknesses of their organisation's corporate brand projection. This process involved the assembling of data relating to internal and external perceptions of the organisation, in two cases drawing from available market research, as well as developing a detailed understanding of the organisation's strategy. This finding provides support for the Van Riel (2000) model on need for external validation as part of the management process and to Fombrun and Rindova (2000) emphasis on the importance of a '*listening phase*' as part of this activity

Relating these findings back to the literature a number of authors have identified the need for corporate branding practices to be multidisciplinary, combining elements of strategy, communication and culture (King, 1991; Balmer, 1995). This view has been further refined in the literature by Hatch, Schultz et al (1997, 2001) who point to the

interplay of three variables - vision, culture and image - as a context for corporate branding. Evidence from all three studies suggests that these variables do, indeed, form part of the strategic setting which organisations use to review their corporate brand. However, a further category emerging from the Cross-Case analysis indicates a fourth variable that was important in setting the context for reviewing the Corporate Brand Communications system. This category was defined as the competitive landscape for the organisation.

Figure 12 5 Context analytic framework developed from findings



Evidence gathered from each study identified the need to consider both present and future competitive landscape. This finding was also present in the ESF study, which, whilst the organisation was 'not for profit' and therefore not selling conventional products, it was considered by the research group to be in competition for attention and funds from external audiences.

These findings suggest that the development of a competitive context for the corporate brand needs to be added to internal and external perceptions and the organisation's strategic direction and supports the view of Balmer (2001a) that environmental factors are an important element in the brand management system.

The data consolidated from the studies indicated that the addition of this fourth category enabled the research groups to build contextual understanding across two temporal dimensions: Current image of the organisation and its present and future competitive landscape; Current culture of the organisation and its intended future strategic direction.

This approach to building a context framework can be represented in diagrammatic form (Figure 12.5) and provides a means to ensure alignment of actual, desired and ideal identities, as defined by Balmer (2001a).

The development of this contextual framework was considered by the research groups to be an important practical learning that could enable the organisation to 'fix the co-ordinates' of their current situation by reference to these contextual factors. In one study it was also used to guide and stimulate thinking on future scenarios for the organisation with reference to its business strategy. This latter finding provides empirical support and an indicative process for Harris and de Chernatonay's (2001) and Balmer's, (1995) claims on need to link brand management practices to an organisation's business strategy.

Construction stage – building the corporate brand framework

The construction stage of the system was defined from the data as the process of defining and building the various elements or characteristics of the corporate brand. The aspect of definition emerged from the data as an issue across all three case studies and the pilot study. This was resolved in the studies during the initial intervention phase with research groups discussing and agreeing on a commonly accepted set of definitions around the concept of the corporate brand.

As indicated in the individual study chapters the pilot study started with a conceptual framework based on the UOVP model (Knox and Maklan, 1998). The data that emerged from the Cross-Case analysis suggests that the four categories proposed in this model were broadly validated. However data from all three main studies highlighted refinements and extensions to two categories and the development of the framework

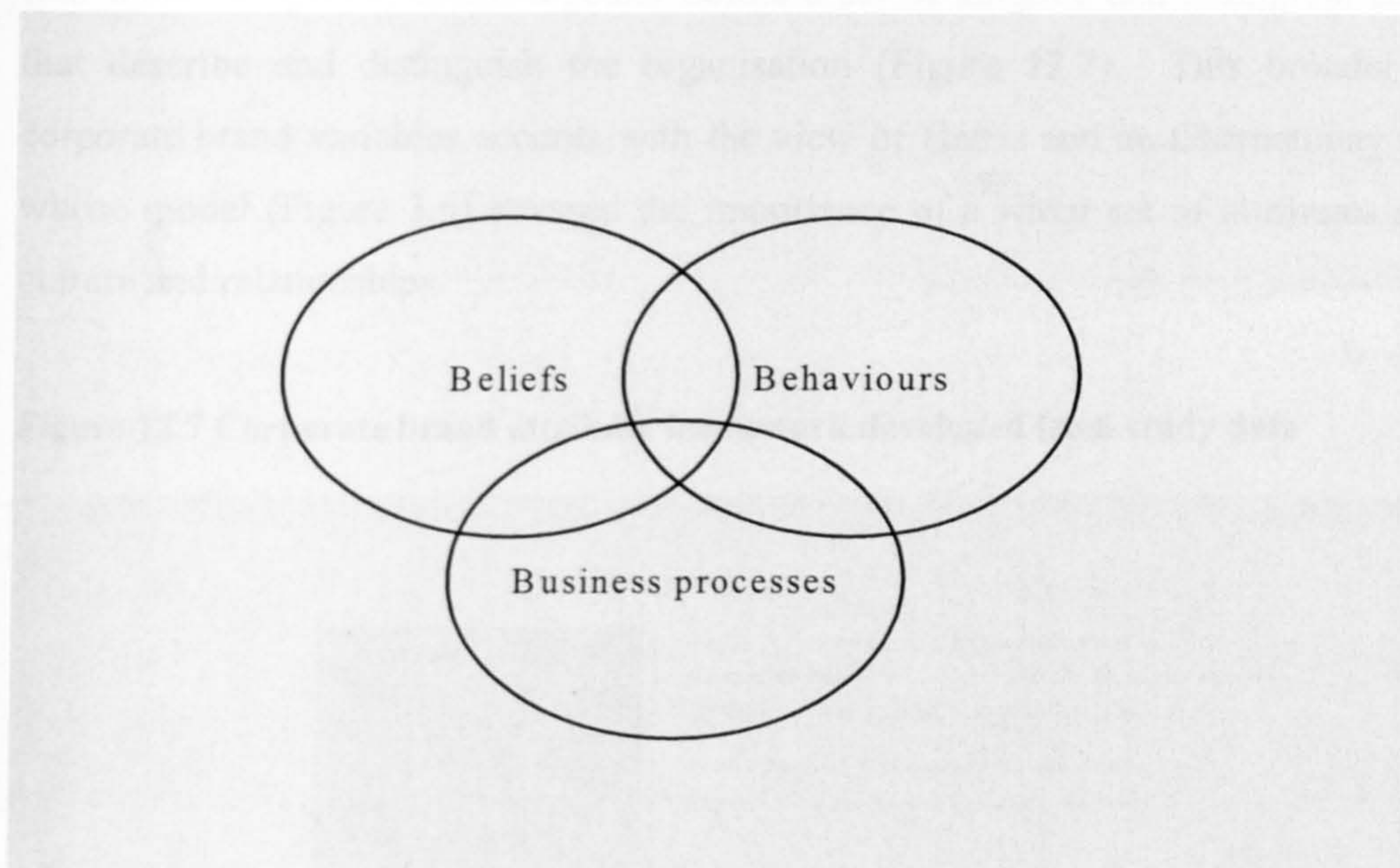
characterised as containing a set of corporate attributes that the research groups served to define and distinguish the organisation. This supports a number of descriptions in the literature (Van Riel, 2000; Lane Keller, 2000; Hatch and Schultz, 2001) and showed considerable commonality with the broader 'soul, mind, voice' categories proposed by Balmer and Soenen (1999).

Evidence from the studies also highlighted the fact that the research groups appeared more comfortable in identifying the tangible performance and portfolio attributes of the organisation, but found it more difficult to articulate the key elements of their intangible organisational attributes. During the course of the three studies and in the Cross-Case analysis these organisational attributes emerged as playing a significant role in the corporate brand construction stage, supporting Lane Keller's (2000) assertion that intangible associations can provide valuable sources of differentiation and brand equity.

Organisational attributes were defined from the studies as including the organisation's core purpose (Mission), its key commitments and guiding values. These attributes are closely interwoven with the concept of culture (Barney, 1986; Kapferer, 1997) or corporate personality (Abratt, 1989). A further finding from the analysis was the need for a process to help participants provide a tangible definition of the culture concept.

The review of the operationalising models in Chapter Three highlighted the importance of the culture concept in a number of models. Authors such as Hatch and Schultz (2001), Dowling (1993) and Abratt (1989) include culture in their models without offering any further insight or practical guidance on how to define this concept. In the final intervention study this led to the development of three process monitors, which were used to identify three components defined by the research group as the main elements that defined the organisation's culture. The generation of these Beliefs, Behaviours and Business Processes monitors provided a framework and analytical approach for identifying the key organisation attributes and was identified as a key practical learning from the study by the research group. This led the researcher to conclude that the development of the '3B's' of organisation branding was a significant development in propositional knowledge flowing from the study (Figure 12.6), and

Figure 12.6 Organisation attributes framework generated from study data

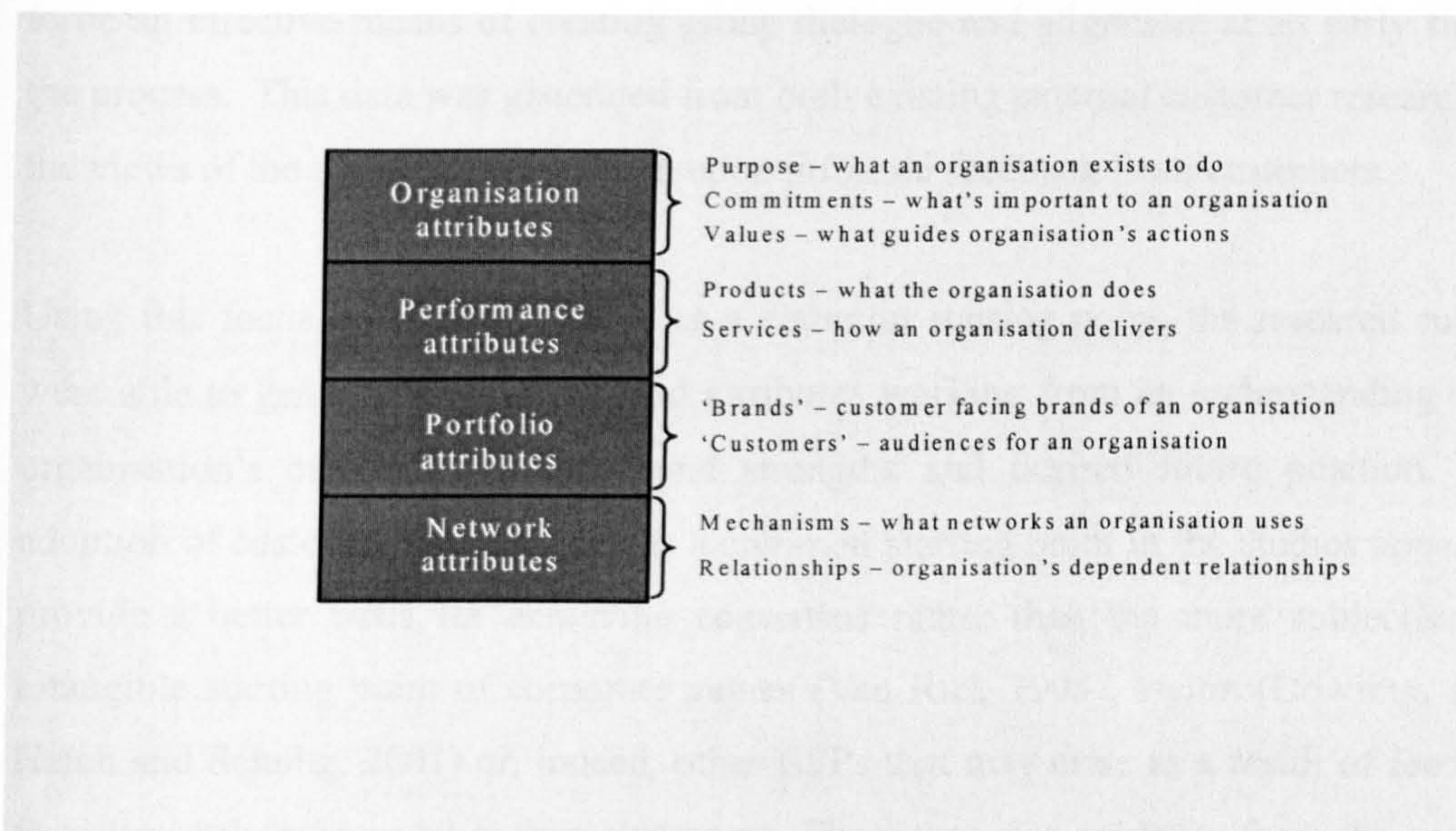


provides a practical means to focus organisations on their internal sources of differentiation (Ind, 1998; Lane Keller, 2000) and help define their corporate personality (Abratt, 1989).

The network attribute category from the original conceptual framework was also re-defined in the light of the data to encompass a broader meaning that covered all of an organisation's dependent relationships. For example, this incorporated AEGON's agent partners and ESF's joint scientific councils within this broader definition. The potential for an organisation's network to form a key, differentiating element in its corporate branding activities has not received much attention in the literature. The main proponents of the Network are Knox and Maklan (1998) who include it as a variable in their UOVP model. The empirical data from this study appears to support their claim for its importance but also suggests that their definition needs to be broadened beyond just the organisation's supply chain to include all external relationships that enable the organisation to operate.

The results of the Cross-Case analysis point to a corporate brand model as containing four main categories, which together define a set of tangible and intangible attributes that describe and distinguish the organisation (Figure 12.7). This broader set of corporate brand variables accords with the view of Harris and de Chernatony (2001), whose model (Figure 3.6) stressed the importance of a wider set of attributes such as culture and relationships.

Figure 12.7 Corporate brand attribute framework developed from study data



The researcher has concluded that the development of this definition is an important contribution to the field as it builds on the work of Ind (1998), Knox and Maklan (1998) and Balmer (2001a; 2001b), among others, by providing an empirically grounded definition for the concept, based upon these four attribute categories. Further, it provides support for Lane Keller's (2000) claim that successful corporate branding activity needs to blend 'top down' and 'bottom up' activity by linking tangible and intangible elements.

A further finding from the analysis was the need to build consensus among the research group early in the process. This led the researcher to conclude that the concept of developing a common starting point for corporate branding was important. Returning to the literature the researcher reviewed the work of Van Riel (1995, 2000) who defined

common starting points (CSPs) as the central values of an organisation, which are proposed as the foundation for all corporate communication.

Evidence from the data appears to agree with the importance of CSPs, but the experience in all three studies was that this common ground was created by a focus on a combination of internal characteristics, defined as the organisation attributes, and external requirements of the organisation as represented in the Customer Value Monitors. The adoption of these customer value drivers was considered by participants to be an effective means of creating group dialogue and alignment at an early stage in the process. This data was generated from both existing external customer research, and the views of the research group based upon informal feedback from customers.

Using this focus on customer value as a common starting point, the research subjects were able to generate corporate brand attributes working from an understanding of the organisation's current corporate brand strengths and desired future position. The adoption of customer value drivers as a common starting point in the studies appears to provide a better basis for achieving consensus rather than the more subjective and intangible starting point of corporate values (Van Riel, 1995), vision (Dowling, 1993; Hatch and Schultz, 2001) or, indeed, other CSPs that may arise as a result of feedback from key stakeholders other than customers. There was also evidence from the analysis that this approach seemed to help participants from cross-disciplinary backgrounds focus on common, unifying issues and develop a shared understanding of the main considerations in developing their corporate brand.

This finding was also endorsed in exit interviews as it was considered by the research groups as an effective means to overcome some of the inhibiting beliefs and behaviours associated with the functional or departmental boundaries that existed in each of the organisations studied.

Confirmation stage – articulating the corporate brand attributes

The confirmation stage, drawn from the data analysis, was defined as being the stage following construction where the research group began developing the articulation of the main corporate brand attributes. This stage was characterised by the development of a series of written statements that described the corporate brand proposition. This was found to be an intense, but crucial part of the identified system and yielded some interesting practical and propositional knowledge.

A first main finding from the analysis was that all three organisations studied were experiencing a greater level of external demand for transparency and that the corporate brand confirmation process was, in part, a response to this demand. The study evidence also suggested that this process must be inclusive for the participants involved and was best conducted in an iterative style, via a series of small working groups. Such an approach ensures participant buy-in and begins the process of developing an agreed corporate language for all organisation communications. This evidence appears to support the Van Riel (2000) model (Figure 3.8), which identifies a stage of creating and validating the '*sustainable corporate story*'. However the data diverges from Van Riel's model in terms of how the brand statements were developed, which was primarily internal, drawing from the work in the context stage and did not involve additional external validation.

The articulation of an agreed corporate brand framework built from a common starting point based on customer value acted as a framework for the development of these corporate brand statements, and was identified in exit interviews as important in providing structure and a framework for this process. This finding supports the view of Van Riel (2000) and Argenti and Forman (2000) that such a framework can be used as an effective tool to create mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders.

A further finding that emerged was the potential for using competitor attribute mapping as a means to assess how the corporate brand attributes developed during this stage

relate to those attributes articulated by competitors. Exit interviews in two studies pointed to the value of this exercise in generating valid information for participants.

Analysis of exit interviews also points to broad agreement that the development of a series of corporate brand statements enabled participants to generate a more holistic definition of the corporate brand, helping to resolve the complexity issues raised in the literature (Balmer, 2001a) and supporting the claims of Holten Larsen (2000) that a *'well-formulated corporate story'* relies on the potential for organisations to develop their own languages and *'own'* words or associations in the minds of stakeholders.

The indications emerging from a further review of the study data suggest that the engagement and reflection of all participants in this process is vital in securing the commitment and ownership necessary to enable corporate brand change and renewal, and does not present the closed loop problem identified with some of existing models (Harris and de Chernatonay, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2001). Further, the difficulties experienced in the LCP study could be attributed to a failure of the intervention process in ensuring that this requirement was met consistently throughout the study.

Consistency stage – communicating corporate brand attributes with intended audiences

The data relating to the emergent consistency stage focuses mainly on the requirement to develop and deliver a coherent set of messages to chosen audiences. A return to the literature highlights the fact that consistency has been widely acknowledged as a core principle of successful corporate brand development (Olins, 1995; Tilley, 1999). Further, the literature also acknowledges the pivotal role of communication in creating this consistency (Van Riel, 1995; Mitchell, 1999) and concentrates on this aspect of Corporate Brand Management (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986).

Two main findings emerged from the data in this stage, relating to audience segmentation and the development of processes to generate consistency. With regard to the issue of audience segmentation a main finding from the Cross-Case analysis was the difficulty that participants found in creating clear distinctions between different

stakeholder audiences. One of the contributory factors identified in each study was the presence of 'crossover stakeholders'. Examples of this phenomenon occurred in the ESF study where 'funders' of research activities were also 'users' and in the AEGON study where the majority of 'employees' were also 'shareholders' of the organisation. Relating this back to the literature, this finding highlights a weakness with models such as Van Riel (2000), Holten Larsen (2000) and Argenti and Forman (2000), which include the need for a process of audience identification without addressing this issue of complexity.

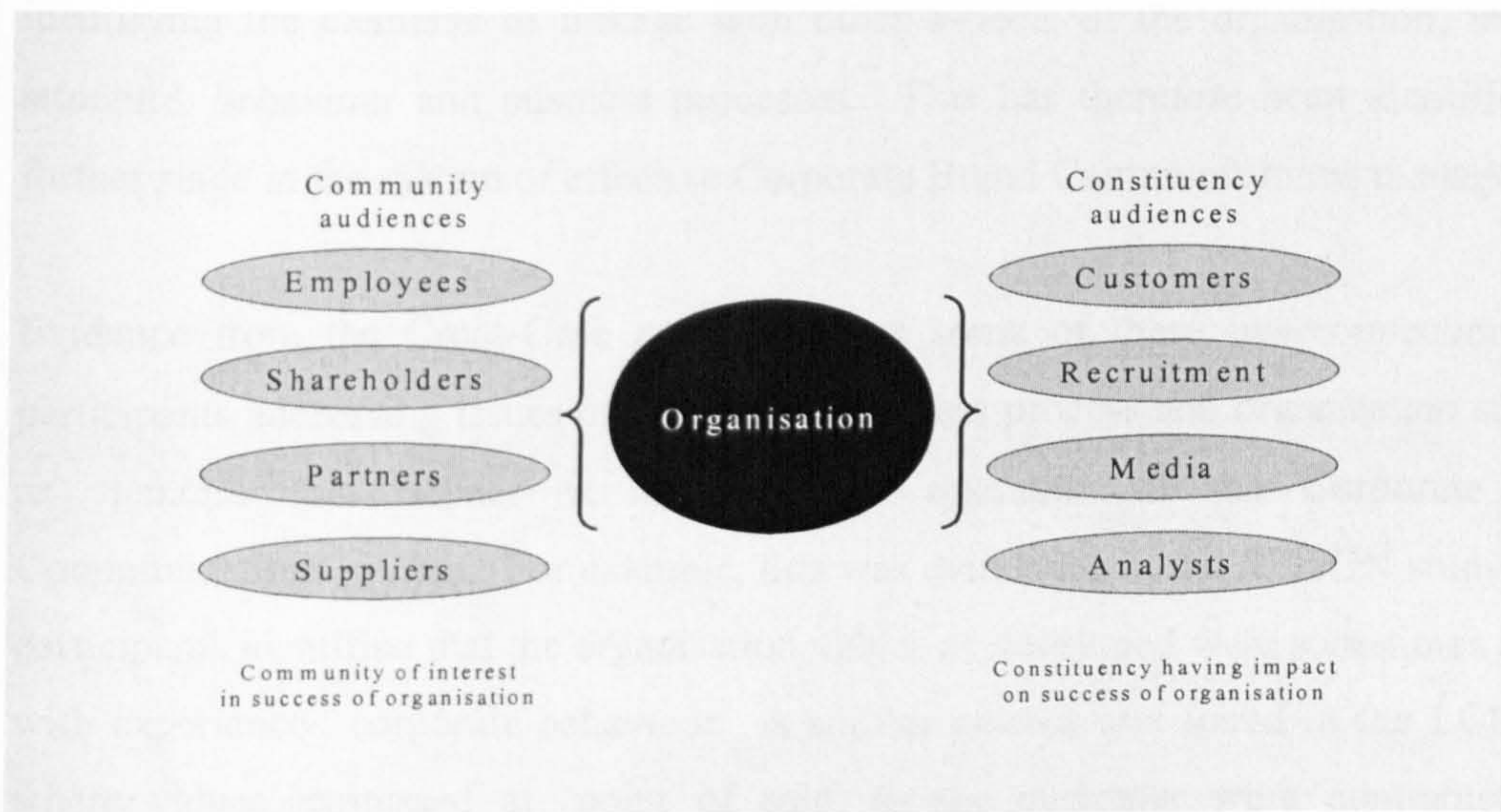
As a response to this issue the research group in one study generated a new perspective on audience segmentation based upon the type of relationship held with the corporate brand. This enabled the group to distinguish two broad categories, those audiences with a financial interest in the success of the organisation and those whose actions could have a business impact on its future success. These 'community' and 'constituency' categories (Figure 12.8) helped guide participants in developing corporate brand definitions that were more tailored and relevant to different sub-groups within these categories.

This finding contributes to Rindova's (1998) framework by adding a level of empirical insight into the '*complex reputational field*' introduced in this model. It also builds on more recent work in the Relationship Marketing field (Payne And Holt, 2001) where the Six Markets model has been clustered into three stakeholder groups (Customers, Employees and External Stakeholders). However, the researcher asserts that the new segmentation emerging from this study offers greater potential than this existing model in recognizing the phenomenon of crossover stakeholders.

Such a structured approach appears to provide a key role for the corporate brand in aligning messages to different stakeholder audiences so that they mesh and reinforce rather than contradict and confuse (Mitchell, 1999) and provides a practical means to fulfill Olins' (2000) claim that '*organisations have to represent a compelling purpose that is widely understood*'.

Evidence from the analysis also indicates that organisations divide their channels of stakeholder communication according to their levels of formality, by identifying both key formal communication channels and the most frequently used informal mechanisms (e.g. e-mail, bulletin boards). This was concluded in each study to be a necessary first phase in conducting a more rigorous audit of stakeholder communications or 'communications networks' (Balmer, 2001b).

Figure 12.8 Corporate brand audience segmentation developed from study data



As an integral part of each intervention study, content analysis (Krippendorf, 1980) was applied to measure the consistency of these formal Corporate Brand Communications. This approach, as a methodology for addressing RQ2 and based on quantified data analysis techniques, enabled participants to measure and monitor the output of all Corporate Brand Communications against the corporate brand definitions generated in the preceding confirmation stage.

The adoption of a measurement tool (based upon content analysis) for all formal Corporate Brand Communications was considered to be of significant benefit to the research groups in each study in helping to understand, control and measure the consistency of formal communications. What began in the study as an objective measure of output became recognised by the research groups as a significant

management element in the emerging framework. This process also provided a means to identify gaps between desired and communicated identity (Balmer, 2001a) and could also be triangulated with conceived identity measured by external research data.

Continuity stage – establishing linkage across the organisation

Whilst the main focus of the study conducted was on Corporate Brand Communications, data gathered in all three studies highlighted the importance of identifying the elements of linkage with other aspects of the organisation, including structure, behaviour and business processes. This has therefore been identified as a further stage in the system of effective Corporate Brand Communications management.

Evidence from the Cross-Case analysis raises some of these interconnections with participants addressing issues of behaviour, business process and organisation structure as elements that impact or influence the operation of the Corporate Brand Communications system. For example, this was evidenced in the AEGON study where participants identified that the organisation values as developed were sometimes at odds with experienced corporate behaviour. A similar pattern was found in the LCP study where values expressed at 'point of sale' to the customer were contradicted by subsequent behaviours. The ESF study also indicated difficulties in establishing corporate brand consistency across a de-centralised, vertical silo structure, supporting Ind's (1998) view that organizations as they grow need to ensure their communications do not become fragmented.

Although such fundamental issues were beyond the scope of each intervention study, the development of Behaviour and Business Process Monitors in the studies did help participants to model and identify how Corporate Brand Communications could link in to these other corporate phenomena. It also supported the view of Tilley (1999), among others, who stated that these issues need to be managed with clarity over a long period.

The researcher deduced from these findings that the issue of continuity across the organisation is an important one, supporting the previous claims of Knox, Maklan and

Thompson (2000) and Urde (1999), who called for the need for *'brand integrity'* across all aspects of the business. Further, the application of these Monitors acts as a useful tool for participants to identify and discuss the wider implications of Corporate Brand Communications projects on other areas of the business (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999; Urde, 1999; Balmer, 2001a).

The findings also have some resonance with the literature on the need for credibility (Van Riel, 2000) and authenticity (Holten Larsen, 2000) and lend empirical support for the view of Olins that corporate brands are becoming fundamental to the way in which a company operates indicating the need for a more fundamental level of brand awareness beyond just communications.

One of the main conclusions from the Cross-Case analysis is that managers need to adopt a more holistic approach to corporate branding which also encompasses the business processes and behaviours associated with value delivery, supporting Balmer's (2001a) view that the original 'four Ps' (McCarthy, 1960) needs to be expanded to include a broader mix of corporate level elements. In this way, brand confirmation is reinforced throughout the organisation by broadening the corporate brand managers' remit to include both changes in communications and the business processes and behaviours engaged in value delivery.

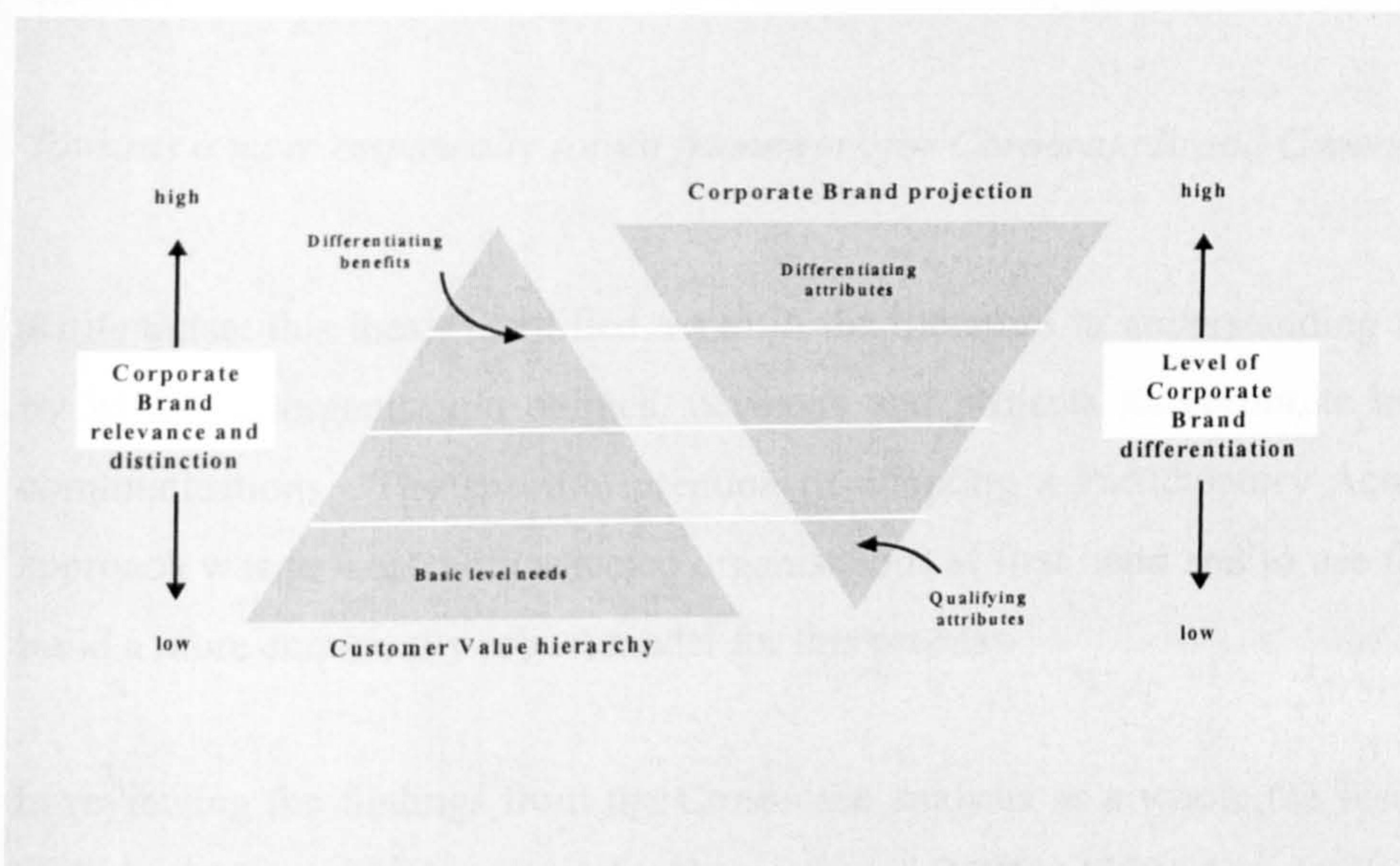
Conditioning stage – monitoring for relevance and distinctiveness

The Cross-Case analysis indicated a sixth emergent stage, which highlighted the need for the organisation to review its Corporate Brand Communications on a continuous basis. Evidence from two of the studies indicated the importance of regular auditing through the cycle of corporate brand development and renewal. This finding supports the view of Abratt and Mofokeng (2001) that the broader practice of Corporate Brand Management is a continuous process rather than a series of one-off events, and highlights the need for management of the system to check on the corporate brand's condition for relevance and distinctiveness at regular intervals.

Conclusions drawn from the analysis suggest that this corporate brand conditioning is most effectively achieved by creating a hierarchy of customer value and ensuring that the corporate brand attribute model delivers against these needs on a continuous basis. This process is demonstrated graphically in Figure 12.9 with Corporate Brand Communications managed as the inverse of the customer value hierarchy to ensure relevance and distinctiveness.

By constructing, articulating and communicating the corporate brand proposition, the organisations studied worked to ensure that the corporate brand retained relevance and distinctiveness with reference to a hierarchy of customer value. The adoption of such an approach was characterized in the findings as a dynamic situation where corporate brand attributes can be actively managed to align with the customer value hierarchy, and supports the views of Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne (2002) that business situations are increasingly characterized by ‘dynamic complexity’ rather than ‘detailed complexity’.

Figure 12.9 Conditioning stage identified from study data



This approach was exemplified in the experience of the LCP study where the difficulties in the confirmation stage arose because the research group did not monitor the evolved

corporate brand definitions against the customer value hierarchy for relevance during the process of brand confirmation.

This sixth stage supports conceptual claims in the literature by again providing empirical evidence for how an organisation actually uses the corporate brand to '*communicate, differentiate and enhance*' (Balmer, 2001a). It also provides support for the claim such practices are shifting from short term 'impression management' to more systematic frameworks for communication that offer greater potential to organisations in generating understanding, trust and commitment from their audiences (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000).

This conclusion and the significance of this stage supports the view of Balmer (2001b) that organisations must monitor the external environment on an ongoing basis to ensure that the corporate brand remains salient. It also led the researcher to conclude that organisations must not only communicate with clarity and consistency the key attributes of their corporate brand, but also ensure that these branded communications are assessed and monitored on an ongoing basis against the twin criteria of relevance and distinction.

Towards a more empirically robust framework for Corporate Brand Communications

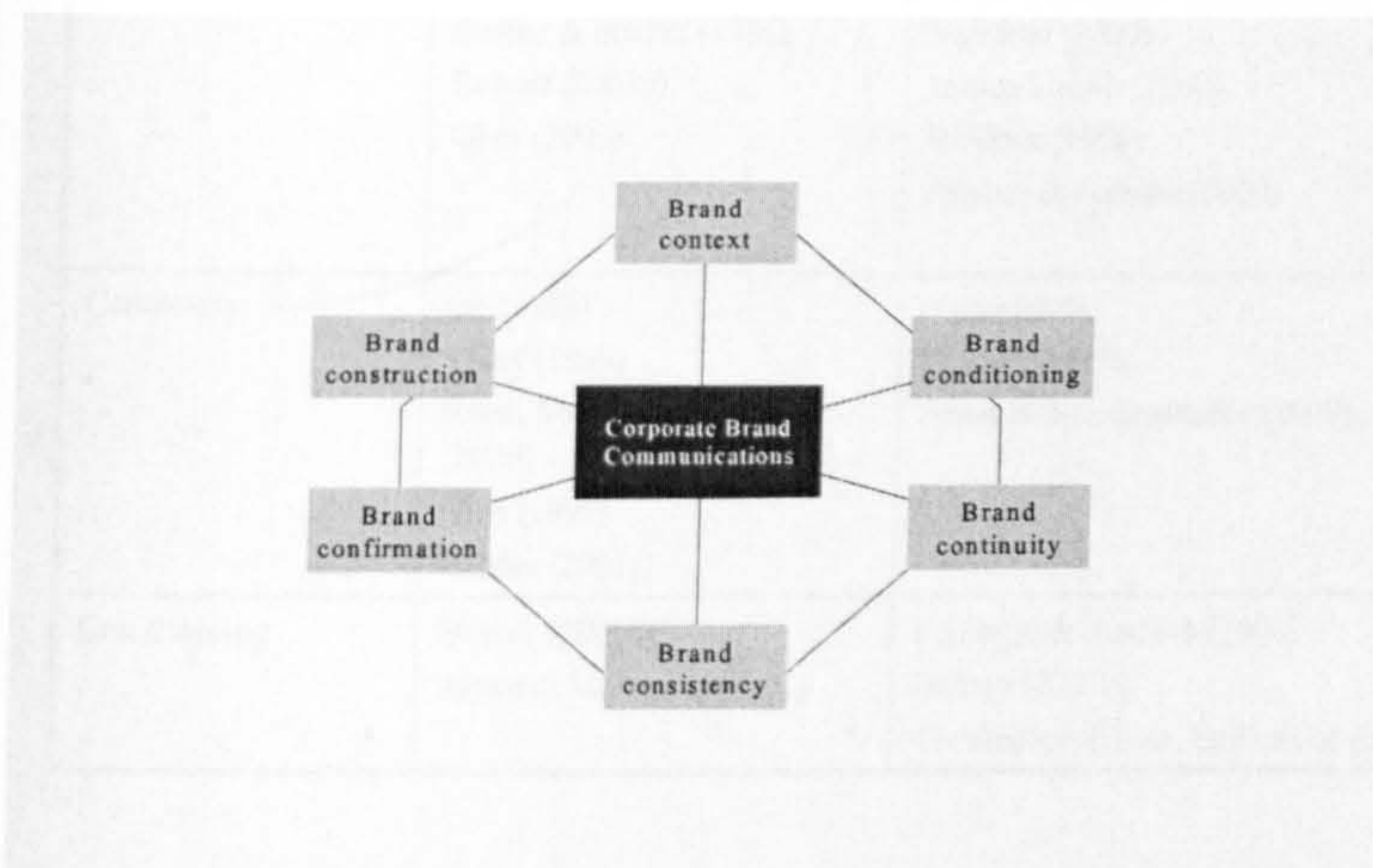
At its outset this thesis identified a gap in the literature in understanding the processes by which an organisation defines, develops and projects its corporate brand through communications. The specific intention of adopting a Participatory Action Research approach was to work with selected organisations at first hand and to use this insight to build a more empirically robust model for this process.

In reviewing the findings from the Cross-case analysis as a whole the researcher finds considerable empirical support for the views of Balmer (2001a) and Mitchell (1999), among others, that a new model for Corporate Brand Management is required which helps align the organisation's capabilities with market needs and frames these activities for future research and development.

The literature review in Chapters Two and Three highlighted the fact that much of the work in this broader Corporate Brand Management field has been conceptual and, to date, there has been only limited empirical investigation of the processes that enable an organisation to engage successfully in managing corporate brands. Further, the data generated in this study appears to support the assertion that establishing successful Corporate Brand Communications practices rely upon the identification of two factors: First, the mix of variables that comprise the corporate brand, and secondly, the development of a framework for understanding this process of direction and control.

Based upon the process and findings generated by the study, the researcher has identified an emerging framework that is characterised as six stages. The researcher has termed this framework 'Six Conventions', where the term conventions is defined as the *'prevalence of certain accepted practices which offer a constraining influence or framework'* (Figure 12.10).

Figure 12.10 Six Conventions framework generated from study findings



The preceding section has shown how each of these emergent stages supports and builds on the models drawn from the literature in Chapters Two and Three. The proposed contribution of this study is to show how each of these elements can be developed into a framework that describes and informs the management processes of Corporate Brand Communications in more empirically grounded and holistic manner than previous conceptual models of the Corporate Brand Management process. The findings of this

study not only help to 'join up' many of the disparate models in this field but use empirical data gained from looking at the phenomenon through a different lens to begin to operationalize the management process in a more robust and insightful manner than previous studies. The contribution of each of these identified emergent management stages is made explicit in Figure 12.11.

Figure 12.11 Linking new framework to the literature

Emergent stage	Supports	Builds on	Contribution
Context	Balmer (1995) Van Riel (2000) Fombrun & Rindova (2000)	Hatch & Schultz (2001) Harris and de Chernatonay (2001)	New context analytic framework incl. competitive landscape as variable
Construction	Van Riel (1995) Lane Keller (2000) Harris and de Chernatonay (2001)	Knox & Maklan (1998) Balmer & Soenen (1999) Hatch & Schultz (2001) Dowling (1993) Ind (1998), Balmer (2001a)	New approach to defining organisation attributes of corporate brand and development of empirically grounded definition of corporate brand attributes
Confirmation	Argenti & Forman (2000) Holten Larsen (2000)	Van Riel (2000) Balmer & Soenen (1999) Hatch & Schultz (2001) Harris & de Chernatonay (2001)	Process for developing and validating a sustainable corporate story and evolved definition of corporate brand concept
Consistency	Van Riel (1995) Birkigt & Stadler (1986) Balmer (2001b) Olins (2000)	Balmer (2001a) Van Riel (2000) Holten Larsen (2000) Rindova (1998) Argenti & Forman (2000)	New process for audience segmentation that addresses complexity and use of quantitative measurement to understand and measure consistency and identify gaps between actual and communicated identity
Continuity	Ind (1998) Tilley (1999) Knox, Maklan & Thompson (2000) Urde (1999) Balmer (2001a)	Urde (1999) Balmer (2001a) Aaker & Joachimsthaler (1999)	Empirical support for need to link CBC to behaviours and business processes of organisation and use of data monitors as tools to establish alignment
Conditioning	Balmer (2001a) Abratt & Mofokeng (2001)	Fombrun & Rindova (2000) Balmer (2001b) Christopher, Payne, Ballantyne (2002)	Linking CBC and projection of attributes to hierarchy of customer value as on-going process

The focus on Corporate Brand Communications also facilitated the development of a more holistic definition of the contribution of the communications variable to the practices of Corporate Brand Management. This definition, which emerged from the data generated in the consistency and continuity stages, characterises Corporate Brand Management as the active control of three different variables, defined as:

'The corporate brand is the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation's unique business model'.

A further review of the literature indicates that this definition is an important contribution of the overall study, building on Balmer and Soenen's (1998) view of a vision-driven approach to *'Corporate identity management'*.

In reviewing this contribution the researcher has questioned whether this should be viewed as a next step towards the development of a new management discipline termed *'Corporate Marketing'* (Balmer, 2001a), or whether this study should be characterised as a development of the literature on Corporate Communication (Van Riel, 1995). It is the researcher's considered opinion that the *'Six Conventions'* framework developed from this study does contribute towards our understanding of the emerging management discipline of Corporate Marketing by revealing the processes involved in branding at an organisation level. The framework can also be characterised as contributing to the development of a discipline termed *'verbal branding'*, defined as the practice of using corporate language to define and differentiate the organisation.

Measuring changes in *'system effectiveness'* in the Corporate Brand Communications system (RQ2).

The approach to Cross-Case analysis for RQ2 was similar to that adopted for RQ1. The researcher returned to the reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrices, relating to the measurement of the system, for each study. The data from these matrices was again compiled into a single Meta Matrix, allowing the researcher to develop a Content-Analytic Summary table (Figure 12.12). This approach enabled the researcher to note emerging patterns in the data in terms of the main concepts or variables that influenced the system. These were again synthesised into a Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix (Figure 12.13), which represents the data in terms of study outcome and the potential and actual impact on organisational change. This data display formed the basis for the researcher to draw meaning and conclusions from the analysis. In drawing conclusions relating to RQ2 the researcher has considered how the impact of the study

has enhanced the system and then used the findings to model how this has influenced participants' understanding of the operation of the system.

Table 12.12 Content-Analytic Summary table for Research Question 2

Developed from Meta-Matrix of three intervention studies

	<i>Within study</i>	<i>Beyond study</i>	
Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Raising awareness	Use of content analysis raises awareness of communications outputs (3)	Research group build understanding from quantitative data – provides credibility	Use of analytics to understand performance of the system
Tool for communications planning	Content analysis approach provides framework for planning communications (3)	Forms basis for strategic approach to planning communications	Creation of a clear framework for analysing communications output important
Linking communication output with reputation	Problems with measuring system performance – content analysis helped to show this link (2)	Improved understanding of link between consistent communication of attributes and impact on reputation	Content analysis acts as good measure of system performance, creating insights for participants in process
Importance of internal communications	Binding element inside organisation can be used as an internal brand management tool (3)	Development of corporate brand attributes as means to internal brand reinforcement	Communication as a tool to building consistency inside the organisation
Role of verbal branding	Complementary to visual controls of CBM is ability to tell corporate story distinctively (2)	Role of corporate language not fully considered. Can be harnessed as a powerful strategic tool	Communications consistency can be used as a key part of the corporate brand management process
Extending brand guardianship	Extend group's understanding of role as guardians of corporate language	Extending scope and remit of corporate brand management to include language	Application of communications within strategic framework

	<i>Within study</i>	<i>Beyond study</i>	
Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Sampling internal and external communications	In measuring system need to include both internal and external communications (3)	Ensure that sampling of communications covers all intended audiences and main communication channels	Need to build inclusive approach to measuring system effectiveness in terms of output
Extending understanding beyond formal communications	Limitations exist in focusing exclusively on communications to measure system effectiveness (2)	Need for broader measures of behavioural change not captured by communications	Widen scope to include informal communications and behaviour
Recognising crossover stakeholders	Need to measure communications with framework that allows for complex inter-relationships (3)	Focus on identification of key audiences and channels	Measuring system effectiveness relies on segmentation of audiences and communication channels
Importance of electronic communication channels	Internet/intranet provide means to communicate with multiple stakeholders (2)	Understanding growing number of channels or routes to audiences and how to control these	Identification of different channels to help build corporate communication consistency
Operational issues of communication control	Operating in decentralised organisations creates issues of co-ordination and control (2)	Need to develop an overall framework to build recognition and understanding of corporate brand communication system	Corporate brand communications provides a means to establish consistency and coherence
Significance of organisation attributes in system	Largest increase in branded element of communication therefore key to improvement of system (2)	Ability to create clarity and consistency through application of a framework	Clarity of organisation attributes provides focus to Corporate Brand Communications

Figure 12.13 Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix for RQ 2

Study impact on 'system effectiveness' (Argyris, 1973)

Variable	Study outcome	Organisational change	Significance
Focus elements			
Understanding system effectiveness	Enhanced understanding of system built from quantitative data (Content analysis)	Ability to measure output and hence greater confidence in managing communication	H
	Establishing link between consistent communication of attributes and impact on reputation raises importance of consistent communication	Higher levels of understanding of cause and effect in developing strategic communications to manage corporate reputation	H
	Recognition of role of organisation attributes (purpose, commitments and values) in developing distinctive brand communications	Importance of developing clear definitions for these attributes and communicating them consistently across channels and audiences	H
Framework elements			
Managing system effectiveness	Introduction of more analytical approach to measuring communication output helped establish a more strategic approach to planning communications	Strategic communications can be planned with reference to a measurable framework	H
	Development of framework improves ability to co-ordinate and guide communication across de-centralised organisation	Ability to apply a more coherent framework across all organisation communications without centralising control	M
	Recognition of the need to extend scope and remit of Corporate Brand Management to include communication	Extending remit of communications team to cover guardianship of Corporate Brand Communications	H

Variable	Study outcome	Organisational change	Significance
	Identification of need for broader measures of system effectiveness to include organisation behaviour	Impact of study limited to recognition of this factor. Points to limitation of study	L
Filter elements			
Enhancing system effectiveness	Recognition that corporate language can be harnessed as a powerful strategic Corporate Brand Management tool	Greater understanding of the role of corporate language as a means to create distinction and consistency	H
	Development and communication of corporate brand attributes are important means of creating internal alignment of employees	Communication can be used as a tool to build consistency and a sense of shared purpose inside the organisation	M
	Assessing system effectiveness requires a representative sample of communications to all intended audiences via all main formal communication channels	Recognition that internal and external audiences must receive consistent communications about the corporate brand	M
	To ensure communication consistency an organisation must identify all key audiences and main communication channels	Recognition that measuring system effectiveness relies on a structured approach to segmentation of audiences and communication channels	M

H = High

M = Medium

L = Low

Discussion and implications of findings relating to RQ2

RQ2 relates specifically to 'system effectiveness' (Argyris, 1973). In two of the three studies there is evidence from the content analysis that the system of Corporate Brand Communications is more effective after the intervention than before in terms of consistency of Corporate Brand Communications. However, as this research has been conducted within a participatory paradigm it would be both inconclusive and

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Filter elements			
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inconsistent to view this as a complete response to the Research Question, as this would fall back into a positivist worldview. Instead, the researcher analysed the data to try and understand why the process of intervention had appeared to improve performance of the system in the two completed studies, and had informed the behaviour of the research group in the third study, against the criteria for Reflexive-Practical outcomes detailed in Figure 12.14 (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

These criteria guided the researcher's data display tactic, which utilised a Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix to analyse study outcomes and assess the degree of organisational change instigated by the study. The results of this analysis are displayed in Figure 12.13 and are discussed in the following section.

Figure 12.14 Reason and Bradbury criteria for assessing validity and quality applied to RQ2

Quality as Reflexive-Practical outcome

What are the outcomes of research?

Did the intervention achieve change?

What were the processes of inquiry?

Did these processes enhance the group?

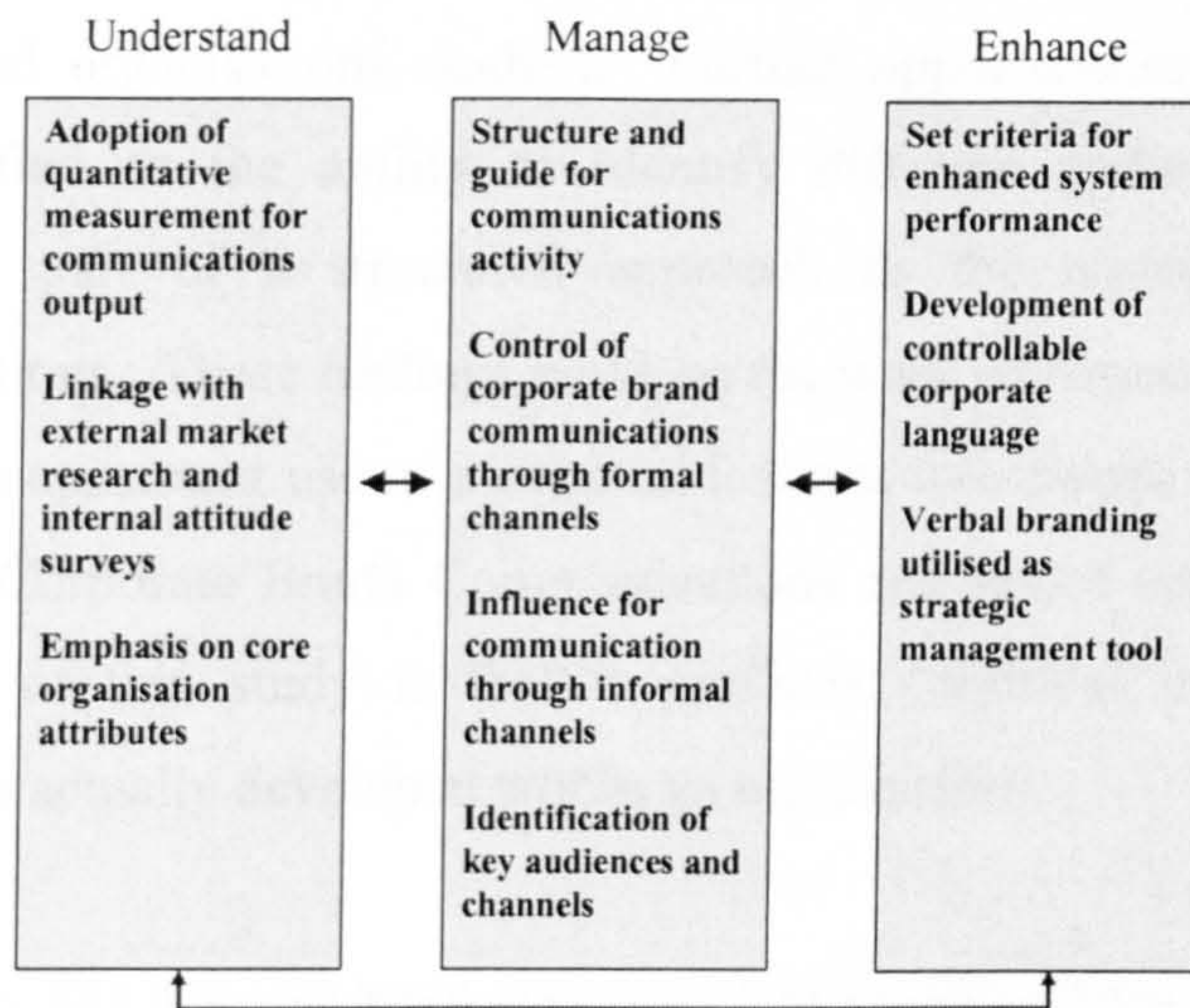
Is the research 'validated' by participants' new ways of acting in the light of the work?

Source: Reason and Bradbury, 2001

Studies provided a focus for the research groups in understanding the effectiveness of the system

In all three studies the application of content analysis techniques to measure output of Corporate Brand Communications helped to generate confidence in the research group as it provided a quantitative measure of output. This enabled the group to understand the current performance of the system and develop a plan for improvement. Further, the ability of this approach to also establish a link with market research on external perceptions helped participants to understand the cause and effect between projected images (Rindova, 1998) and reputation. This phenomenon occurred in two of the

Figure 12.15 Communication system framework developed from study data



recruitment criteria had been altered to screen applicants for compatibility with the organisation's restated corporate brand attributes. Such factors were recognised as enhancements to the Corporate Brand Communications system, but lay beyond the scope of this particular study.

Studies also allowed the research group to develop a filter for enhancing effectiveness of the system on an on-going basis

Beyond establishing a greater level of system understanding and creating a framework for managing the system, the studies also highlighted how the research groups began to look for ways to enhance system performance, using the corporate brand definitions as a filter for this activity. One area was the recognition of the importance of language in the Corporate Brand Management toolkit and its ability, if managed, to create consistency and distinction for the organisation. This was concluded as support for the claim that the 'virtues' of corporate brand activity are the ability to communicate, differentiate and enhance the organisation (Balmer, 2001b).

There was also recognition of the importance of internal communications in this process and its potential to create alignment and build a shared sense of purpose among employees. This potential was recognised as being of particular importance in the two de-centralised organisations studied. Further opportunities for system enhancement were identified as the ability to identify different audiences and communication channels as part of a structured approach to the planning of Corporate Brand Communications. These findings build on the work of Argenti and Forman (2001) who state that the consistent use of a communications framework enables an organisation to enhance its Corporate Brand Communications and hence develop its reputation. The significance of this study is that it provides empirical evidence for how such a framework is actually developed within an organisation.

The results of this analysis were also reviewed for theoretical and conceptual coherence (Miles and Huberman, 1994) against the five criteria recommended by Intervention Theory to evaluate the success of an intervention (Argyris, 1973). These criteria are discussed below:

Information generated is understandable to research subjects – use of Content Analysis in the studies helped to create a framework that provided focus to the study and was generally understandable by participants. In one study the application of quantitative data was viewed as important in building credibility for the study with the research group.

Information generated by each study can be used by the research subjects – data recorded during the conduct of the study and post-project exit interviews pointed to a general acceptance from participants that this information could be used on an on-going basis as part of the monitoring of the system.

The associated investment in terms of time and resources is acceptable – exit interviews for each study indicated that the research group did not feel that the process of the study had created additional undue demands on time. However, this finding must be balanced against the experience of the LCP study where the extended timeframe of

the study pointed to the unwillingness or inability on the part of the research group to invest adequate time within the intended study timeframe.

The problem identified at the beginning of the study is either solved or better understood – each study started from the basis of having identified a problem with the existing system. By the completion of each study there was recognition of a greater level of understanding of the system of Corporate Brand Communications, as discussed in the previous section.

The conduct of each study was accomplished without a negative impact on the performance of the system – exit interviews provided no evidence that the participants had experienced any negative impact on system performance whilst the study was being conducted.

In summary, the data generated from the studies that relate to '*system effectiveness*' (RQ2) have yielded some interesting findings and have been shown to have theoretical coherence (Argyris, 1973) and conceptual coherence in addressing questions of outcome and practice (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

Extending the potential of case study approaches in studying management processes (RQ3)

The approach to Cross-Case analysis for RQ3 was similar to that adopted for RQ1 and RQ2. As a first stage the researcher returned to the reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrices, relating to the role of the action researcher, for each study. The data from these matrices was then compiled into a single Meta Matrix. From this matrix the researcher developed a Content-Analytic Summary table (Figure 12.17) to look for patterns and themes emerging from the preliminary data display. This approach enabled the researcher to cluster key themes in terms of the main concepts or variables that described the intervention process. These were synthesised into a further data display, the Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix, which is presented in Figure 12.18.

These data displays formed the basis for the researcher to draw meaning and conclusions from the analysis. These are discussed in the implications section on the following pages. In drawing conclusions relating to RQ3 from the study the researcher has considered three main areas. First, what has been learned from the study in terms of first, second and third person Action Research? Second, how do these findings extend the potential of traditional case study approaches to studying a management system? As a final stage, issues of quality and validity are discussed in relation to '*relational praxis*' and '*enduring consequence*' as outlined in the Reason and Bradbury (2001) framework (Figure 12.16) described at the start of this chapter.

Figure 12.16 Reason and Bradbury criteria for assessing validity and quality applied to RQ3

Quality as Relational Praxis

What was the relationship between initiators and participants?

Were the study groups set up for maximal participation?

Were opportunities used to allow all participants to feel fully involved?

Were less powerful participants helped by the experience?

Source: Reason and Bradbury, 2001

Table 12.17 Content-Analytic Summary table for Research Question 3

Developed from Meta-Matrix of three intervention studies

	<i>Within study</i>	<i>Beyond study</i>	
Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Setting context	Dealing with multi-lingual team creates need to establish common definitions throughout study (2)	Importance of engaging participants by establishing clear frames of reference throughout study (3)	Need to continually re-engage research group and re-state definitions as study progresses (3)
Ongoing planning and co-ordination	Additional planning and emphasis on good communication required when conducting European study or intervention study at a distance from the organisation (3)	Careful examination of logistics required before commencing study and need for good co-ordination skills to maintain connection with organisation to counter geographic distance (3)	Important to carefully plan each phase of intervention – setting expectations and managing schedules (3)
Establishing a key project owner	Importance of establishing a main point of contact or project champion within organisation (3)	Need to establish ownership of the study at the earliest stage within the organisation to ensure participation and commitment (3)	Crucial part of early engagement with organisation is to identify a key project contact who will own the study (3)
Development of tools to encourage engagement of research group	Use of different data displays helped research group to address specific issues they considered relevant during the intervention phases (3)	Requirement for flexibility in planning each intervention stage to allow group to generate valid information (3)	Need for researcher reflexivity to adjust interventions to allow group to focus on issues important to them at each stage (2)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Flexibility in setting parameters of intervention	Experience of studies were that group required space to consider implications beyond communication (2)	Intervention style must not run a closed agenda. Allow space for exploration of other issues (2)	Intervention style must be flexible to allow for this exploration of wider issues (2)
Importance of capturing post project learning	Liaising with key project contact in post project phase helped validate findings of the study (3)	Conduct of exit interviews brings closure to the study and encourages participants to reflect on their learning (3)	Important to validate final write up and engage research group as a final stage of the study (3)
Generating valid information	Use of different inputs successful in helping group develop valid information about competitive environment and customer value drivers (3)	Ensure that content of each intervention is tailored to provide valid information to the group as stimulus (3)	Need to enable research participants to make decisions by generating valid information on important brand issues (3)
Generating commitment of all research participants	Ensure that each stage of intervention is planned to generate internal commitment and provide momentum to the study (3)	Planning each session for maximum involvement and full participation (3)	Need to ensure that the whole research group remain engaged in the process throughout then study (3)
Timing of approach to organisation	Ensuring in preliminary stages that the organisation is ready to undertake an intervention study (3)	Improve structure of initial discussions to ensure that the organisation is both suitable for and committed to such a study (3)	Improve dialogue at start of study to ensure that it will complete within a given timeframe and that the researcher will generate required data (2)

Concept	Presentational knowledge	Practical knowledge	Propositional knowledge
Set initial expectations on timeframes	Establish a clear timeframe expectation at commencement of the study (3)	An extended timeframe can be a benefit in allowing the research group to reflect on process over a longer timeframe but this does not suit the requirements of a multiple case study approach (1)	As part of the initial approach the researcher needs to make explicit the timeframe for the study and manage that timeline throughout the intervention (2)
Negotiating access on mutual benefits of participation	Agreement to access for studies granted on the basis that there was a clear need and desired output for the organisation from the study (3)	Negotiation of twin outputs – academic and practical to suit the needs of the organisation (3)	Timing of researcher approach to organisation important. Must be a clear need recognised for change and this recognition is part of initial engagement phase (3)
Role of pre-understanding	Researcher's previous experience of organisational dynamics and culture helped to gain trust of research subjects in agreeing access to conduct the study (3)	Experience of researcher vital in building trust and gaining access to study via intervention (3)	Pre-understanding of the organisation and the issues it faces helps to gain trust of research subjects and generates enthusiasm and support for the study (3)
Sustaining focus on system under study	Exit interviews point to longer lasting awareness of the system and support for its ongoing management (3)	Ability of intervention process to embed awareness and understanding and empower participants to continue managing the system (3)	Relies on skills of researcher and key contact to continue the work initiated by the study – research group must feel empowered to continue managing the system (3)

Figure 12.18 Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta-Matrix for RQ 3

Extending the potential of case studies through active researcher intervention

Variable	Process	Impact	Significance
Engage elements			
Timing of approach to organisation negotiating access	Initial contact must ensure that the organisation is interested in the subject and ready to undertake an intervention study	Identification of a problem with the current system essential to demonstrate relevance and potential of study to provide output for organisation	H
Negotiating access on mutual benefits of participation	Agreement to access for studies was granted on the basis that there was a clear need and desired output for the organisation from the study	Timeframe for negotiating access can be reduced if this need can be identified early in the negotiation phase	H
Establishing ownership via a key project contact	Importance of establishing a main point of contact or project champion within the organisation at the early stages of engagement	Ensures ownership of the study within the organisation and aids communication and co-ordination throughout the study	H
Enrol elements			
Role of pre-understanding in establishing researcher credibility	Pre-understanding of the organisation and the issues it faces helped the researcher to gain trust of research subjects and generate enthusiasm and support for the study.	Previous experience of researcher vital in building trust and gaining access to study using an intervention approach	H
Set initial expectations on timeframes and process of study	As part of the initial approach the researcher needs to make explicit the timeframe for the study and manage that timeline throughout the intervention. Use of an intervention protocol vital in creating clarity of commitment	Failure to set these expectations and manage the process could delay or jeopardise completion of the study or result in loss of momentum and disengagement of research subjects	H

Variable	Process	Impact	Significance
Setting context	Need to re-engage research group at each intervention stage and re-state definitions around the subject to check for understanding	Failure to do this can lead to loss of interest or misunderstanding on the part of the research group which could jeopardise completion of the study	H
Need for ongoing planning and co-ordination	Requirement to carefully plan each phase of intervention – setting expectations and managing schedules for the research group	Proactive approach will retain interest of the research group in the subject and maintain momentum	M
Enable elements			
Focus on generating valid information	Need to ensure that research participants are able to make decisions by generating valid information on key issues	Maintain involvement of research group by using each intervention to cycle data that is relevant to the study	H
Development of data and display tools to enable choice	Need for researcher reflexivity to adjust interventions and allow research group to focus on issues important to them at each stage and make informed choices	Keep discussion relevant to the needs of the research group – check for relevance at each stage of the intervention cycle	H
Flexibility in setting parameters at each stage of intervention	Intervention style must be flexible to allow for this exploration of wider issues if the research group demand	Flexible approach preserves relevance for research group but must be handled within a clear framework to ensure that the study is not distracted from its objectives	M
Generating ongoing commitment of all research participants	Need to ensure that the whole research group remain engaged in the process throughout the study	Each stage of intervention must be planned to generate internal commitment	H

Variable	Process	Impact	Signifi- cance
Empower elements			
Importance of capturing post-project learning	Important to validate learning in final stage of intervention and maintain engagement of research group at completion of study	This process forces the research group to reflect on their own learning and hands over momentum for the study back to the organisation – ensuring that they now own the process	H
Sustaining interest in system after the study	At the completion of the study the researcher and key contact must emphasise the need to continue the work initiated by the study	The research group must feel empowered to continue management of system after the close of the researcher's study	M

H = High

M = Medium

L = Low

Discussion and implications of findings relating to RQ3

RQ3 relates to the research method adopted for the study. Reason and Bradbury (2001) assert that good Action Research emerges over time in '*an evolutionary and developmental process*' (Figure 12.14). In reviewing the main findings of the study the researcher acknowledges that this was, indeed, the case with the conduct of this study, as a pattern emerged at the completion of the study, which had not been apparent to the researcher during the conduct of each individual intervention study.

Analysis of the Variable-Ordered Descriptive Meta Matrix in Figure 12.16 highlights the development of a four-stage model that described the intervention process. The main elements of these four stages are discussed in the section below:

Engaging the organisation in the need for a study

A key finding across all three studies was the requirement to ensure that the right initial approach was made to suitable target organisations. This involved initial screening of potential targets, gathering intelligence on the state of their current communication system and approach to Corporate Brand Management as a whole and identifying a suitable point of contact. A reflection from this process was the considerable investment in time required at this stage, meaning that the researcher had to plan approaches to potential organisations whilst conducting each study to meet the time constraints of the overall study.

In negotiating access the researcher learned that there needed to be an explicit discussion with the organisation of the mutual benefits of co-operating on the study. This meant that the researcher had to invest time in initial meetings with organisation representatives to understand the issues surrounding their current Corporate Brand Communications system. As part of this process the researcher had to assess whether there was sufficient interest on the part of organisation to initiate and provide on-going support for such a study. Negotiating this access became easier with the later studies as

the researcher could use the first studies as a benchmark to demonstrate the process and expected outputs to the target organisation.

A further key learning was the requirement to establish at the earliest stage an individual owner for the study inside the organisation. This person could therefore act as a co-ordinator and champion for the process and was vital in maintaining momentum for the study. In the one case where this main contact changed during the study there were problems for the researcher in maintaining momentum and continued interest in the process inside the organisation.

Enrolling the research group in the study process

Once the organisation was engaged by the potential for undertaking a study, the researcher faced the challenge of building trust and credibility with the research group. A main finding from each study was the role of pre-understanding in this process. Exit interviews pointed to the importance of the researcher's consultancy background as vital in establishing credibility with the research group. This enabled the researcher to draw on anecdotes from experiences working within other organisations and to use his facilitation skills, running focus groups and conducting interviews, to gain the trust of participants. Gummesson (1991) stresses the importance of pre-understanding in helping gain '*privileged access*' (Torbert, 1994) to study management systems. This viewpoint was validated in all three studies, and particularly in the AEGON study, where the researcher's previous work with the Group enabled him to gain access, which would not have been allowed to a researcher not previously known to the organisation.

This finding appears to support the claims of Balmer (2001b) that researchers are likely to experience '*acute difficulty in researching changes of business identity*', owing to the sensitive nature of the phenomenon. The enrol stage was therefore identified as crucial in setting expectations and building confidence with the research group at an early stage in the study and establishing a '*licence to study*'.

A further tactic for gaining trust that emerged as a finding from all three studies was the importance of setting expectations on the timeframe, process and required organisation support for each study. The development of an intervention protocol for each study was concluded to be essential in ensuring that a process was mapped out and deliverables for the organisation identified at the earliest phase of intervention. The researcher's post-study reflection suggests that failure to provide such a protocol would have hindered the progress of the study and could have jeopardised its completion.

The management of the study process also required the researcher to ensure that the research group was re-enrolled at each phase of intervention. Tactics for achieving this were to summarise progress and issues at each stage, clarify definitions and check for understanding with the research group at regular intervals. This latter point was important for the two European studies where English was not the participants' first language and definitions needed to be discussed and agreed for concepts such as '*reputation*', '*network*' and '*corporate language*'.

The enrolment stage also placed considerable emphasis on the researcher's project management skills, with each study requiring scheduling management to set up meetings and on-going communication (via phone and e-mail) to maintain momentum for the study. This was again deemed particularly important for the two European studies where the geographic distance between researcher and organisation demanded good co-ordination for each intervention phase.

Enabling commitment of the research group

The 'enabling' stage of intervention was characterised in each study by the iterative cycle of generating '*valid information*' (Argyris, 1973) with the research group. The key learning in this stage was the requirement for the group to collectively decide which areas at the context stage were of most importance. This helped set the agenda for discussion of the key corporate brand issues and attributes. Referring back to the theoretical framework of Intervention Theory (Argyris, 1973), the researcher concluded that valid information in the context of the three studies was that information about the

Corporate Brand Communication system that the group defined as relevant to their particular situation.

A further key finding from the studies was the potential for using various data displays to enable participants to review data and make informed choices throughout the process. Data Monitors were particularly effective display tools with various formats adopted at relevant stages in different studies. For example, the organisation monitors developed for the AEGON study, use of competitor attributes mapping in the LCP study and development of Customer Value Monitors across all three main studies and the pilot study.

Cross-case analysis also highlighted the need for flexibility during this stage to enable participants to explore corporate brand-related issues that moved beyond communication. This scenario was experienced in each study and placed emphasis on the researcher's facilitation skills to allow this exploration, as it was deemed 'valid' by the group, without reducing momentum for the study as a whole. Examples of this were the investigation of business process issues in the ESF study and consideration of the relationship between Corporate Brand Communications and business strategy in the AEGON study. The researcher concluded that these 'excursions' were a vital phase in the studies as they helped retain the commitment of the research group by enabling them to focus on issues that they added to the study agenda.

These explorations also added richness to the researcher's own learning of the system and have added depth to the new framework developed as a response to RQ1. They can also be viewed as conceptually coherent with Reason and Bradbury's (2001) view of Action Research, which states that *'making explicit the questions of what is important to attend to is itself often a part of good Action Research'*.

A final conclusion relating to the enable stage was the need to maintain the ongoing commitment of the research group. This required the researcher and main project contact to ensure that all participants were involved at each stage of intervention. The importance of this requirement was highlighted in the LCP study when difficulties in

engaging the whole group at one key stage of corporate brand development resulted in problems with the outputs (corporate brand statements), and delays in securing full commitment of the research group.

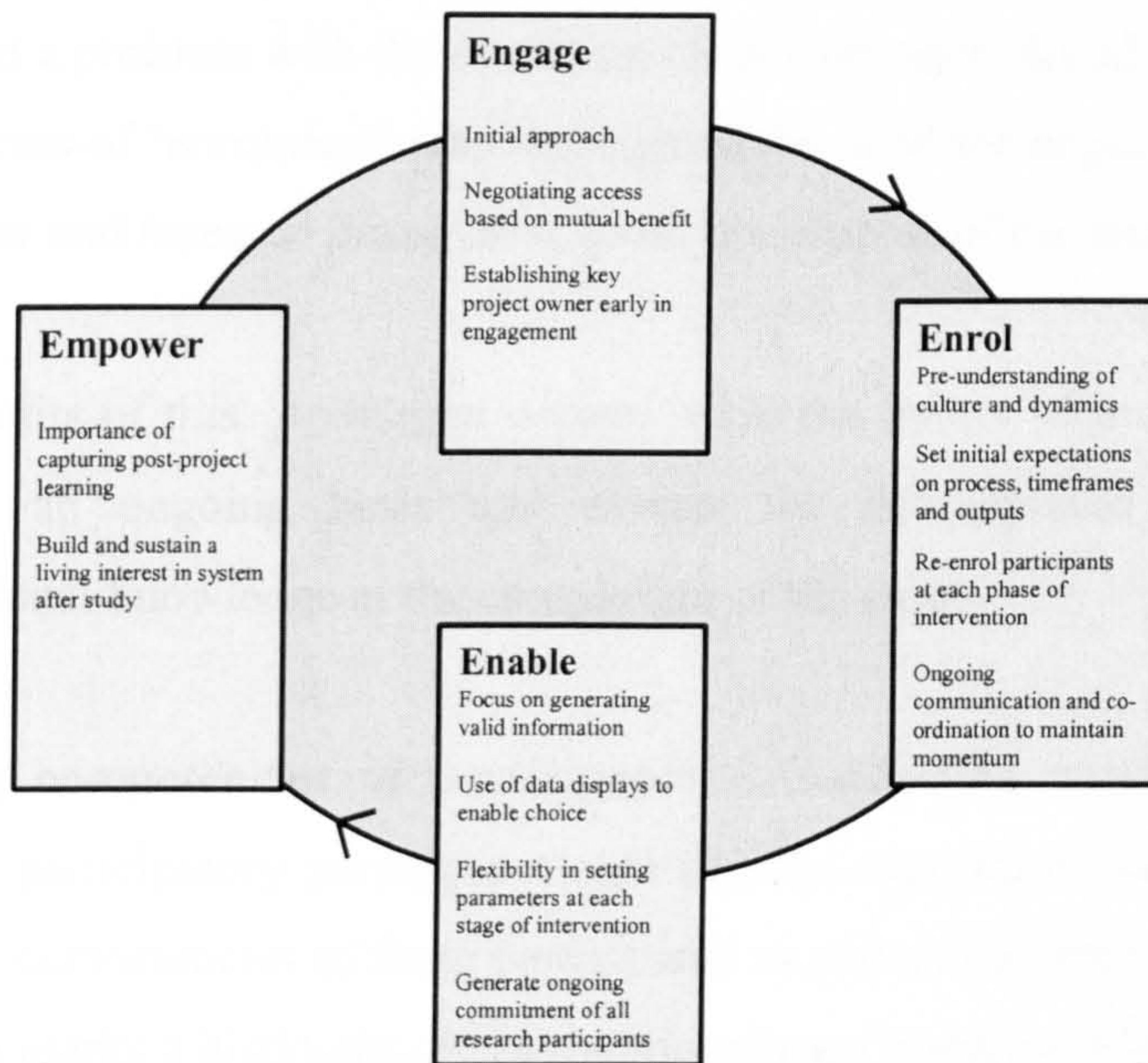
Empowering participants to continue work initiated in study

The findings indicated a fourth stage of the intervention approach, which occur at the end of the researcher's intervention (Figure 12.19). This stage is conceptually important as it points to the '*enduring consequence*' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) of the intervention. That is, the willingness of participants in the research process to continue developing the emergent understanding gained by the study. Whilst this is difficult to assess within the timeframes of this thesis, the data indicated some initial conclusions on the process of empowerment.

An important process finding in all three studies was the role of exit interviews with participants, which help all parties to consolidate their learning from the study, but also signals the end of the researcher's engagement with the organisation. The tactic of exit interviews was particularly important in the extended LCP study timeframe as it enabled participants to reflect on what they had learned from the process and helped to identify in what ways they had been empowered by the study. In the context of that particular study this process helped identify that certain key management behaviours (internal communication and recruitment criteria) had changed, indicating that the understanding generated by the study had begun to be embedded in the organisation.

A further learning from the Cross-Case analysis was the need for the key project contact to maintain awareness and interest in the system after the study. Indications that this had occurred were the intention of the LCP group to instigate a fundamental review of external communications later in 2002 and the AEGON study where the research group had begun to develop corporate brand 'tone of voice' guidelines for the organisation. These initiatives are highlighted as examples that the studies conducted had created a '*living interest*' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) in the work.

Figure 12.19 Framework for effective intervention developed from study



Potential of intervention approaches to extend role of traditional case study research

Chapter Seven discussed the use of traditional case studies (Yin, 1995) as an approach to study management processes and discussed some of the shortcomings of this method in the context of this study. To understand how the intervention approach developed for this study has extended the role of the traditional case study, it is useful to return to Hult and Lennung's (1980) definition as a framework for drawing methodological conclusions. This is stated as follows:

'Action Research simultaneously assists in practical problem-solving and expands the scientific knowledge, as well as enhances the competencies of the respective actors, being performed collaboratively in an immediate situation using data feedback in a cyclical process aiming at an increased understanding of a given social situation, primarily applicable for the understanding of change processes in social systems and undertaken within a mutually acceptable framework.'

Hult and Lennung (1980)

Practical problem solving and knowledge generation - The 'engagement' stage of interventions was found to rely on recognition that the organisation studied had identified a problem with the operation of its Corporate Brand Communications system. The process of 'enrolment' also highlighted the need for ongoing collaboration between researcher and research group throughout the process of the study.

The benefits of this '*privileged access*' were the ability of the research group to cycle data on an ongoing basis and review the development of both practical and propositional knowledge at the completion of the study.

Building competencies of participants – Conducting multiple intervention studies within a participatory paradigm meant that the researcher was committed to helping build the competencies of these participants as part of the intervention process. Such an approach marks a distinction from traditional case research, which does not require such learning or a '*living interest*' on the part of its research subjects.

The intervention framework adopted used this interactive relationship between researcher and participants to jointly develop practical and propositional knowledge. The outcome of this collaboration was the generation of new knowledge about the system that was concluded, in exit interviews with research group members, to have practical application, having been jointly developed by the users of this knowledge (Jonsson, 1991; Brulin, 2001).

Collaborative approach - It has been acknowledged that Participatory Action Research evolves through a process of mutual engagement and influence (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). In the context of this study the emphasis on collaboration was a key element in securing initial access for the researcher to conduct the study in each case. This privileged access would probably not have been achieved through a conventional case study method, as the organisation representatives would not have been involved in the research process.

The emphasis on mutual benefit to both the researcher (propositional knowledge) and the research group (practical knowledge) ensured that shared benefits were identified at the start of the study and this was recognised in the post-project review as a key contributor to the continued momentum in two of the studies. A traditional case study approach would not have offered these twin benefits to both parties and hence may have reduced the organisation's commitment to the successful completion of the study.

Conducting research in an immediate situation - A main finding from the Cross-Case analysis was that the researcher involvement in the process of investigation generated a richness of experiential data (captured as project journal and reflective notes) that would not be as readily available to a traditional case researcher. This did, however, put added emphasis on the researcher's facilitation and data recording skills.

The ability to reflect in the midst of action was a skill that the researcher developed and honed during the course of each successive study. The benefits of such a process were that it allowed the researcher and research group to capture events as they happened (Torbert, 1976). The application of a clear analytical framework, based on Intervention Theory, also added rigour (Reason, 1994, Torbert, 1976) to the process and helped to ensure that the conduct of each study did not cross the boundary into simple methodology-based consultancy, with the researcher defining and dominating the process of intervention and hence the conduct of the study.

Specific examples of the benefits were the ability to reflect '*on-line*' (Torbert, 1976) with the AEGON research group on specific aspects of the organisation belief systems and the development of an approach to mapping competitor attributes with the LCP participants. Each of these opportunities allowed the researcher to facilitate and observe a process at first hand and to capture data in a more holistic manner than traditional case study approaches.

Cyclical approach to data feedback – This study also differed from traditional case research in the adoption of a cyclical approach to data feedback between the researcher and participants throughout the conduct of each study. This meant that for each defined

phase of intervention all valid information generated as data was captured in the form of transcripts and journal notes. The information generated was then fed back to the research subjects for comment, discussion and further analysis.

This cyclical approach also necessitated the adoption of a number of data gathering techniques, including interviews, desk research and observation. Gummesson (1991) notes that observation is an essential means of data gathering in ethnography, which is a method of generating cultural description from an intimate study. Whilst ethnographic methods such as participant observation offer access to study organisations and processes, the role of researcher's intervention in the studies led him to conclude that this would be limiting if it had been the only approach adopted. Instead, the combination of observation, interviews and group sessions, together with on-going feedback to participants was found to be more consistent with the canons of Participatory Action Research and served to maintain the engagement of the research group over the period of the study.

The approach to data cycling was embedded in each stage of the intervention including the drawing of conclusions with key contacts from each organisation engaged in further dialogue around the meaning and significance of the key findings from the multiple studies as part of the Cross-Case analysis.

Goal of increased understanding of the system - Throughout the conduct of each study the role of the researcher (Argyris, 1973) was to assist the organisation in managing its Corporate Brand Communications system. By actively participating in the study the researcher also addressed a further distinction with traditional case research, which was the potential for goal dilemmas to arise as a result of this intervention (Warmington, 1980).

To minimise these dilemmas the objectives for each study were negotiated and agreed by both parties before an intervention protocol was developed. Part of this agreement was a clear understanding between the researcher and research subjects that the system of Corporate Brand Communications itself formed the focus of the study. Given the

commitment to shared learning and change dictated by the methodology, this overall objective had to be balanced against the demands for outputs related to change in terms of changed communication and behaviour from the research subjects. In creating the intervention protocol the researcher had to remain aware that the participatory approach offered research subjects the potential for improved system performance and greater levels of understanding in exchange for an enhanced level of access.

The benefits of a participatory approach to studying this system were found to be the increased level of involvement of the research group in this process of generating understanding. The post-project findings of two studies indicated that this increased level of understanding had caused the participants to begin to manage the system in new ways, indicating '*enduring consequence*' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) for the studies. A review of the case study literature confirms that this change is not an expected outcome of case study research.

Primary focus on change processes in system - A further distinction between the Participatory Action Research approach adopted and traditional case research was the focus on change within a specified system. A key driver of access was the desire on the part of the organisation to affect change through the study. This contrasts with Yin's (1994) typology of case research where the focus on change is not a necessary prerequisite for effective research. In contrast, Gummesson (1991) states that Action Research approaches are primarily applicable to understanding change in social and management systems.

In reviewing the efficacy of such an approach the researcher returned to the work of Lewin (1946), who stated that '*the best way to understand something is to try and change it*'. In reviewing the findings with the key research contacts the researcher concluded that the intention to change the system had provided a clear purpose for the research group and allowed the researcher unique access for study. Thus the team working together towards a practical outcome had helped to co-create new forms of understanding about the system.

Conducting research within a mutually acceptable ethical framework - Wood-Harper (1992) states that Action Research is distinguished by its special requirements in research methodology and that this calls for considerable care and attention in research design. To help provide this rigour each study utilised a variant of the case study protocol, recommended by Yin (1995) as a means to add clarity to the research design. For each study an intervention protocol was prepared as part of the preliminary negotiations with each organisation. This dialogue established a mutually ethical framework for the study with both parties aware of the inputs and outputs of the process.

The use of an intervention protocol to actively manage the intervention phases marked a clear distinction with case research as this protocol was revised and updated throughout each study to ensure that the research group remained enrolled in the process.

Researcher's own learning from involvement in phenomenon under study

As part of the conclusions to this study, and to provide as full a response as possible to RQ3, the researcher also considered it important to review his own reflections in developing the research approach and conducting this study. To provide a framework for this reflection he returned to the literature to assess his learning.

A first reflection is that the process of conducting intervention studies has helped the researcher develop new skills in facilitation and reflection. Rudolph, Taylor and Foldy (2001) point to the potential of Action Research to build a researcher's skills in three ways. The adoption of an off-line reflection stage as part of the process offered the researcher distance and space to analyse and re-experience feelings and thoughts on an ongoing basis throughout each study. It was noted in the researcher's study journals that his ability to become more self-reflective was enhanced during later studies (Marshall, 2001), with the researcher more open to ideas and stimuli generated by the research group.

A second personal learning was that the intervention stages provided an arena for the researcher to build his facilitation skills. This was identified in the pilot study and helped the researcher in terms of planning interventions and content for each session. As each study developed the researcher was also able to experiment with different ways to handle interventions in terms of data display and generating feedback from each group. Wadsworth (2001) talks about facilitation skills in terms of six key capabilities. The researcher's personal learning can be assessed in terms of these criteria.

In terms of *'knowing self and others'* the researcher was forced to hold findings and conclusions lightly (Miles and Huberman, 1994) during each study and not try to develop immediate solutions, in keeping with his extensive consultancy experience. The researcher also learned techniques for building trust and team feeling among participants. This was essential to ensure sustained engagement for the study and forced the researcher to build on his existing consulting skills. However, the development of the intervention approach and adoption of the principles of Intervention Theory helped ensure that the process was robust and met the second of Wadsworth's criteria of *'realising interconnectedness'*.

The intervention approach also helped the researcher's skills of engagement with the requirement to *'identify and encourage sources of energy and ideas within the research team'*. In doing this there was a need to be flexible to suit the needs of each group. For example, the LCP research group were quite opinionated and outspoken, whilst the ESF group needed more structured input and encouragement during intervention stages. The main quality learned in handling these various situations was the need for flexibility in recognising when the intervention stage required more momentum or more control and focus.

On occasions this also required the researcher to *'be a source of energy and ideas'* in sessions when the need arose. The researcher's experience pointed to the fact that the greatest benefits here were in channelling his energy into helping participants with ways to display concepts and ideas. This emphasis on data display served to maintain

momentum and drive commitment successfully, even in the extended timeframe of the LCP study.

A further personal learning was the skill of '*shaping the inquiry*' without recourse to a strict process model, the usual currency of consultancy. The researcher learnt through the process that the uncertainty over precise outputs of each session could be harnessed by flexible handling of intervention stages, guided by the identification of internal group commitment and conditions allowing for free and informed choice. This called for a soft process approach with the researcher building considerable reflexivity into his thinking and facilitation at each stage.

The final learning reflected Wadsworth's (2001) sixth criteria of '*accompanying the transformative moments*'. During the conduct of each study there were some breakthrough moments. In terms of personal satisfaction the researcher can now reflect that it was fulfilling to share in these moments as part of the inquiry, but also at the end of each study it was rewarding to observe that the process had begun to transform the thinking and views of research group participants, as evidenced by the feedback at the exit interview stages.

Implications of Six Conventions framework for managers

At the start of this thesis, the researcher highlighted the increasing importance of the corporate brand and the need for further empirical insight into the mechanisms and processes that enable managers to manage their corporate brand. The identification of the Six Conventions framework from the study findings can best be viewed together holistically, as a set of guiding principles and practices, which offer a new diagnostic approach to the management and development of the corporate brand.

The progressive nature of these diagnostic stages, from setting the co-ordinates to monitoring for relevance and distinctiveness, helps to bridge the gap between conceptual modelling and operational interpretation.

In particular, the Six Conventions offer managers a means to manage across each dimension indicated in the framework (Figure 12.10). For example, managers can utilise the Brand construction/Brand continuity dimension to ensure that the organisation attributes generated by Beliefs, Behaviours and Business Process Monitors as part of the Brand Construction stage, are linked into other management processes and monitored on an ongoing basis as part of the Brand Continuity stage.

Similarly, the Brand Confirmation/Brand Conditioning dimension can be examined to ensure that the corporate brand attributes developed or refined during the Brand Confirmation stage are monitored for relevance and distinction during the Brand Conditioning stage.

The Brand Context/Brand Consistency dimension can also be viewed as a means to ensure that the audiences identified and examined in the Brand Context stage are receiving clear and consistent Corporate Brand Communications as part of the Brand Consistency stage.

Empirical evidence from this study points towards the need for these Six Conventions to be addressed by managers to conduct corporate brand management effectively. It is the researcher's assertion that these Six Conventions therefore offer a significant evolutionary step towards a more structured approach to the active management of the corporate brand. Further, these findings suggest that the role of corporate brand management is not a peripheral activity that can be delegated to a marketing or single communication function.

Based upon the findings, the researcher would suggest the following steps to senior management engaged in developing and nurturing their corporate brand. First responsibility for corporate brand management should be clearly allocated to a senior team, accountable to a Director or senior partner. Second the Six Conventions can be used as a guiding framework to audit the corporate brand and act as a 'checks and balance' mechanism to ensure relevance and distinctiveness to stakeholders over time.

Limitations to study and opportunities for further research

As part of the conclusions the researcher has also considered the limitations to this study. These relate mainly to the selected scope and definition of the phenomenon. In limiting the focus on Corporate Brand Communications the researcher has consciously focused the study on one key component of the emerging field of Corporate Brand Management (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Balmer, 2001a). This limitation was imposed to ensure that the study was focused and could provide an objective measure of '*system effectiveness*' via Content Analysis.

In reviewing the findings of each study it is clear that there is potential to broaden this approach to cover both the visual and behavioural manifestations of the corporate brand, in keeping with the need to understand brands experienced in their entirety (Ind, 1998; Urde, 1999; Macrae, 1999). However, further extension of the scope would also require careful consideration of how to effectively measure variables such as behaviour, which may necessitate the introduction of other stakeholder perception measures beyond the Content Analysis method adopted for this study.

A further limitation relates to the type of organisation selected for study. In this thesis the researcher has addressed the current lack of empirical data and the emerging nature of the field by actively selecting a cross-section of organisations to study. These provided variety by type of business (commercial and non-commercial), ownership (partnership and public listed company), and geography (UK based and international). In making this selection the researcher was consciously seeking to examine different types of organisation to aid generalisability of findings and conclusions.

A case could be made for creating a locus for future multiple studies around a single type of organisation (for example, UK only, partnership only, not-for-profit only). The researcher's view is that this type of study would be of value once the level of knowledge in the field has been deepened and broadened by further empirical work.

The researcher also recommends that the Six Conventions framework could be applied in future studies to different types of organisation to further validate and refine these emergent management stages. In particular, future research could focus on single conventions such as brand continuity or brand conditioning to consider how brands can be embedded effectively in organisations and actively managed to ensure long-term relevance with stakeholders.

For reasons of access, the organisations selected for study were characterised as ones that were in the process of change. The perceived need to re-examine the corporate brand enabled access and facilitated the commitment of the senior management team over time by offering a mutual benefit to both the organisation and researcher in studying the processes of managing their corporate brand.

The researcher recommends that further work could be conducted within organisations, which are not undergoing radical change, for comparative purposes. However, the researcher also notes that such an approach would create significant challenges in gaining sufficient access to and engagement of a senior management team in such circumstances (Balmer, 2001b).

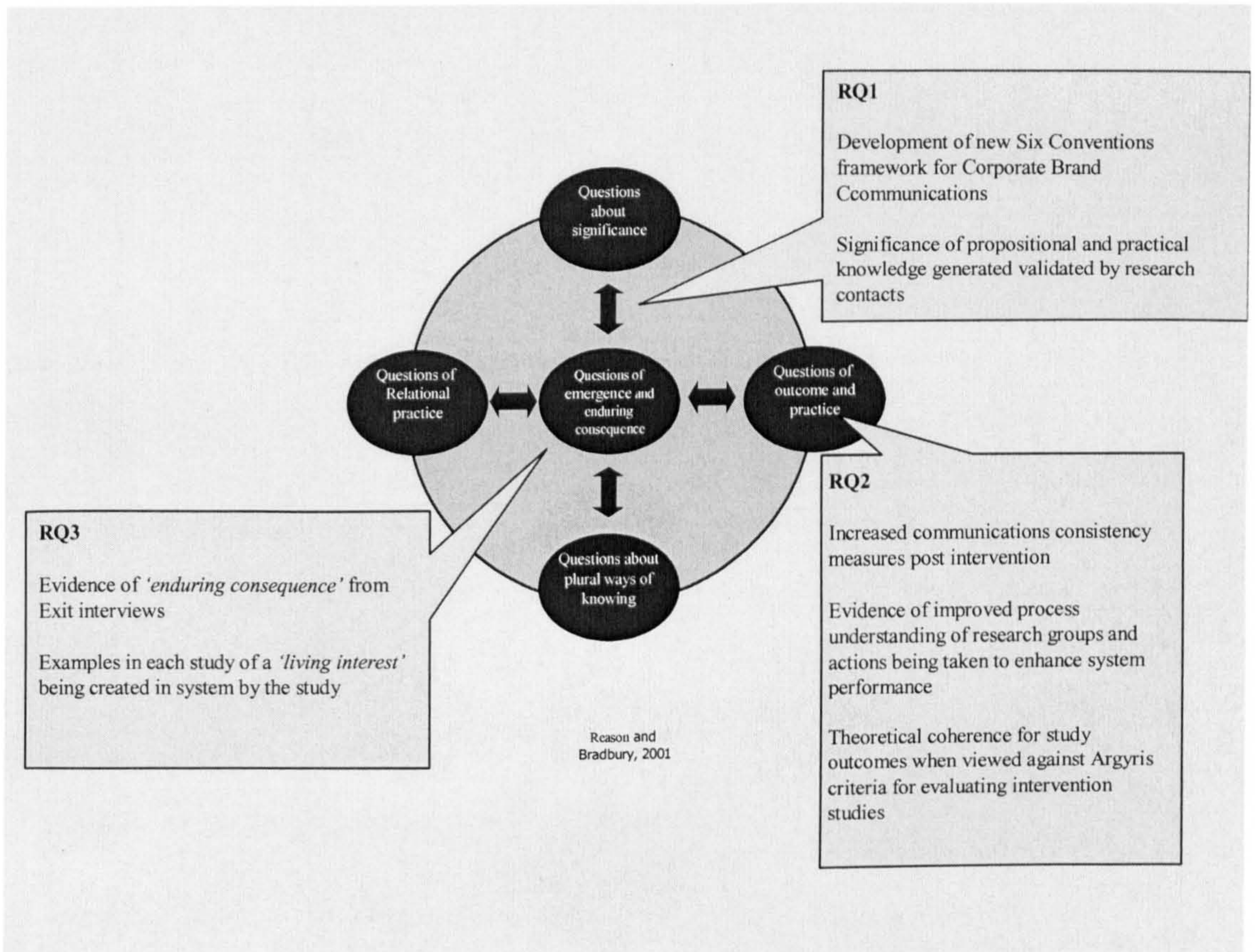
Thesis conclusions

This study set out to answer three distinct, but related Research Questions. The conduct of the pilot study and three successive intervention studies has adopted an alternative approach to the study of the field, utilising the concept of *'privileged access'* (Torbet, 1991).

The development of an intervention framework to drive the study has generated rich data and insight, which has informed the researcher's thinking considerably around the field of Corporate Brand Communications. Further, by grounding the approach in Intervention Theory, the researcher has provided additional assurance concerning the validity and quality to the findings. These are summarized in Figure 12.20.

It is the researcher's assertion that these contributions mark an important addition to the existing body of knowledge in the marketing, organisational and methodological fields.

Figure 12.20 Assessing validity and quality of findings



CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY



D. BICKERTON

BUILDING AN EMPIRICALLY ROBUST FRAMEWORK
FOR CORPORATE BRAND COMMUNICATIONS
USING ACTION RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

PhD THESIS

Volume Two (of two)

TEXT BOUND INTO

THE SPINE

Appendix 8.1: Pilot study reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrix

Post intervention stage – September 1999

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>Role of corporate branding</p>	<p>Clear brand definition needed to fill vacuum</p> <p>Lack of clear brand is disability</p> <p>Understanding that clear brand helps across the entire business</p> <p>Branding important as internal management tool</p> <p>Branding can act as a guide</p> <p>Branding must create a common language</p> <p>Brand must be seen as potent business tool</p>	<p>Without this definition people profile firm by describing what it is not</p> <p>Puts strain on firm to work harder to attract clients and staff</p> <p>No clear process in firm to make this happen</p> <p>Strong brand helps internal identification with firm and acts like a glue</p> <p>Strong brand is not just about control. It can liberate and inspire staff</p> <p>Lack of corporate pride.</p> <p>UK law firms do not take brand as seriously as US competitors</p>	<p>Overcome negative branding through introduction of agreed process</p> <p>Education of senior management on how to manage brand</p> <p>Help firm develop process to manage brand across firm</p> <p>Give framework to help people to bond and provide direction</p> <p>Brand needs to be seen as more than a set of rules and guidelines – must stretch and support</p> <p>Build this pride through effective brand communication</p> <p>Need framework that links communication with behaviours to achieve business benefits</p>

Appendix 8.2: Pilot study reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrix

Post intervention stage – September 1998

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>Corporate Brand Communication as a process</p>	<p>Time needs to be invested in understanding the context in which branding systems operate</p> <p>Corporate Brand is made up of a set of components</p> <p>Need to develop a clear set of statements as to what DH is and what it stands for</p> <p>Use of customer value data served to provide a common starting point for the branding process</p> <p>Customer value drivers also helped senior management to focus on their own operations and find common ground to talk about strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>Use of small groups and one on one interviews is effective way of generating valid information</p> <p>Brand process seen as a catalyst for real change within firm</p>	<p>No framework for guiding this process</p> <p>Need to understand what these components are</p> <p>No current forum to achieve this</p> <p>Recognition of the importance of this data but not currently reported back or acted on</p> <p>No accepted forum to review this data and discuss as a team</p> <p>Time consuming exercise</p> <p>Ability to build and sustain momentum for change</p>	<p>Conduct audit of external and internal perceptions of firm as a starting point</p> <p>Begin process with clear definition of these components</p> <p>Need forum to create consensus on approach</p> <p>Need formal mechanism to communicate this data and review against the brand</p> <p>Include customer value drivers as part of the brand development process</p> <p>Need to ensure that a representative cross-section of senior individuals are involved and engaged in the process</p> <p>Need to build profile and formalise brand process to signal this change</p>

Appendix 8.3: Pilot study reflection on action thematic conceptual matrix – corporate brand definitions

Post intervention stage – September 1998

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>1.0 Reputation</p>	<p>Least understood and utilised differentiator of four UOVP variables</p>	<p>Lack of clarity of corporate brand and this term which is understood as external image</p>	<p>Improve understanding through clearer definition as attributes of the organisation</p>
<p>1.1 Purpose</p>	<p>Lack of personality – sense of who firm actually is</p> <p>Lack of guiding force/clear direction for firm</p> <p>No clear corporate style to guide behaviour and communication</p> <p>Lack of profile – less well known than quality of work suggests</p> <p>Reputation recognised as important</p>	<p>Sub-cultures exist which work against this clarity</p> <p>Clarity of strategy/recent corporate history had not achieved this clarity</p> <p>Limited leadership communication</p> <p>Consistent communication of success absent</p> <p>Different views on what this is among sub-cultures</p>	<p>Need to define and agree what the organisation exists to do</p> <p>Consistent communication of vision and brand from Board would assist this process</p> <p>Talk about strategic direction in communication</p> <p>Promote success stories across firm</p> <p>Improve the definition of this element</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
1.2 Commitments	<p>Uncertainty over what firm's key commitments are</p> <p>Don't benchmark with peers to improve own standards</p> <p>Promoting on values is important</p> <p>Values should be consistent across all departments</p> <p>Identification of common values would help to define DH brand</p> <p>Communication of values will help differentiate the firm</p> <p>Need to promote values to improve collegiality</p> <p>Need to become proud by understanding unique aspects of DH again</p>	<p>Poor communication of these elements</p> <p>Inconsistent standards exist within firm</p> <p>Lack of agreement on defined corporate values</p> <p>Lack of recognition of consistent qualities across firm</p> <p>No forum to debate such issues at present</p> <p>Communication needs to be relevant to each department</p> <p>Lack of strong team collective</p> <p>Lack of collective feel within organisation</p>	<p>Improved communication and forum needed to gain consensus</p> <p>Need to define what is important to the organisation</p> <p>Need process to agree what guides the organisation's actions</p> <p>Use values to create greater alignment across teams</p> <p>Use corporate brand as rallying point</p> <p>Consider programme of ongoing brand reinforcement</p> <p>Team building required around this subject</p> <p>Internal brand workshops required to build alignment via common starting points</p>
1.3 Values			

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>2.0 Performance</p>	<p>Group more comfortable with describing tangible elements of firms offer</p>	<p>Performance plays a key role in defining the organisation</p>	<p>Performance of the organisation is a key element in its corporate brand definition</p>
<p>2.1 Products</p>	<p>Some confusion in ascribing what the firm does to how it delivers value</p> <p>Branding has to be based on what organization actually is</p>	<p>Definition of performance needs to be refined</p> <p>Simple definition of the firm is what it does</p>	<p>Need to allow for a product (what) element and a service (how) element in the brand definition</p> <p>Definition of performance acts as a simple definition of the corporate brand</p>
<p>2.2 Services</p>	<p>Sub-brands exist across the firm</p>	<p>Inconsistent levels of performance reinforce these differences</p>	<p>Define common standards of service to create alignment</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>3.0 Portfolio</p>	<p>The most significant component of the existing corporate brand presentation</p> <p>Separate teams or practice areas can become sub-brands in the way they operate</p> <p>Emergence of sub-branded offers and behaviours reflected needs of certain client types</p> <p>No established guidance for how practice areas should operate and communicate</p> <p>Client base is a strong element of brand that is not currently utilised</p>	<p>Relies on fact that this is the external client face of firm</p> <p>Potential for sub-brands to emerge and dominate the corporate brand</p> <p>Need to be explicit about who the organisation is serving</p> <p>Without shared framework practice areas can operate in very different ways and fragment the corporate brand projection</p> <p>Fragmented approach to client development inhibits this happening</p>	<p>Client facing teams, practice areas operate as 'product brands' for the corporate brand</p> <p>Need to establish common understanding of purpose, values and commitments to mitigate against this fragmentation</p> <p>Without clear understanding of who the organisation serves brand projection can be dominated by the needs of one particularly strong audience</p> <p>Need to incorporate customer facing elements of the business and who these teams serve as part of the corporate brand definition to drive alignment of behaviour and communication across the organisation</p> <p>Need to establish commonly agreed ways to promote the client portfolio across the firm</p>

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
<p>4.0 Network</p>	<p>Firm owned a network but did not include it consistently in its brand definition</p> <p>Network was an element that distinguished the firm's business</p> <p>Problems in the group in defining the network component due to ownership structure</p> <p>Firm operated with a wide range of contacts in UK and Europe -- these formed part of the network offer</p> <p>Way in which the network operates forms part of the brand</p>	<p>Problems of definition and understanding of the role of the network as part of the brand offer</p> <p>Potential for network to create distinction in corporate brand</p> <p>Consider a broader definition for the network element as it applies to the brand</p> <p>Contacts can be expanded as part of network definition</p> <p>Need to include this as part of the network definition</p>	<p>Benefits in including the network as part of the corporate brand</p> <p>Focus on the role of the network element as a means to creating a distinctive corporate brand</p> <p>Broaden definition of network to include contacts and mechanisms</p> <p>Network definition needs to extend beyond owned network to include contacts that help deliver the corporate brand performance</p> <p>Expand network definition to include the mechanisms by which the network operates as this is distinctive to the organisation</p>

Appendix 8.4: Pilot study reflection-on-action thematic conceptual matrix

Post intervention stage – September 1998

Concept	Presentational learning	Reflective interpretation	Propositional learning
Role of Action Researcher			
Managing the intervention cycle	<p>Need to plan interventions with care</p> <p>Approach to data collection has significant impact on researcher's time</p> <p>Need to map entire process of study at the earliest stage</p>	<p>Importance of managing expectations of research group at each stage</p> <p>Need to manage time with interview coding and analysis</p> <p>Management of research group rests on ability of researcher to set expectations throughout the study</p>	<p>Importance of consistent and clear communication throughout study</p> <p>Build adequate time into intervention phases to allow for ongoing coding of data</p> <p>Establishing a clear intervention protocol at the start of the study sets expectations and milestones for the group</p>
Approach to data display	<p>Use of study journal helped to capture researcher's notes</p> <p>Use of qualitative data analysis software created good discipline for coding</p> <p>Thematic conceptual matrices were most suitable means of data display to capture different kinds of knowledge generated by the intervention</p>	<p>Researcher's thoughts and notes were a vital part of data collected</p> <p>Coding with software added rigour to process as every line of transcript was included in analysis</p> <p>Use of matrices structured analysis of data successfully</p>	<p>Include journal keeping as part of study process</p> <p>Balance need for rigour with time implications of this approach</p> <p>Thematic matrices helped with cycling of data by allowing the researcher to provide trail of evidence for discussion with research group at each stage</p>

Appendix 9.1: ESF Intervention Study Protocol

Key Elements:

Study overview
Field procedures
Key study questions
Guide for intervention study report

Purpose of Protocol:

Acts as a route map for study
Acts as a planner to anticipate potential pitfalls with the study

Overview

This intervention study is a piece of qualitative research, which has a Participatory Action Research basis. The study aims understand the process by which the organisation manages its corporate brand communications and to measure the impact of an intervention on the communications output of the organisation.

The purpose is to investigate whether the intervention will improve the consistency of corporate communications from the organisation. Analysis is being conducted at the level of the organisation, which has one main central office in Strasbourg, France. The research is being conducted by a single researcher, as part of his Ph.D thesis for Cranfield School of Management.

The research has been sponsored by Mr. Andrew Smith, Head of Communication and Information at the ESF. The research was commissioned after an initial exploratory meeting and preparation of an outline proposal for the study.

Timeframe

The anticipated timeframe for the study is a 9-month period. This is planned as follows:

Aug-Nov 1998	Collection of initial data for content analysis and phase one interventions with research group
Dec 1998	Analysis of interview data and second phase interventions
Jan-Mar 1999	Phase three interventions
April-May 1999	Collection of published data for second content analysis
May-June 1999	Reflection on action and study write up

Field procedures

Key elements of the field procedures plan:

- Conduct initial interviews with key members of the organisation – starting with the Secretary General
- Instrumentation to be used is semi-structured questionnaire for each face-to-face interview
- All interviews to be recorded for transcription and coding after the meetings
- Interviews to be planned and conducted on site in Strasbourg – consider time span to gain access to correct/representative sample of subjects

Appendix 9.2: ESF semi-structured questionnaire 1

Script for ESF case study preliminary interviews with senior management (August 1998)

Preliminary

Thank you for your time. Clarify length and purpose of interview

Explain objectives and outputs for study

All conversations strictly in confidence

Request to tape interview for future transcription

Question Areas

- Role and responsibility
- Time at ESF
- Description of role
- Reporting lines

- Context for branding
 - strategy for ESF

- Current image of ESF
 - to scientists
 - to member organisations

- Culture of ESF
 - prevailing culture
 - existence of sub-cultures

- Customer value
 - How does ESF deliver value?
 - to scientists
 - to member organisations

- Key components of ESF brand
 - Reputation
 - Performance
 - Portfolio
 - Networks

- Role of communication in this process

Next actions and close interview

Appendix 9.3: ESF semi-structured questionnaire 2

Script for ESF study second phase interview sessions (Autumn 1998)

Preliminary

Thank you for your time. Clarify length and purpose of interview

Explain objectives and outputs for study

Outline previous discussions with Secretary General, Strategy and Communication Units

All conversations strictly in confidence. Findings to be presented to Senior Management team.

Request to tape interview for future transcription.

Question Areas

- Role and responsibility
- Time in position
- Background to Scientific Standing Committee (SSC)
- Current image of ESF
 - to scientists
 - to member organisations
- Customer value
- How does SSC deliver value?
 - to scientists
 - to member organisations
- Key components of ESF brand
 - Reputation
 - Performance
 - Portfolio
 - Networks
- Any other comments?

Close interview and explain feedback/next phase

Appendix 9.4: ESF Corporate website usage statistics

<i>ESF Corporate website</i>	
Period 9 th –30 th November 1998	
Total number of visits	16,390
Total number of visitors	8,469
Users countries of origin	51
Users European countries	30
<i>Source: European Science Foundation</i>	

Appendix 9.5: ESF study sample reflection-in-action thematic conceptual matrix

Second phase intervention

Brand element	Common issues	Inhibitors	Possible facilitators
Organisation attributes	Need to offer a more consistent 'face' to outside world	Current fragmented presentation	Growth of interdisciplinary functions could encourage shared approaches
Purpose	Need to get positioning of ESF clear	Lack of clarity or process to deliver this clarity	Development of forum to discuss main role of ESF based on value added to 'customers'
	Is ESF the voice of European Science?	Lack of profile/low awareness	Need to build/demonstrate mechanisms
	Should purpose be to promote good science at a European level?	Top down versus bottom up argument inside ESF	Demonstrate ability to analyse brand impact in both directions
	Is purpose to play a Guiding role?	Not a research funder so where's the value?	Assess role of Standing Committees
	Forward thinking – looking for new areas of opportunity	Forces of inertia/politics/self interest	Look at niche/frontier areas where ESF can have real impact
Changing aims of ESF	Confusion as aims of research councils are changing	Opportunity to re-position and clarify purpose of ESF	Use brand process and value monitors to clarify aims

Appendix 9.6: ESF study corporate brand statements developed in workshop with research group

Draft 2: 1st Feb 1999

Organisation attributes

Purpose

ESF's core purpose is to promote high quality science at a European level.

Commitments

ESF is committed to facilitating co-operation and collaboration in European research on behalf of its principal stakeholders (member organisations and Europe's scientific community). This cross-border activity combines both top-down and bottom-up approaches in the long-term development of science.

ESF is committed to providing scientific leadership through its networking expertise and by ensuring that there is European added value to all initiatives and projects.

Values

The work of the constituent parts of the ESF organisation, active through its Scientific Standing Committees is governed by a series of shared values.

Diversity

We believe strengthening the international competitiveness of European science depends on bringing together scientists and organisations from

different countries to co-operate on projects at a pan-European level. This diversity offers the potential for European added value.

Multi-disciplinary

We represent all scientific fields (from Humanities to Medical Sciences) enabling us to take a holistic approach. We believe that this approach is essential to tackle the growing number of current and future interdisciplinary challenges that will emerge in the field of European science.

Flexibility

We are a relatively small but mobile organisation. This gives us the freedom and flexibility to focus on new and emerging areas and respond rapidly to new areas of enquiry.

Independent

Through our 65 member organisations and links with the wider scientific community we offer a unique and authoritative voice to identify and address issues of scientific importance. This independence also allows us freedom to ensure that co-operation and collaboration is built effectively.

Rigorous

We are committed to the promotion of high quality research and co-operation on current and emerging issues of European scientific importance.

Transparency

ESF through its Scientific Standing Committees offer a range of opportunities for scientists across Europe. These opportunities take the form of programmes,

networks and other forms of collaboration that are clearly defined and
communicated to all interested parties

Performance

Our scientific activities employ four main instruments:

- 1 Exploratory workshops and grants**
- 2 Scientific networks**
- 3 Scientific programmes**
- 4 European conferences**

Each of these instruments are open to the scientific community, drawing on ESF's 25 years experience in developing cost-effective and efficient scientific management on a pan-European scale.

Each instrument is clearly defined and offers access to opportunities for co-operation and collaboration across borders and scientific disciplines.

ESF also helps to address science policy issues on a European level through consultation, workshops and the production of specific issues-based reports.

Portfolio

ESF operates through a series of Scientific Standing Committees, Associated Committees and Multi-disciplinary Committees which run networks and conferences. These bodies are representative and cover a range of scientific disciplines.

Each Standing Committee is responsible for identifying scientific priorities, formulating relevant strategies and developing research agendas.

This work offers benefits to four main audiences:

- 1 The member organisations
- 2 The scientific community
- 3 Policy makers at both a national and international level
- 4 Users of science

Relationships

A key element of the ESF's unique offer is the ability to offer ACCESS.

ESF, through its 65 member organisations, provides ACCESS to the leading scientists across borders in 22 European countries and beyond.

ESF, through its links in the scientific community, provides ACCESS to influential people in specific fields of scientific enquiry who sit on committees and act as referees.

ESF, through its links with national and supranational bodies, provides ACCESS to policy makers across Europe and the Rest of the World.

Appendix 9.7: ESF study sample contact summary sheet

Contact Summary Sheet

Name: Mr Tony Meyer

Position: Head of Strategy

Time in position: tba

Date: August 1998

Key Themes/Issues:

- Clear audience definition
- Member organisations are primary audience
- User figures available for website
- Staff working at ESF come from member organisations and bring their own baggage. Adds to culture problem.
- Importance of internal audiences for project
- Issue of flexibility versus common rules

Points to Consider

- External environment is changing
- Description of ESF as a “light networking organisation”

Appendix 9.8b: ESF study content analysis results

		27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250	251	252	253	254	255	256	257	258	259	260	261	262	263	264	265	266	267	268	269	270	271	272	273	274	275	276	277	278	279	280	281	282	283	284	285	286	287	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296	297	298	299	300	301	302	303	304	305	306	307	308	309	310	311	312	313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320	321	322	323	324	325	326	327	328	329	330	331	332	333	334	335	336	337	338	339	340	341	342	343	344	345	346	347	348	349	350	351	352	353	354	355	356	357	358	359	360	361	362	363	364	365	366	367	368	369	370	371	372	373	374	375	376	377	378	379	380	381	382	383	384	385	386	387	388	389	390	391	392	393	394	395	396	397	398	399	400	401	402	403	404	405	406	407	408	409	410	411	412	413	414	415	416	417	418	419	420	421	422	423	424	425	426	427	428	429	430	431	432	433	434	435	436	437	438	439	440	441	442	443	444	445	446	447	448	449	450	451	452	453	454	455	456	457	458	459	460	461	462	463	464	465	466	467	468	469	470	471	472	473	474	475	476	477	478	479	480	481	482	483	484	485	486	487	488	489	490	491	492	493	494	495	496	497	498	499	500	501	502	503	504	505	506	507	508	509	510	511	512	513	514	515	516	517	518	519	520	521	522	523	524	525	526	527	528	529	530	531	532	533	534	535	536	537	538	539	540	541	542	543	544	545	546	547	548	549	550	551	552	553	554	555	556	557	558	559	560	561	562	563	564	565	566	567	568	569	570	571	572	573	574	575	576	577	578	579	580	581	582	583	584	585	586	587	588	589	590	591	592	593	594	595	596	597	598	599	600	601	602	603	604	605	606	607	608	609	610	611	612	613	614	615	616	617	618	619	620	621	622	623	624	625	626	627	628	629	630	631	632	633	634	635	636	637	638	639	640	641	642	643	644	645	646	647	648	649	650	651	652	653	654	655	656	657	658	659	660	661	662	663	664	665	666	667	668	669	670	671	672	673	674	675	676	677	678	679	680	681	682	683	684	685	686	687	688	689	690	691	692	693	694	695	696	697	698	699	700	701	702	703	704	705	706	707	708	709	710	711	712	713	714	715	716	717	718	719	720	721	722	723	724	725	726	727	728	729	730	731	732	733	734	735	736	737	738	739	740	741	742	743	744	745	746	747	748	749	750	751	752	753	754	755	756	757	758	759	760	761	762	763	764	765	766	767	768	769	770	771	772	773	774	775	776	777	778	779	780	781	782	783	784	785	786	787	788	789	790	791	792	793	794	795	796	797	798	799	800	801	802	803	804	805	806	807	808	809	810	811	812	813	814	815	816	817	818	819	820	821	822	823	824	825	826	827	828	829	830	831	832	833	834	835	836	837	838	839	840	841	842	843	844	845	846	847	848	849	850	851	852	853	854	855	856	857	858	859	860	861	862	863	864	865	866	867	868	869	870	871	872	873	874	875	876	877	878	879	880	881	882	883	884	885	886	887	888	889	890	891	892	893	894	895	896	897	898	899	900	901	902	903	904	905	906	907	908	909	910	911	912	913	914	915	916	917	918	919	920	921	922	923	924	925	926	927	928	929	930	931	932	933	934	935	936	937	938	939	940	941	942	943	944	945	946	947	948	949	950	951	952	953	954	955	956	957	958	959	960	961	962	963	964	965	966	967	968	969	970	971	972	973	974	975	976	977	978	979	980	981	982	983	984	985	986	987	988	989	990	991	992	993	994	995	996	997	998	999	1000	1001	1002	1003	1004	1005	1006	1007	1008	1009	1010	1011	1012	1013	1014	1015	1016	1017	1018	1019	1020	1021	1022	1023	1024	1025	1026	1027	1028	1029	1030	1031	1032	1033	1034	1035	1036	1037	1038	1039	1040	1041	1042	1043	1044	1045	1046	1047	1048	1049	1050	1051	1052	1053	1054	1055	1056	1057	1058	1059	1060	1061	1062	1063	1064	1065	1066	1067	1068	1069	1070	1071	1072	1073	1074	1075	1076	1077	1078	1079	1080	1081	1082	1083	1084	1085	1086	1087	1088	1089	1090	1091	1092	1093	1094	1095	1096	1097	1098	1099	1100	1101	1102	1103	1104	1105	1106	1107	1108	1109	1110	1111	1112	1113	1114	1115	1116	1117	1118	1119	1120	1121	1122	1123	1124	1125	1126	1127	1128	1129	1130	1131	1132	1133	1134	1135	1136	1137	1138	1139	1140	1141	1142	1143	1144	1145	1146	1147	1148	1149	1150	1151	1152	1153	1154	1155	1156	1157	1158	1159	1160	1161	1162	1163	1164	1165	1166	1167	1168	1169	1170	1171	1172	1173	1174	1175	1176	1177	1178	1179	1180	1181	1182	1183	1184	1185	1186	1187	1188	1189	1190	1191	1192	1193	1194	1195	1196	1197	1198	1199	1200	1201	1202	1203	1204	1205	1206	1207	1208	1209	1210	1211	1212	1213	1214	1215	1216	1217	1218	1219	1220	1221	1222	1223	1224	1225	1226	1227	1228	1229	1230	1231	1232	1233	1234	1235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Appendix 9.8f: ESF study relative frequency content analysis																															
Portfolio attributes																															
Product brands																															
Content Analysis 1: December 1998																															
	50	45	40	35	30	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Concept
	Frequency																														
49	standing committee activities																														
	standing committee composition																														
	standing committee funding																														
Content Analysis 2: September 1999																															
	50	45	40	35	30	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
	18																														
	scientific standing committees																														
	ssc responsibilities																														
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Appendix 10.1: Intervention study protocol for LCP study

April 1999

Background

I am currently undertaking doctoral research investigating the process of managing corporate brand communications. The study to date has involved a review of the academic literature surrounding the subject of corporate branding. The conclusion of this process was that in academic fields very little is actually known about how this process is managed within organisations.

Work to date

To date, I have completed two case studies with an international law firm and a European Scientific organisation. I am looking for a third organisation to study.

Objective

The objective of my research is to assist companies to understand and build a better process for managing their brand communications programmes. In doing this I am studying the process and helping to measure the output of this process to draw conclusions. These will hopefully offer both practical and theoretical insights to the team involved.

Benefits to LCP

I believe that the methodology employed in my studies to date offers LCP a number of benefits.

These include:

- An improved definition of the key elements of the LCP brand
- Development of an agreed positioning of all LCP brand communications
- A new way to think about the LCP brand and how to manage it in communication terms
- Development of a clear and agreed platform to inform work for all LCP publications (electronic and print).

I expect that the study will take a total of 6-8 months to complete. Given the requirement for involvement of the LCP management team I would suggest planning the project as follows:

1. An initial stage to investigate the brand context for LCP – this would include a series of interviews to establish the current vision, image and culture of the business together with a detailed review of the market research carried out recently for LCP.
2. A series of group workshops with the LCP management team to work on the definitions of the LCP brand.
3. Measurement of existing communications for consistency of message drawn from a sample of all communications material published (e.g. Corporate brochure, case studies, corporate website, business proposal documents).
4. Development of clear statements of the LCP brand for agreement internally.
5. Consideration of how this work could impact LCP communications strategy.
6. Measurement of this communication for consistency of message.
7. Final interviews with the LCP team to review the process and discuss what has been learned by the project.

David Bickerton will act as the researcher throughout the process to help guide and assist on the project and act as recorder for all sessions. He will be assisted, as necessary, by Gabrielle Blackman-Shepherd at LCP and Steve Tibble, LCP marketing consultant.

Process

Time – this will require some investment of time from the LCP team to take part in group sessions. These can be planned in advance to ensure minimum disruption.

In terms of a specific timetable, I would anticipate the following timeline:

April/May 1999

- Initial interviews in Berkhamsted with the LCP management team
- Identify and collect published communication material for content analysis
- Researcher to conduct detailed review of market research commissioned with Steve Tibble
- Conduct initial content analysis measurement of current LCP communications

July- September 1999

- Workshop sessions to review findings of first stage

- Development of LCP brand statements – as working sessions with LCP management team
- Consider how these will influence the development of an LCP communications plan

October- November 1999

- Presentation of main findings from workshop sessions and agreement of next actions
- Developmental workshops with LCP team

January/February 2000

- Re-measurement of LCP brand communications to test for consistency
- Conduct exit interviews with LCP team
- Review of project and learning of all parties

Contact – to help meet this timeline I will require a single point of contact to help facilitate scheduling of meetings. It is expected that Gabrielle Blackman-Shepperd will be the main point of contact for the study.

Publication rights – as part of my doctoral thesis I will be looking for approval to publish my findings in my thesis and in any key academic journals. This will only be done with prior approval from LCP.

Appendix 10.2: LCP phase one interview semi-structured questionnaire

Script for LCP senior management interviews (April - May 1999)

Preliminary

- ◆ *Thank you for your time*
- ◆ *Clarify length and purpose of interview (approx. one hour)*
- ◆ *Explain objectives and outputs for study as development of corporate brand for LCP*
- ◆ *All conversations strictly in confidence and if agreed by respondent interview will be taped for researcher's transcription and analysis*

Question Areas

- ◆ Role and responsibility
- ◆ Time at LCP
- ◆ Description of role

Context for branding

- strategy and business development at LCP

Current image of LCP

- internal audiences
- external audiences (define)

Culture of LCP

- how would you describe the prevailing culture of LCP?
- Do you think these descriptions would be consistent with your management colleagues?

Customer value

- ◆ How does LCP deliver value to its end customers now and in the future?

What are the key components of LCP brand?

- ◆ How would you describe the key attributes of the LCP brand?

Positioning LCP in the future

- ◆ How would you rank the importance of each of these attributes described above?

- ◆ How well-defined would you say LCP is in each of these attributes?
- ◆ Which of these attributes offers LCP the most opportunity for a point of difference?

Next actions

- ◆ *Part of a process of assessment and review. Results of this plus an audit of existing communications will be prepared to go into the next phase of the study*

Close interview

Appendix 10.3: Sample interview transcript with researcher's on-line reflective notes

Interview with John Lockton, Managing Director

8 April 1999

Interviewer: What I really wanted to cover is just a little bit more background just to fill me in. The first area that I wanted to cover is really just a bit of an understanding of how LCP has evolved over the last few years. Secondly is what is the strategy for moving forward and then probably the more macro question then what is the vision for LCP – what is your vision for LCP in the next 3-5 years. So covering those in order – one of the things I noticed from the research was there were a couple of comments about well LCP as an organisation has changed quite dramatically in the last 18 months – how can you define this?

John: You know the history of LCP?

Interviewer: Yes a potted history would be good.

John: OK well the document that Gabrielle is getting you will give you a potted history.

One of the things that we haven't had – didn't have was a clear place where all of the way forward for the business – where it comes from, who did what was written down because the business was small and everyone knew this. Over the last six months there has been a number of things that we've been putting in place which are part of taking us through the next stage in our growth

And I think a lot of people are referring to the change in the last 18 months because we got to a point probably about 18 months ago where the business has moved from a £1 million up to a £3 million business

and we're feeling the pressures and then trying to take the next stage to the thing and in many cases with senior team of Alan and I were unsure about what should be the next stage

So there was a period of sort of thinking if you like.

That was probably during the first part of last year – Alan and I and the senior team went through a period of resolving what would be the next stage

And in terms of the staff group it came out in the summer, so we had a major couple of days where effectively the staff made the breakthrough through various things and really allowed us to start the next stage of growth which is which is what we're in at the moment.

So there has been quite a large number of new things put in place over the last period and the recruitment in of a number of senior people, plus starting to actively look at offices away from the UK is part of the change that we are in the middle of going through at the moment.

Researchers on-line
reflection notes

Catalyst for business
change – new phase of
growth

Need to assimilate new
staff

So if we go all the way back to here (pointing at diagram) really is that the business – was started by Alan as you know and consulting as other businesses grow in a number of stages.

And the first stage of business growth is a very much entrepreneurial one and essentially LCP stayed in that entrepreneurial stage for want of a better word from about '85 to '95 where everything relied on Alan essentially as these businesses do.

The change to go from that phase into the second phase of the business occurred around between '95 and '97 which was the jump in Alan's mind being the major driver in business at that time to say I want to take it to the next stage – how do we do it?

And a number of changes at that time were to do with this office – what to do with me, what to do with other people coming into the business and essentially from about that point up to the middle of last year (well beginning of last year), was sort of the first part of growing into this second phase business, which is less dependent on, well not dependent on an individual but a group of people managing the business and a number of different business strings which have much clearer ways of operating – all those sorts of things.

So the first phase of that, which was to get us well into the middle of it but yet not stable business in that phase was that growth that I just mentioned which went from £1 to about £3 million and increased our staff group from a handful up to about just under 20.

But at that point we have to put into place a lot of the other things to help us to become stable as a firm and certainly on our way to a phase 3 business which is one that has multiple offices, very clear multiple business streams and things of that sort

So the business now is focused very strongly on consolidating of the phase 2 business being a stable phase two business but also taking the steps to make stage 3 business where it is a global consulting business with a number of different streams and so on and so forth.

So at the moment the key thing that we are focussed on (I'm probably answering all your questions all together) is the vision is of a, for want of a better term a £10 million business which has a number of offices throughout the world, which has a number of different streams but all within the area of supply chain management, which is very strongly positioned as equivalent to a large professional organisation in terms of the level of expertise provided and has a very strong expertise based technical 'expertise' base but provided in a very professional way.

And you'll see down there that a number of things, some of the words that actually came out of the study that were actually the sort of things we wanted to see were very much a combination of the innovative new type stuff that was very much complemented by 'we don't do it for academic pleasure' we're doing it to help the business practically move on, so we want to keep that dynamic growing and evolving within the business.

Need to consolidate and explain ways of working as business expands

Establish a clear vision for the business to attain its business goals

Business has goals for its positioning

Understanding need for reputation management

We're not looking for a McKinsey type image which is very strongly academic, innovative, bright all those sort of things – we're not looking for that.

We're also not looking for a big Six great process, you know, we're looking to actually bringing the two together but in a different sort of mix.

Interviewer: And the international growth will be solely sort of fuelled from LCP and it won't be joint ventures or anything?

John: Good question – ok one step back. The business that operates as a model - the aim of the model is that half of the business that we do at the moment is be done by staff and half done by associates that are blended together on the projects.

And that is the model that we want to continue.

We have had periods where it has been more associates than staff, we haven't yet had a period where it's more staff than associates although we may be going into one of those for a short period because of the high recruitment to get it on the ramp.

That's the sort of business model that we're looking for.

So the business is very used to working with people outside of the core if you like.

One thing we have done is work closely with other consultancies or other businesses on projects with mixed blessings I think.

What we've decided to do is that we will put more effort into working with other niche players whether they are skill based or geographically based.

As part of that we're actually forming one of the major changes over the last six months and will be the last six months is forming much stronger relationships/partnerships with other consultancies outside of the UK.

So that's the major thrust is to form the European and global reach through initially strong partnerships and associations.

In parallel to that for a number of areas we will put in place or want to put in place what are effectively LCP's offices rather than joint ventures.

So we're going to have a period of actually being able to look – looking and being able to operate globally through this network but gradually putting in place things that are ours in areas where we think either there is particular business opportunities or opportunistic where things have to come together or were led there by one of the key clients.

You know there are number of reasons about why that should hold in that situation.

About 40% of the business is already done outside of the UK, almost totally supported by staff and people who are from the UK. So we already have quite a strong consulting project base outside of the UK but we don't have a strong office base..

Interviewer: Is that work then that is commissioned out of the UK by international companies?

John: No it's the other way around. We do have business like that but the 40% tends to be things that are commissioned outside of the UK and done

Need for brand to tie together staff across business

Need for strong alignment mechanisms with associates

Expansion overseas places greater demands on understanding the brand and positioning

Quality control issue for outside UK?

outside of the UK, due to they're picking up on us through some reputation stuff .

We don't target it in terms of there is no marketing effort aimed at them, they pick up on something else that is going on either through an individual or some sort of communique.

Interviewer: Can I just come back one second about the sort of relationship partners and building those sorts of relationships. What sort of organisations are they then that you are going to be working with? Are they similar organisations to LCP or are they more implementation based?

John: Outside of the UK they tend to be similar to us but they may not have the whole breadth of what we do and they may be stronger in certain areas than us but if you took the whole breadth of the things we do they would fit in somewhere within that spectrum so they are at least in technical and hopefully in some degree in terms of culturally although different nationalities but culturally they fit into similar overlapping box to us sort of thing so there is that sort of element.

Within the UK its different because of the competitive sort of nature, the ones we work with tend to have different skill bases to us so there is a difference in that respect.

Interviewer: So they're of a more complimentary nature within the UK?

John: Yeah it's more adding to a skill base whereas outside of the UK it is more of a parallel skill base at some point so that we can understand what they have and they can pull us in and we can pull them in – so you're pulling in somebody that is sort of like you.

Where the nationality is the difference not the skill base – in the UK the skill base is different and the nationality and geography is clearly clearly the same.

Interviewer: Can I ask one other area – the reason I was asking that is that something that came out of research was this aspect of implementation – in terms of moving forward – what is the attitude there in terms of....

John: Yeah that is one of the things – we'll do both.

The issue here is what is implementation I think?

I think that there is a balance here that actually says that what people are after is someone who can help them devise new solutions and then help them carry out at least the initial basis of some of the things the advice is given on.

The Mobil thing for instance is very strong as they had Booz Allen in to do some analysis and they said we don't want them anywhere near our people and what there are interested in is people that can do the strategy come strategic thinking and analysis but then can also go on to work with their senior managers to help things change and that is really the space that we are in.

Actually a different space – there is a space which is to do with (draws diagram). There's another diagram which we are toying with at the moment which actually is when a business is evolving that one of the key things they are looking for is training its staff.

Need for improved internal communication

Issues on delivery of the brand promise – need to be clear on performance attributes of the brand

When he wants to make a jump it wants consultants over that period and the period is to do with devising what and then helping the managers carry through that first phase of change.

There is then actually quite a big period of this where they're not wanting to do that but its quite dynamic in there and this could be for prolonged periods – this could be 18 months or longer before it gradually settles down and the key thing is training before they decide to do another jump.

Alright and actually consultants aren't very good at this because actually our people all like this bit when we actually talk about implementation what we're actually talking about is the second part of the change, the second part of the project. McKinseys will be in here and they are actually bloody useless staying with managers to help internalise that change and help them through the first bit.

Training organisations are great at this.

Our people are useless at that as they get bored because it's the same thing it's the skilling up you know.

So there is a period here where actually the organisation doesn't want to change it just wants to bed down and get going something that's new and there is a period in there and I think that when we talk about implementation we're not really talking about this we're talking about implementing the change to allow the organisation to then start working how it actually makes something new happen.

It was very interesting because I was talking to a company called F5 international and I was talking to one of their guys and he said well we have a training service which did that and it used to give training courses on various bits of software and he said that we have done a new service now and what it is that it partly stemmed from their training and actually what it is the process, skilling, comms and I said well fine, and what he said was what we do – we're not going in there to change what they're doing to change what they are doing, we're going in there to help them bed it down.

And I think there is in here the bedding down service, which to me is really implementation and we don't do that really.

We do this first bit and its like what Mobil want –they want us to go in and say what do they need to do, they then want us to work with the senior managers to make that change happen – but they don't want us to stay there for 2 years to help bed it down, they want us to get their managers to a) make the change and then get on that plot and then we'll tend to pull out but often they do business that does need support over that period – and often consultants are the sort of people who can do that because the people who we have got here like doing that, there are different skills there almost to do that. And we are looking at how we're would do that.

Interviewer: I was going to say because there are two issues here because at the senior level you probably don't commercially want consultants to be in that area but presumably if they are in that area that the fee levels for the bedding down are not going to be as as high as the big change which means that you are going to be having back on the problem the resources spread too thinly and don't want them locked in to Mobil for 18 months. But by the same token I am presuming that the big 5 do what they do on every other one of their

Need for consistency in delivering the brand throughout client/project lifetime

Use brand to define where the LCP offer begins and ends

services and the big hitters are in for the interesting part there then hand it over to the more junior people.

John: Well I'm not sure that the big six actually do this very well. I think that this is why this is one of the things that happens with outsourcing in some way or you get – there is a huge as we know they are there is a huge population of self employed consultants.

And actually when you look at what they are doing they are actually going in and supporting in this phase.

You know they are going in because the business wants people that can programme manage and help them over a period of change and what these people don't do is make that happen they come in once that has been identified and on the way and they need bodies to help them through that period and I think that is where they are actually fitting in and I think that we talk about strategy and implementation I think we're talking about that bubble, so I think we're confusing our people in many ways that they're thinking well it's about this but its not actually, so we're just going through that because we're talking to various organisations and training organisations and that's where this diagram has come out because they're saying well we're here and we want to go up the value chain but actually they don't want to come here they're actually pushing into there.

It's interesting...so I think one of the words we've got to find is a new way of explaining when we're here because a lot of the clients coming out of that don't see it as two separate they see it as identifying and helping them through change and that's actually what we're actually really about.

Interviewer: That's interesting because also it touches on one of the other points from the research which is this issue of slight disconnection some of the experiences of clients or former clients that LCP don't stay in touch so much because your in there and there is that minor gap maybe.

John: Well I think yes I think there is another point that you've got to remember where we are as a business. We are very immature – you've talking to a very immature business here even if the people in it are fairly mature. It is an immature business. Businesses themselves have a life and you know if we look at the model I was telling you about before – you know phase 1,2,3,4 all that sort of MBA stuff which you know doubt have done.

The phase 1 as we've said is all about the individual, phase 2 which is where we are is in the middle here somewhere is about building yourself as a business. You tend not to get account management stuff till you're in stage 3 or 4. I mean the big five are here. Very mature businesses they have – they think account management, they have time to do that and everything else.

We as a business, we're very immature you know and one of the things that are coming out there are exactly what you would expect where you are, you know, and that's why I'm saying a lot of the things that came out from the study were things which were good because they show that's where we are and we have to build on these things – it gives a push to get those things fixed.

Good strategic information to help position the context for the brand

Business trying to move into a new space and attract new kinds of decision maker – clear need to re-define brand

Phase of business development demands a more mature structure

The business here that can actually do any account management is doing well – that's not to say we shouldn't do it but actually getting us thinking about it and to do it, even if we have got people who know it is right and that we should be doing it – they are doing it within a green environment that finds it very difficult to work out how to do it as a group. And really what we're learning here – what we've been learning is that we don't go in here do whatever project finish and go out, we're actually learning that we go in and do one well and if we stay in we can get that as well and my God there will be another one of those and that's what we're learning here. That's what we've learnt to go from the 1 to the 3.

We would not have done that without learning that but actually saying how do we keep in touch with people ourselves actively over a long period to develop a big account and work our way through an organisation, you know is another thing we've got to learn really and when you look at the contacts a lot of them come to us because we're not mature enough to keep them going – you know part of where, I'm not saying its right, but it's just part of where we are and our aspirations are to do these other things really. But that's the new model we have just been playing with that one.

Interviewer: No good because it helps me because I'm struggling with this issue of implementation and quite what it meant in the research, before I came down, now I have a better understanding of how you work.

John: Well that's how we're rationalising it.

Interviewer: OK .

John: Everyone's always looking for a rationalisation aren't they? But I like this model – if you haven't come across this model.

Interviewer: No I've not seen it

John: Yes and I've used it for 3 or 4 businesses now that I've been in so I've checked it and it's a very good model actually – it works really well and if you map our growth its spot on really.

The only thing I would change really is this model would say that you come up here and you hit periods of crisis – you either do or you don't get over. Well actually what our experience is showing is that you get a period of crisis as you find in the model in the middle.

Very interesting that it actually says ah we're not quite doing it – there's a period of crisis well we'll carry on. It sort of almost a catapult to complete – yeah.

Interviewer: Yes its very interesting.

John: So last summer we had a little period of crisis which wasn't a big period of crisis but it was a period of people going – why is it so difficult in certain areas and it sort of broke through to allow us to well hopefully, to go over the next phase.

Need to develop new skills in client relationship management

Willingness of management team to open up to discussions on brand and reputation

The only issue is that we are starting to get things you want to do it then you're really in here and there is a big decision about whether to go for them early and try them or whether to say no we can't until we've done that – that's the big issue for us at the moment.

Interviewer: I mean what are the barriers for you getting from 2 to 3 at the moment – what is holding you back?

John: Well two things really, there is probably more actually but the key things is having in place sufficient senior people who can act as focus for areas of the business that is number 1. We identified that two years ago and we've been trying to find the right people over the last 18 months so that's number 1.

We've now got a number of those coming in who will either be the right or the wrong people but that was one and actually the crisis was the organisation saying we feel we need these people and the senior team saying well we know we do we've just got to find them.

Alright so that's number one and number 2 is probably a realisation, is partly related to this is actually getting other streams of expertise within the business and not just led by say Alan. Which is sort of a related element so that's important because you've got to have several streams of the business you can't just have the one.

What else, I'll include that in one. The second one is having the brand. I still think that is important, is actually people seeing that you're not one of these that you're definitely one of those and I think what the market is saying is we see you're on that road but we don't see that you've got there yet – broadly speaking that's what it says – so that's because...we won't go into we need the business process we know you have to put in your business processes.

The third one is that the market holds up. yeah because these guys we know are taking our space and the question is will the market place say we want the big boys to do this in which case we'll get mangled or will the market place say, actually we'd like this way of doing it in which case we'll be fine.

Interviewer: And that's a question of whose operating model's right.....

John: Well the big boys will always get it right to a degree because their model is right so they're always going take Alan out of the market the question is whether there is sufficient market while we do this to grow sufficiently, to allow us to do that and carry on and that's an assumption, that has to be an assumption that you have to go with.

On these occasions that is true but who knows.....

Interviewer: And a final question. Gabrielle was mentioning that the people of joining, the four people you mentioned, the four senior people joining, are coming from places like Price Waterhouse Coopers, I was just going to ask why – why are they coming to you? It's always an interesting thing when senior people join.

Need for brand to build profile with external audiences

Aspect of the business model and how to reflect this through branding

John: Well this has been a nightmare job, a learning point for me over the last 18 months because they have been looking for these senior people for 18 months, why do people from a senior level join?

And we've had a lot of people who have nearly made it but not quite and I think it has to be a combination of, really the key things are one, do they believe in what we are telling them is something that can happen.

The second one is there enough pain where they are?

And the third thing is whether the monetary package and reward going forward fits in to where their needs are and we've had a lot of people where we've got two but not the third and it hasn't quite happened and its been interesting to identify why.

For a senior person to join our sort of business because we're not a PWC trying to get somebody from Ernst & Young, who are basically saying we're the same but different and we can give you lots more money, you know this is different there are not very many people in our sort of business that are looking for less hours.

And I think if you look at the people who have joined all the senior people have all three elements in some degree or another that meant that for that particular time that's been right plus of course the acceptance of this end that they were the right people or near enough to actually come in and fill that slot.

A lot of these people because we have not got all three aligned plus ourselves aligned at the same time, so it has been an interesting education for me really and most of them see it as a challenge and most see this is the next thing they would like to do, most see that they don't want to be in a big organisation. Those are the key reasons.

Interviewer: Thank you very much that's very useful that's just given me that broader background which is what I'm interested in.

John: So this is one of the key things about what we talked about earlier – what we know the documentation that we produce – the key profile that is produced here. That is where the profile was produced (pointing to early on the diagram) here. That's where the profile was produced, it was produced as way of saying we have hopped over here.

The next set of documentation needs to have it here somewhere – it needs to be positioned just above where we are and it can talk about all the stuff that's in here.

John: Ok so what we've got here – a number of things that have occurred after the production of the document by Steve, obviously Gabrielle can take you through in more detail.

One of the key things was the staff handbook we have implemented a white day which is the one day that everyone comes together, we've implemented a more formal line in the process of implementing a more formal training and staff development, staff management type process, we're giving the staff more information about how the business is doing and we've initiated a number of initiatives which is to do with processes and pulling together the intellectual properties of the business in a more formal way.

Need for distinctive brand to attract senior level recruits

Need for brand to build focused team at senior management level

Collect all samples of published communication for analysis

Clearly when these senior people come on board or we set up other offices what do you tell them? So there's quite a lot that has occurred since that summer, because that little point where everyone got a realisation that these things were important and needed to be put in place.

OK so the staff handbook has got several sections you may need the first few pages of the people section because that will give you the structure.

In her its got an overview of the aspirations, things we are doing.

A characteristic of a business like ours is that we want to do 35,000 things yesterday, and we'll do all of them a bit. There is a short history of LCP based around phase one and two, and I have been using that language with the management team since here so it is not totally understood but it is a model we are using for ourselves.

Appendix 10.4: LCP study sample journal note

5 July 2000

Journal notes from a management session held off site to help develop the corporate brand statements. Whole management team present plus Annie Garthwaite and external communications and PR consultant who will be providing input to the session as well as the researcher

The group included Alan Braithwaite, John Lockton, Julian Mosquera, Phil Collinge, Richard Budd, David Bingham, Annie Garthwaite, plus the researcher.

Important that the venue is outside the office so that there is a total focus on the project and no distractions for the management team – this helped create the right atmosphere for the meeting.

The process of developing these statements has been extended by other business issues which necessitated this initiative being put on the back burner for a number of months, so the first part of the session was in re-setting the agenda to allow the team to get back up to speed on the project. This suggests that there needs to be a clear schedule and regular meetings to keep some momentum under the brand project otherwise it tends to be reduced in importance for the team.

Also limitations exist in that there is no senior in-house person responsible for the marketing and development of the brand. This tends to fall on the shoulders of the MD who provides a good focal point but is too busy with other business issues to give this day-to-day input. Learning here is the clear need, not only for management support but also for a daily focal point to drive the project forward and act as brand champion

Session itself revolved around a process of negotiation on the wording for each statement, which started with the vision and purpose for the business. This had been developed in iterative style in the earlier meetings and was re-described to ensure that there was valid information and internal commitment from all members of the group.

For each element there was an agreed description discussed so that everyone in the group had a shared understanding. For example the Vision was described as 'The goal we aspire to' and the Purpose was explained as 'the reason for being in business'.

Key attributes and performance elements were then discussed as separate elements and the process of debate then covered a number of hours.

Key issue here is to get the right level of detail without allowing the team to focus too deeply on the precise wording of each statement. Given the dynamic of the group, and the robust views held this process became protracted and did turn into a legal style drafting meeting

The key values were further articulated and translated as the qualities that define the teams' working style – this placed considerable emphasis on the issues of internal belief systems held by the management and what these beliefs meant for behaviours within the organisation. In particular how these behaviours needed to be modified to help reinforce the corporate brand.

It was noted that there was still a desire on the part of the communications consultant to reduce this down to a simple strapline as part of this process

It was interesting to see how the core elements of the brand as defined in previous sessions had now been developed into more external marketing messages but based upon the building blocks already developed during phase two of the study.

Appendix 10.5 SLIDES DEVELOPED
AT LCP MANAGEMENT
WORKSHOP

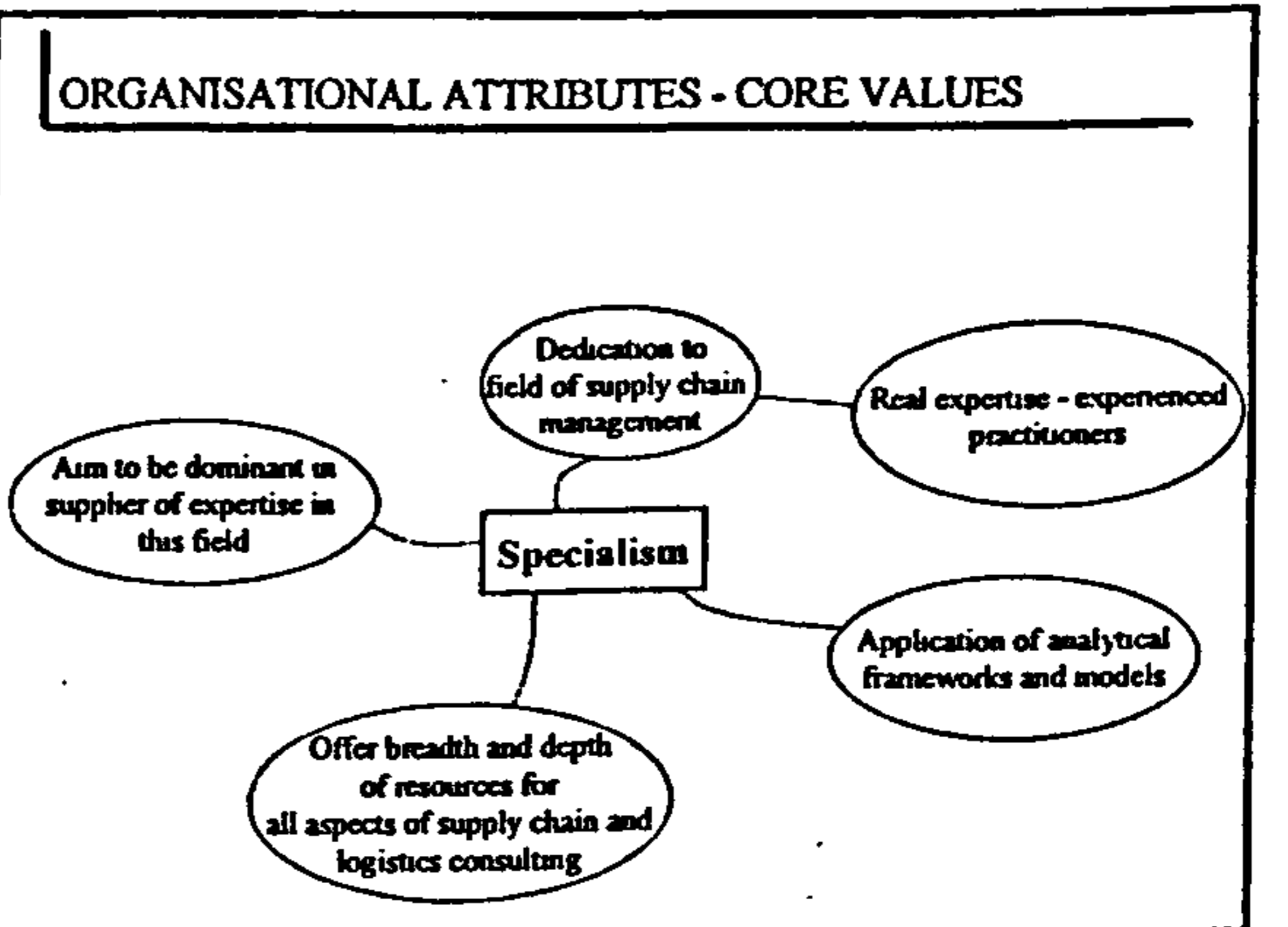
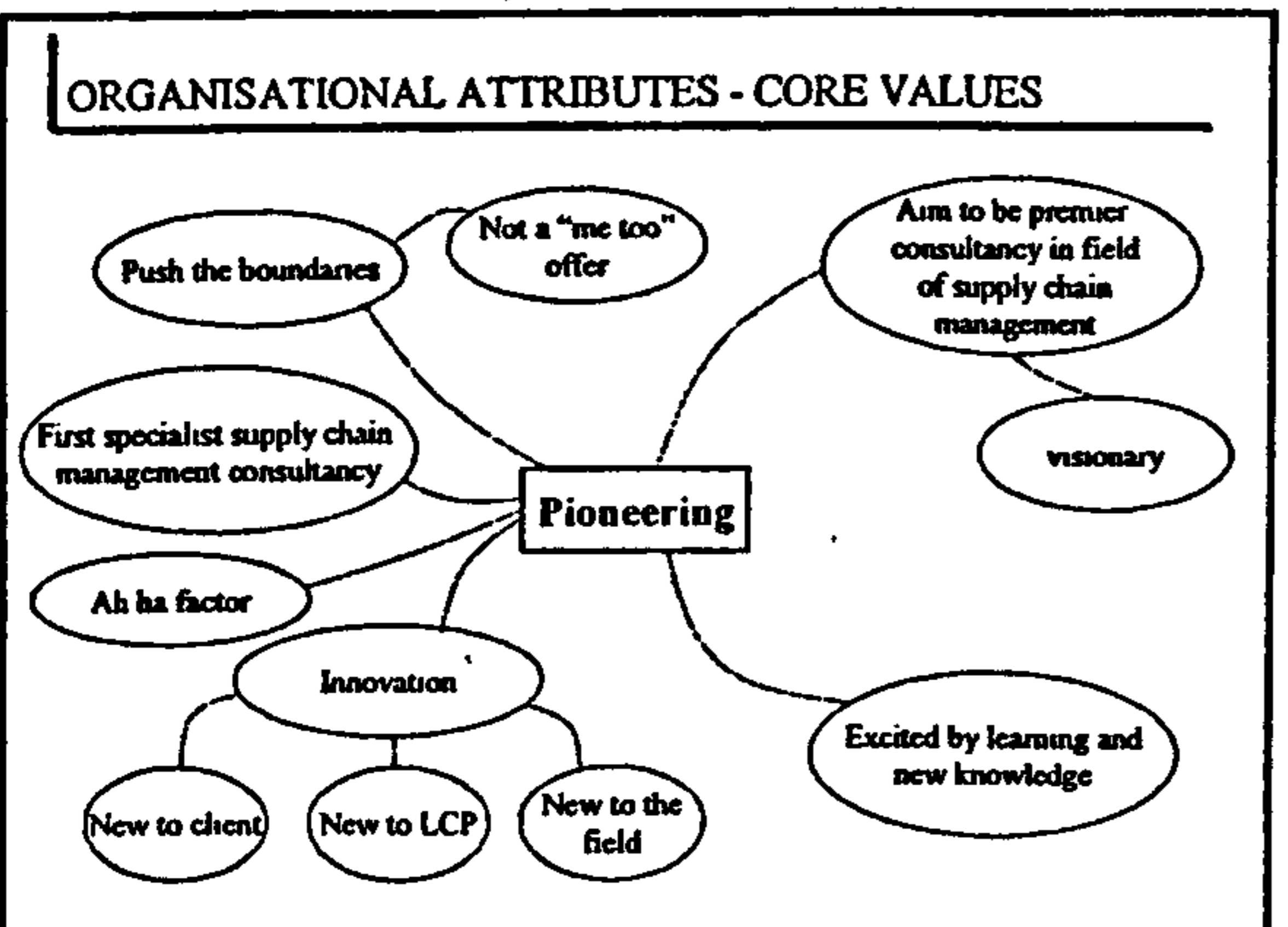
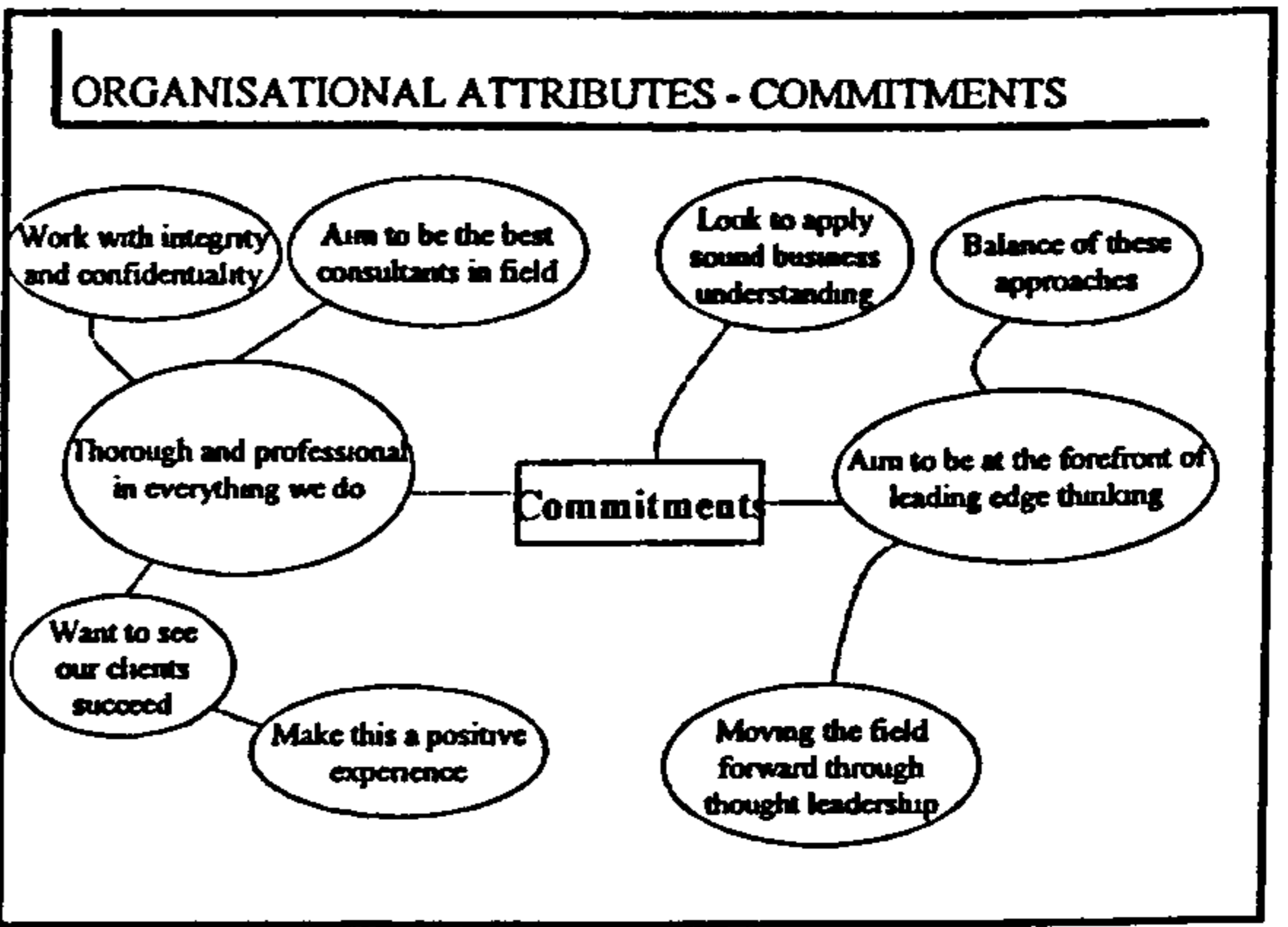
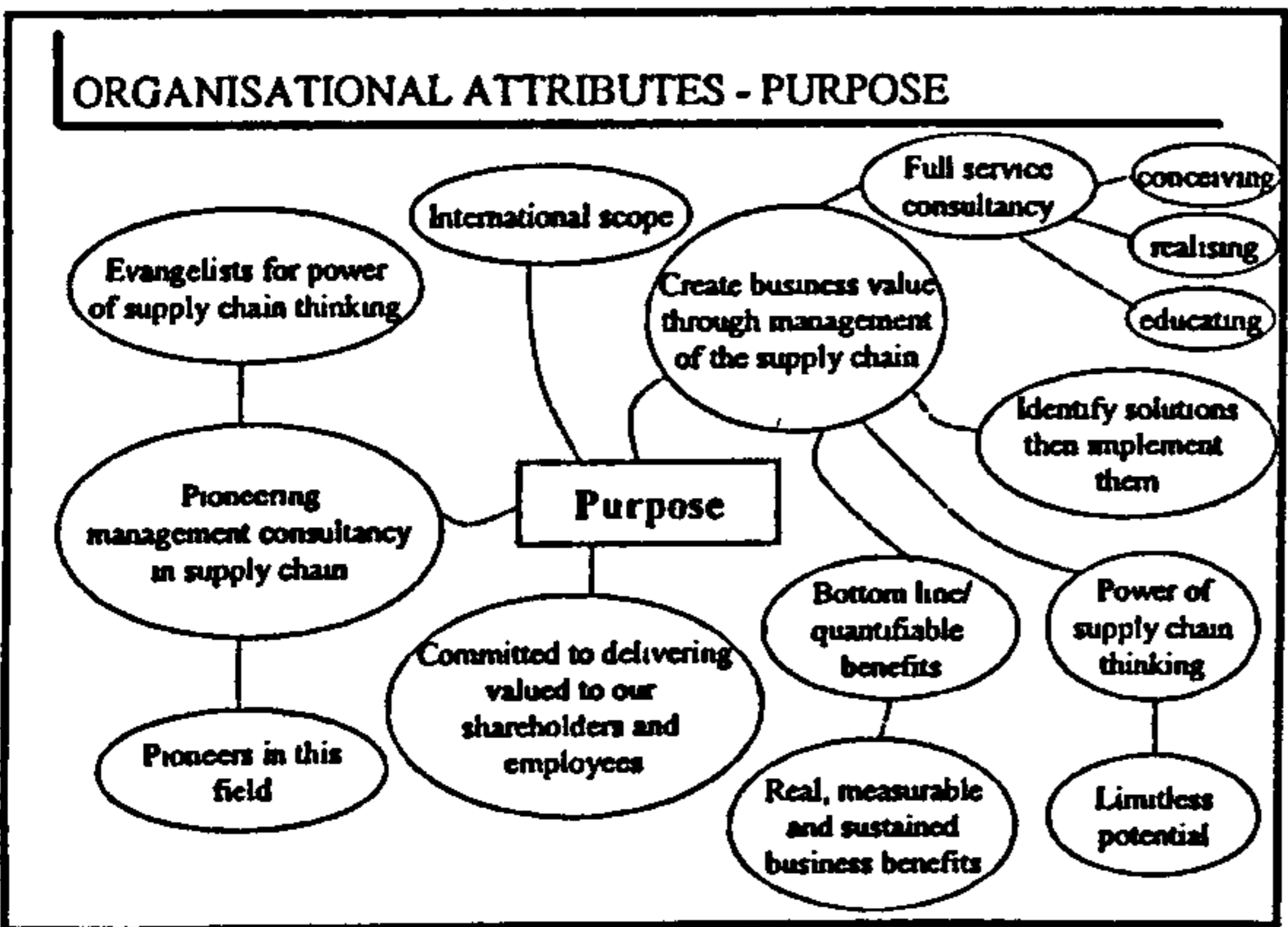
July 1999

LOGISTICS CONSULTING PARTNERS

Attribute mapping workshop

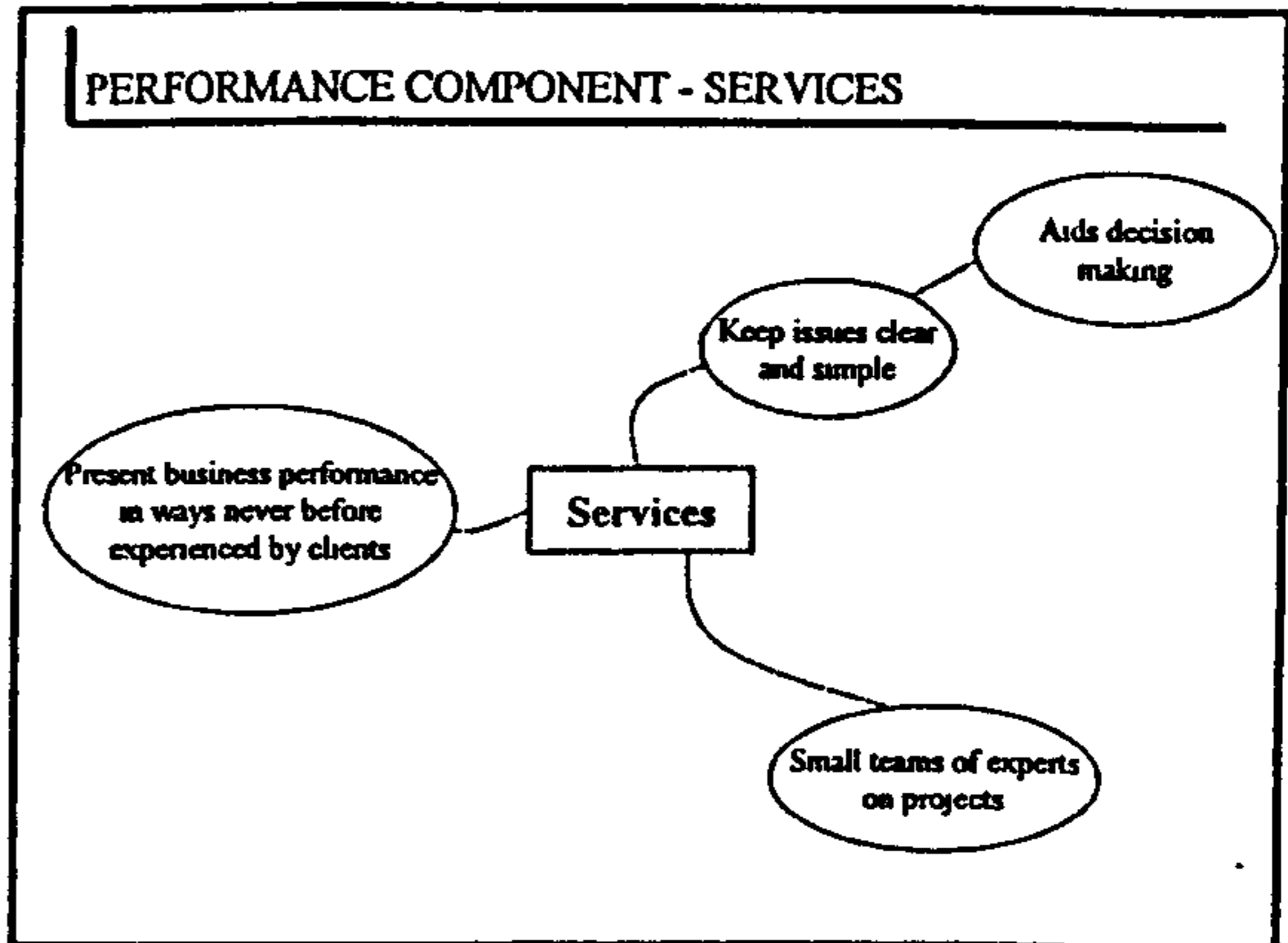
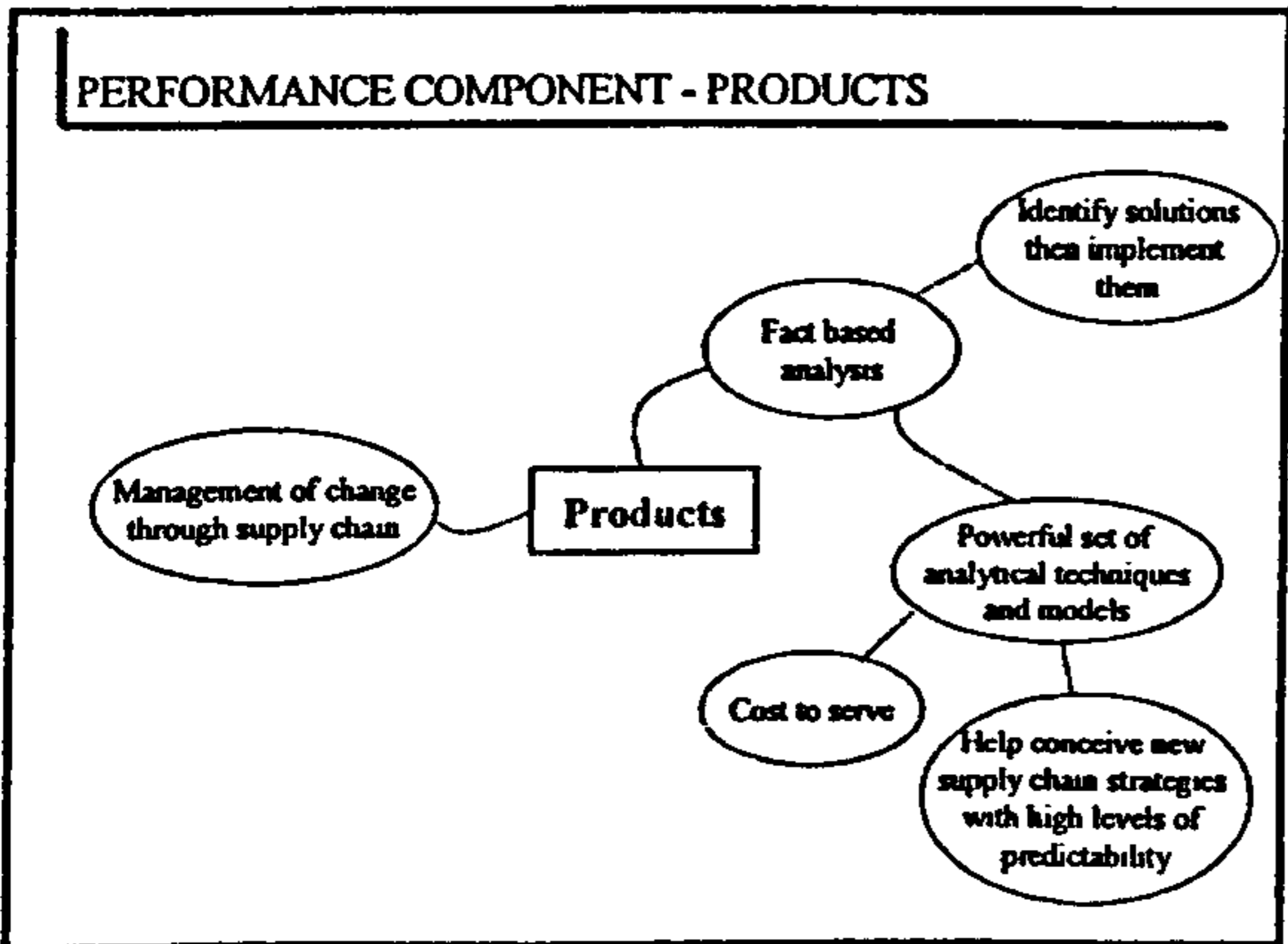
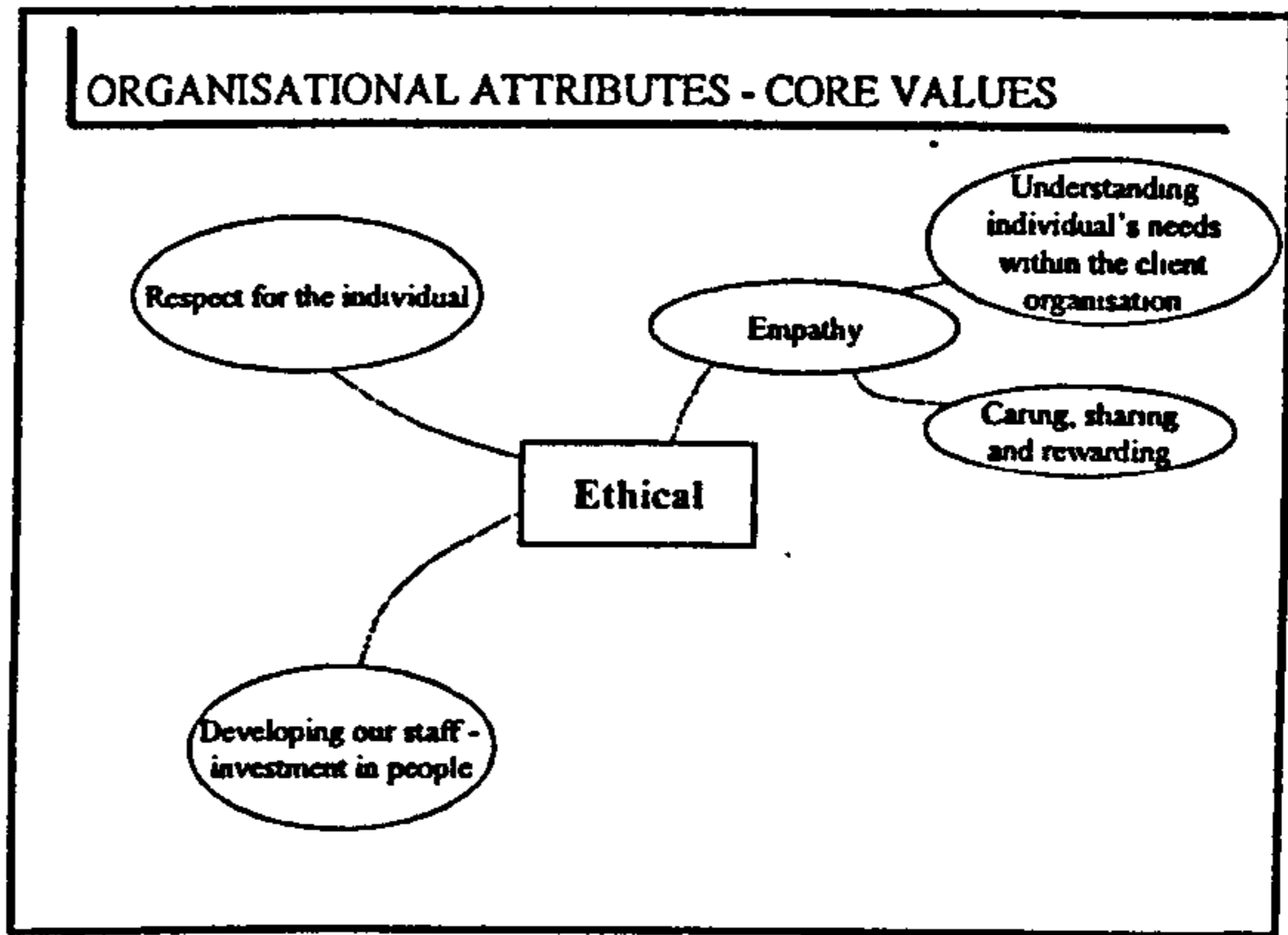
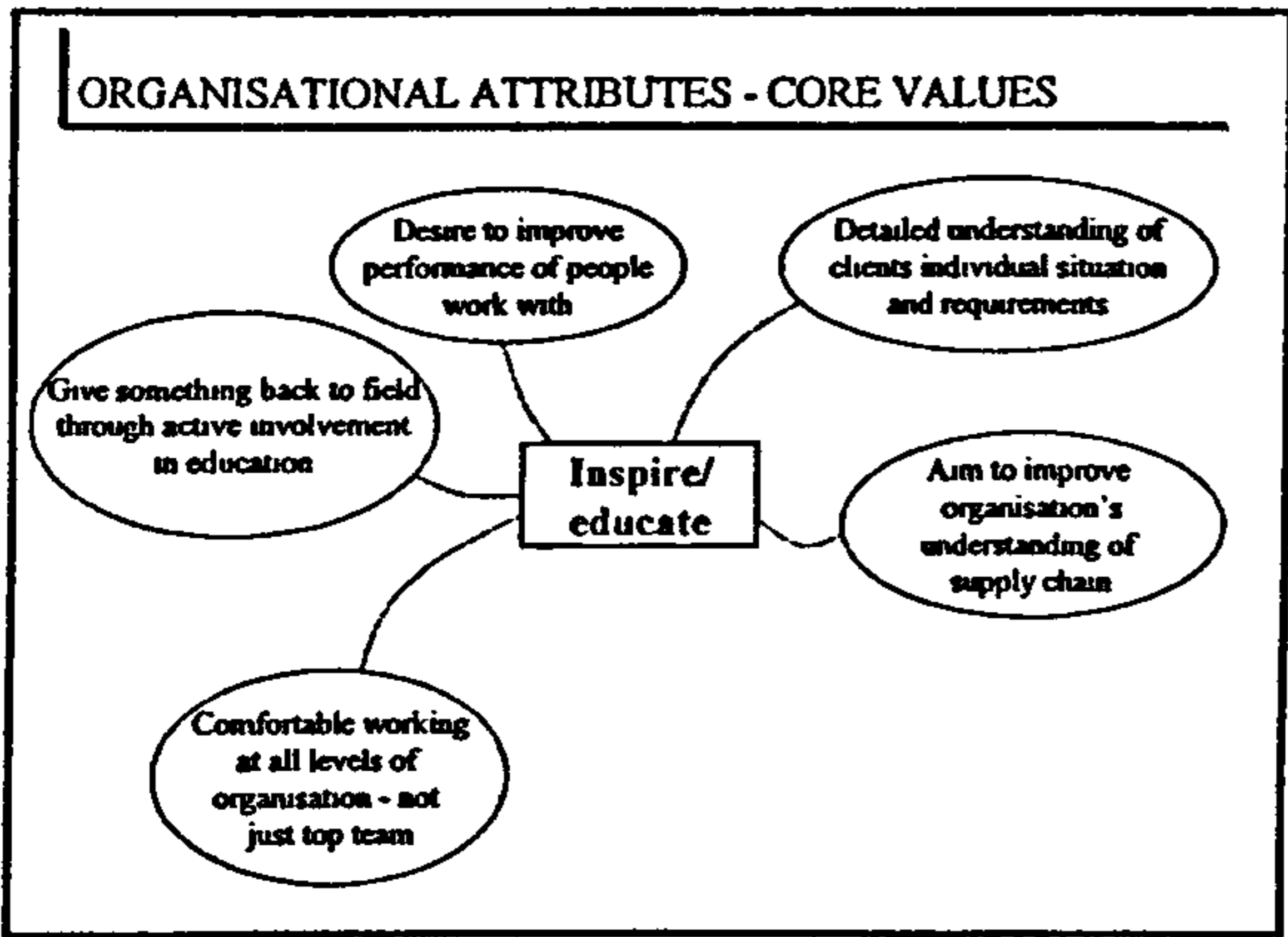
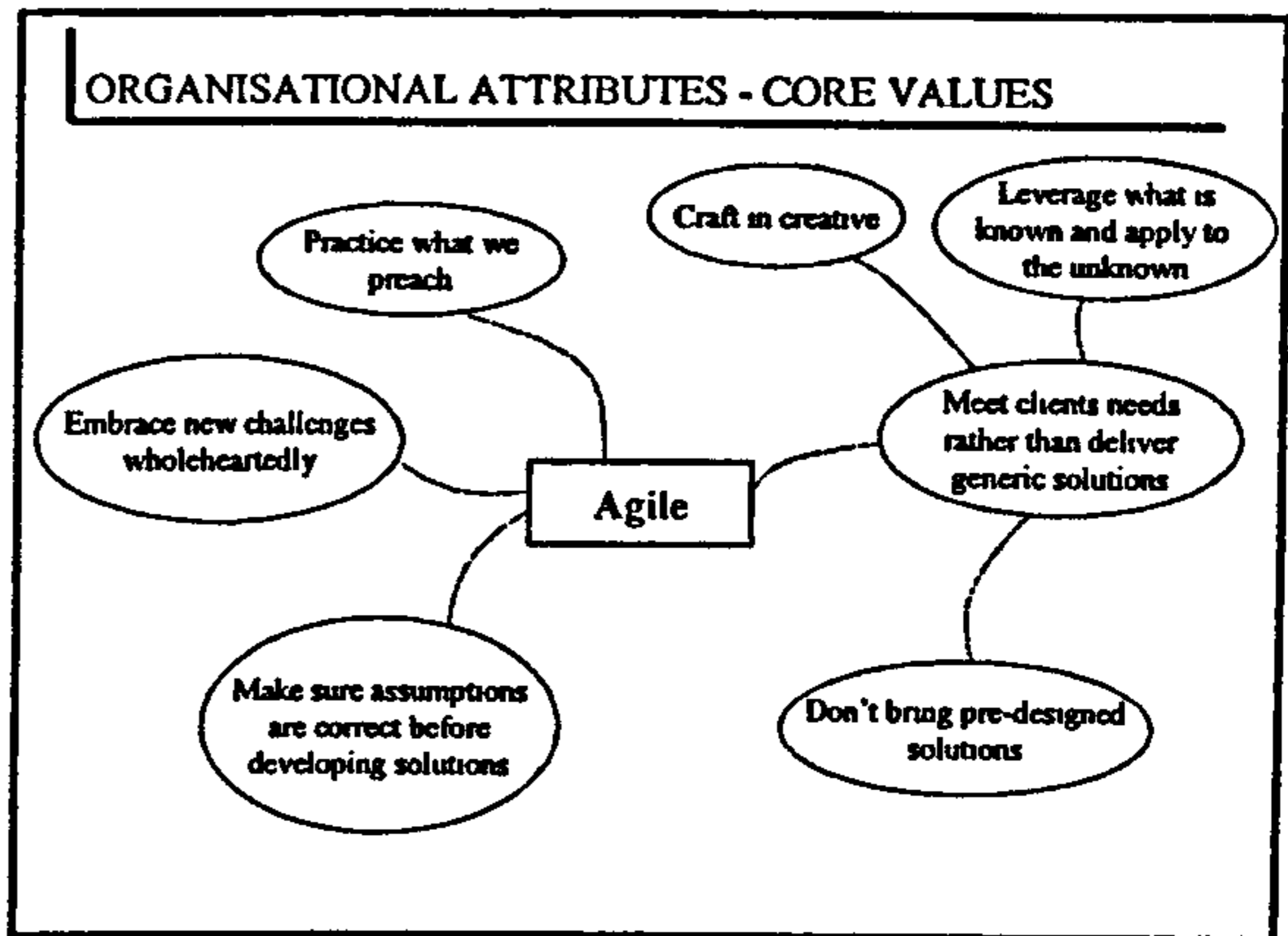
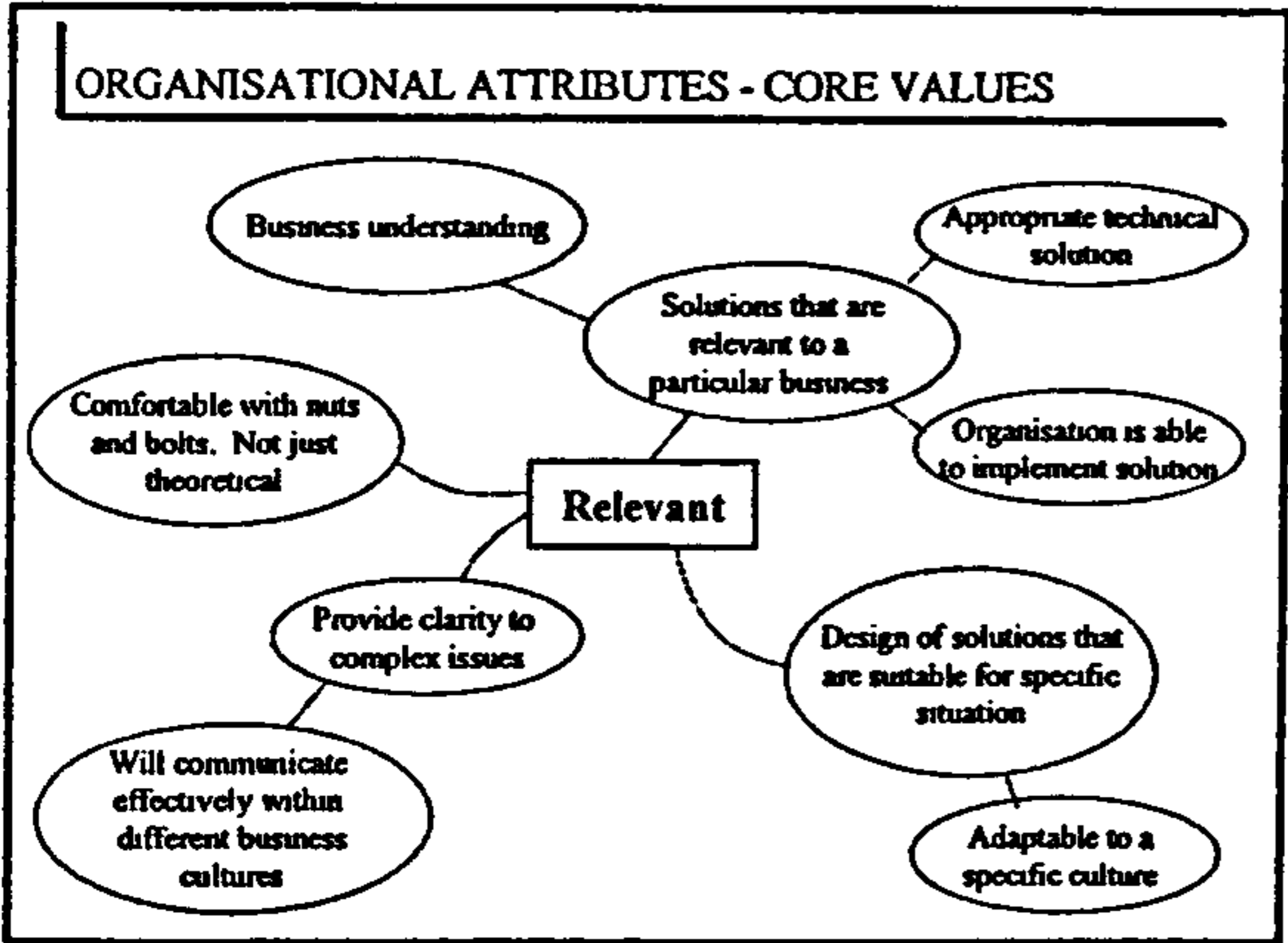
David Bickerton
Cranfield School of Management

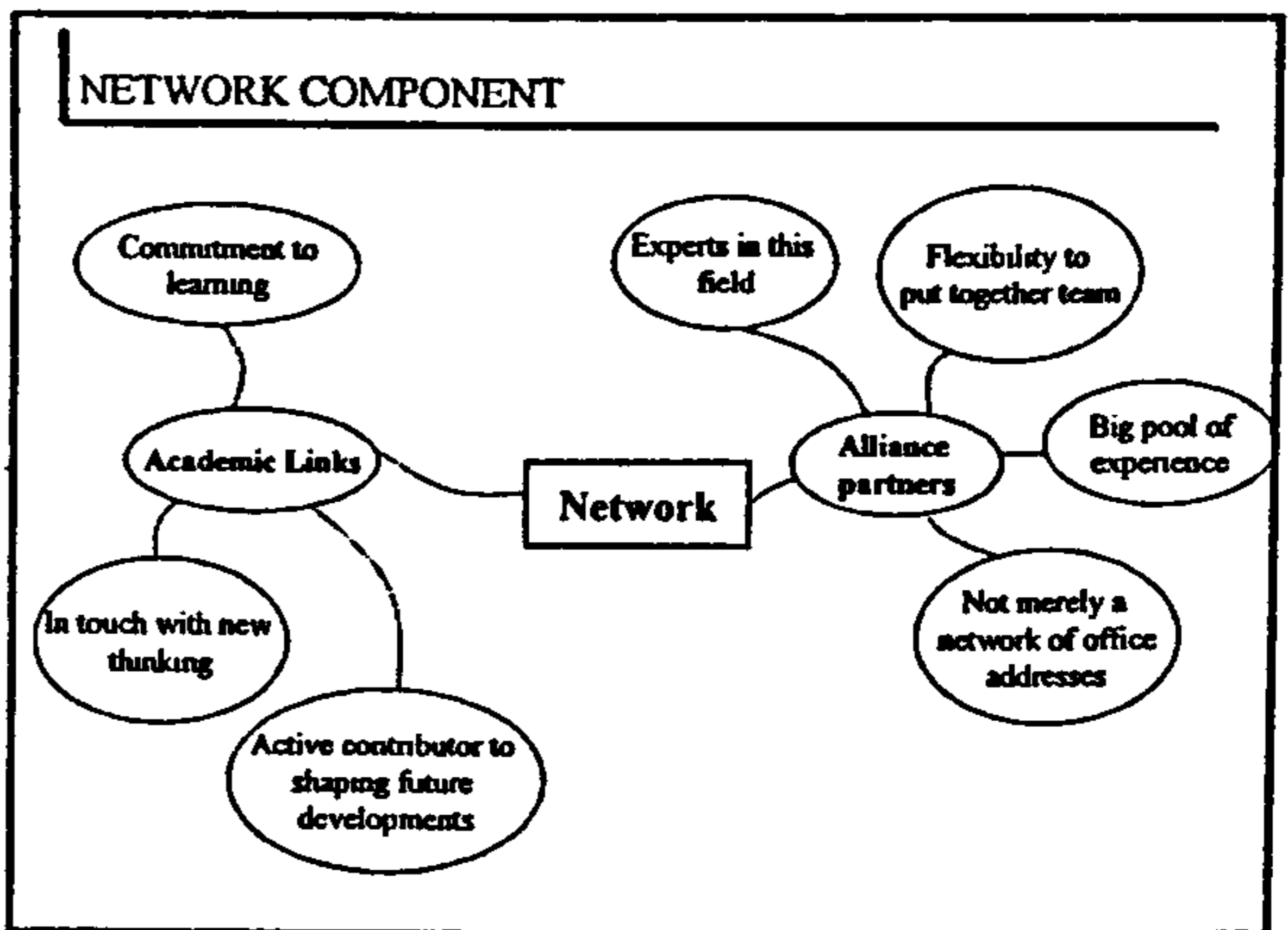
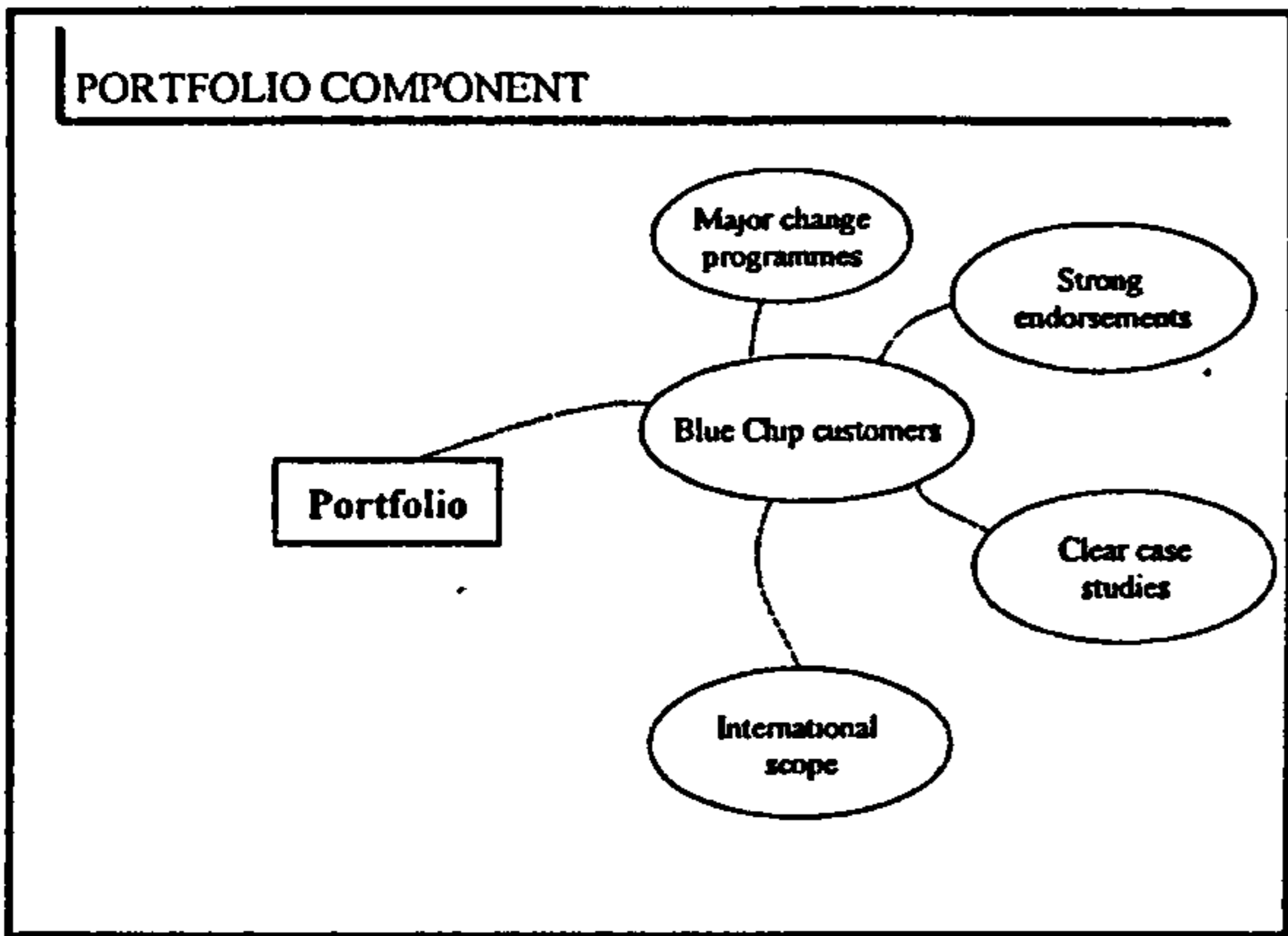
May 1999



329

3296





Appendix 10.6 SLIDES DEVELOPED
AT LCP MANAGEMENT
WORKSHOP

Sept 1999

LOGISTICS CONSULTING PARTNERS

Brand statements workshop

David Bickerton
Cranfield School of Management

Sept 1999

TODAY

- Development of key brand statements
- Consolidate learning from initial sessions
- Develop clear view of business attributes

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is to deliver business value through supply chain innovation. As a pioneer consultancy in this field, we believe passionately in the power and potential of supply chain thinking. We are evangelical about its capacity to enhance performance for our clients' organisations.

We work with clients, sharing knowledge with them in order to create business value - value that is tangible and measurable - through better management of their supply chain.

Our added value is the ability to deliver a breadth of advice. We will help our clients conceive new ideas and realise and implement these ideas. We will inform and educate their own people in order to continue the improvement process.

OUR COMMITMENT

Our commitment is to set new standards of professionalism in everything we do for our clients. We will provide them with the 'best' possible service, working with absolute integrity and in complete confidentiality. We will make the collaborative process a positive, satisfying one.

Our commitment is to lead the field in the development of new ideas. We want to be seen as innovators, to build a reputation as 'thought leaders'. In this way we will move our business, and our industry, forward.

Our commitment is to always be business focused, to make sure that our unique analytical capability and 'blue-sky' thinking translates into actions that have a practical application and a tangible end benefit for our clients

OUR VALUES - PIONEERING

As pioneers we are excited by new challenges and we welcome the opportunity to explore the unknown. We are energised by learning. We seek to serve, surprise and delight our clients by offering new, unexpected solutions.

As pioneers we have a crystal vision. We want to be the best at what we do. We want to lead by setting new standards in performance.

As pioneers we are not afraid of the new. Building an industry leader is itself an act of innovation. We are pushing boundaries back as the very first specialist supply chain management consultancy.

OUR VALUES - SPECIALIST

As specialists we have made a commitment to focus on one specific area of expertise - supply chain management. We intend to build our reputation as leaders in this area alone.

As specialists we have a familiarity with, and understanding of, the analytical processes and 'big ideas' which underpin what we do. We are familiar with the 'language and grammar' of supply chain management theory and practice.

As specialists we can deliver a team of people who all have a great deal of experience in our field. We can deliver a depth of resources for all aspects of supply chain management and logistics consulting.

OUR VALUES - RELEVANCE

Relevance is about understanding the needs of the client organisation, and then delivering a solution that answers those needs; solutions that the client organisation can implement and sustain over time.

Relevance is all about providing clarity when faced with complex business issues. It's about communicating effectively within many different business cultures -speaking the client's language rather than jargon.

Relevance is a good description for the solutions we deliver. 'Nuts and bolts' solutions that work in the real world, but are based on a great deal of experience and a high level of conceptual and creative thinking.

OUR VALUES - AGLITY

Being agile means delivering the solution the client and the circumstances require. It means never relying on generic solutions.

Agility is all about quick thinking, about never making assumptions. An agile organisation embraces new challenges, new knowledge and new ideas with open arms.

Our agility is demonstrated by our ability to use our experience to make sense of the new and unknown situations we go into. We always apply this experience in an open, creative way.

OUR VALUES - INSPIRATION

We are inspired by a desire to really make a difference; to really improve our clients' performance and their understanding of what we do.

We are inspired to make a contribution to our discipline through an active role in education. We are not just in this for what we can get out of it!

We are inspired by an eagerness and willingness to work at all levels of the client organisation - not just at senior management or board level. We are comfortable and able to communicate and inform people throughout the organisation.

OUR VALUES - RESPECT

We respect our clients - their structures and processes, their culture and values.

We respect the needs of individuals within organisation. We try to work with them at all times.

We respect the needs and aspirations of our people. We want to share our success with them; to reward them in the full sense of that world.

Appendix 10.7 SLIDES DEVELOPED AT
LCP MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

August 1999

LOGISTICS CONSULTING PARTNERS

Competitor mapping workshop

David Bickerton
Cranfield School of Management

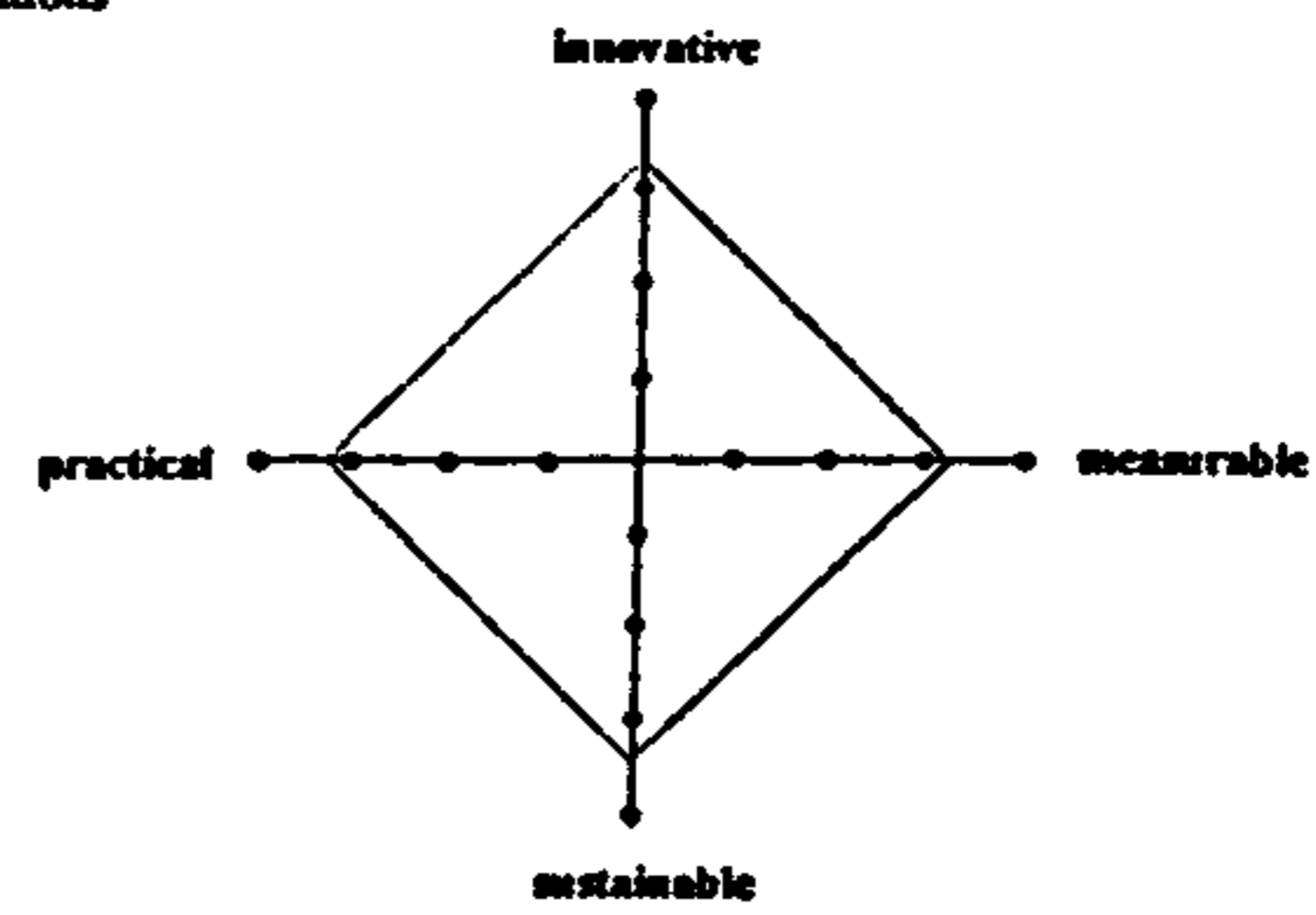
August 1999

MAPPING COMPETITORS' PROPOSITIONS

- All offer solutions
- Different emphasis on marketing communications
- Consider desired position
- Align to customer value drivers from research

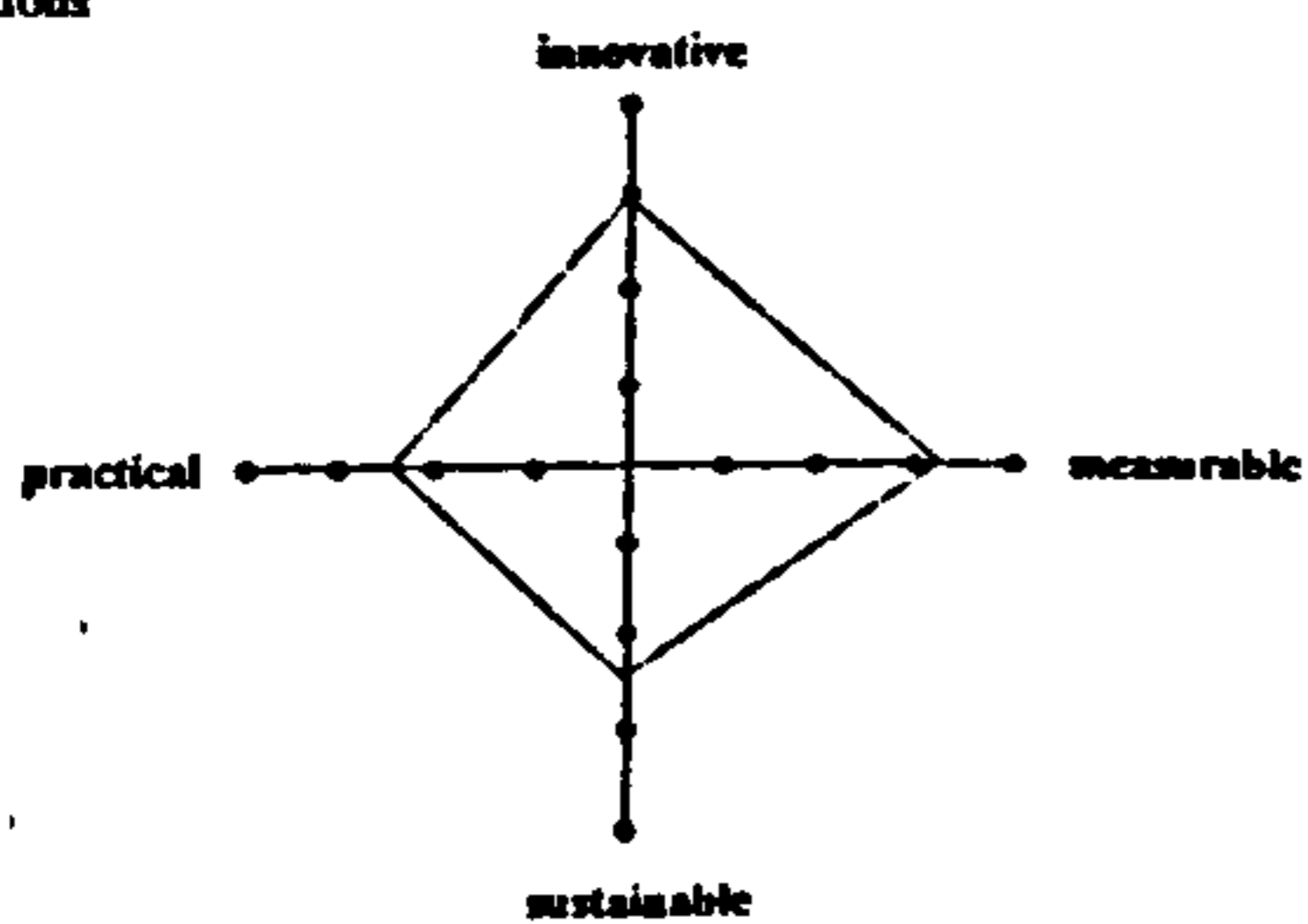
ARTHUR ANDERSEN

Mapping marketing
communications



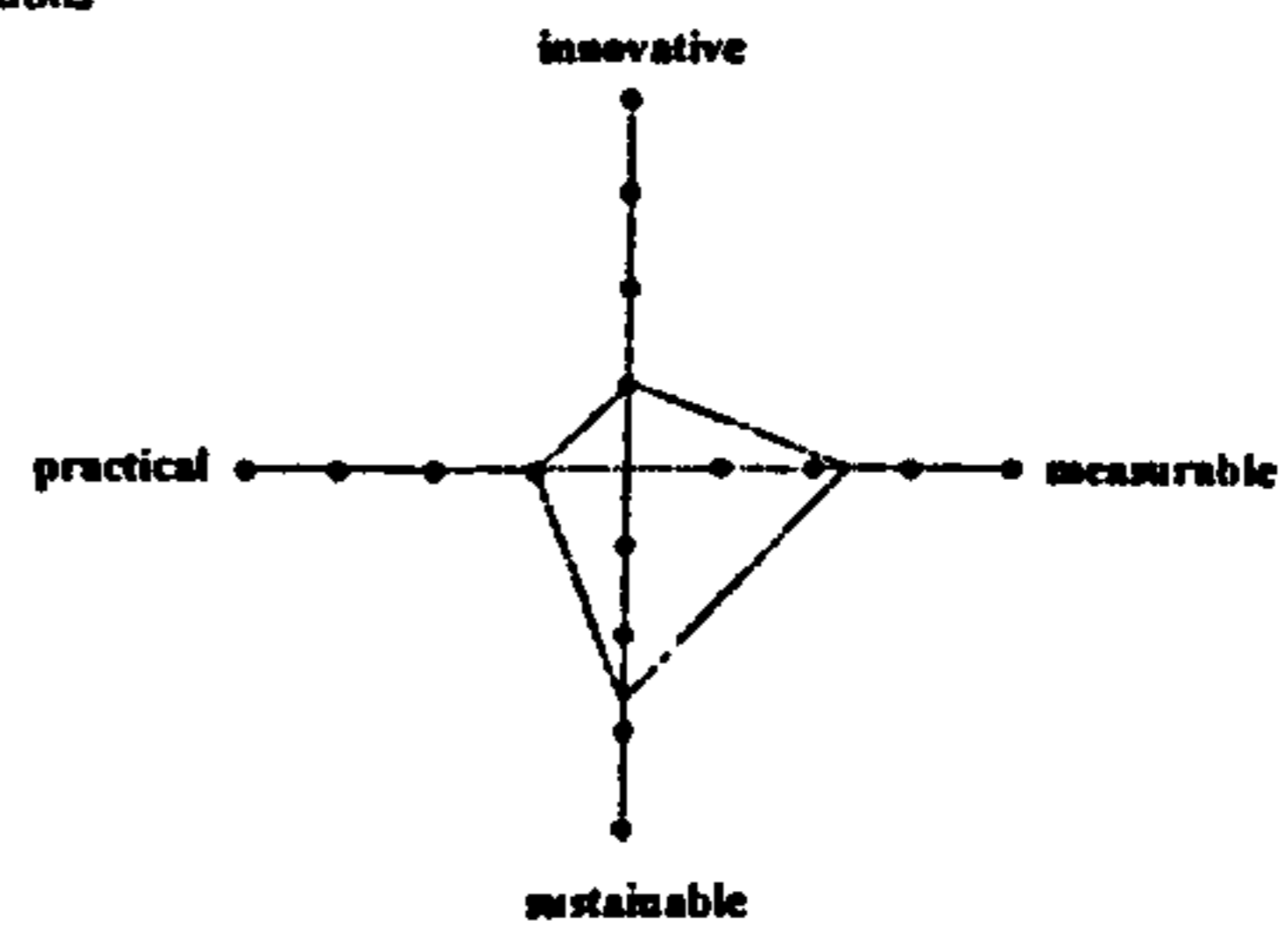
PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS

Mapping marketing
communications



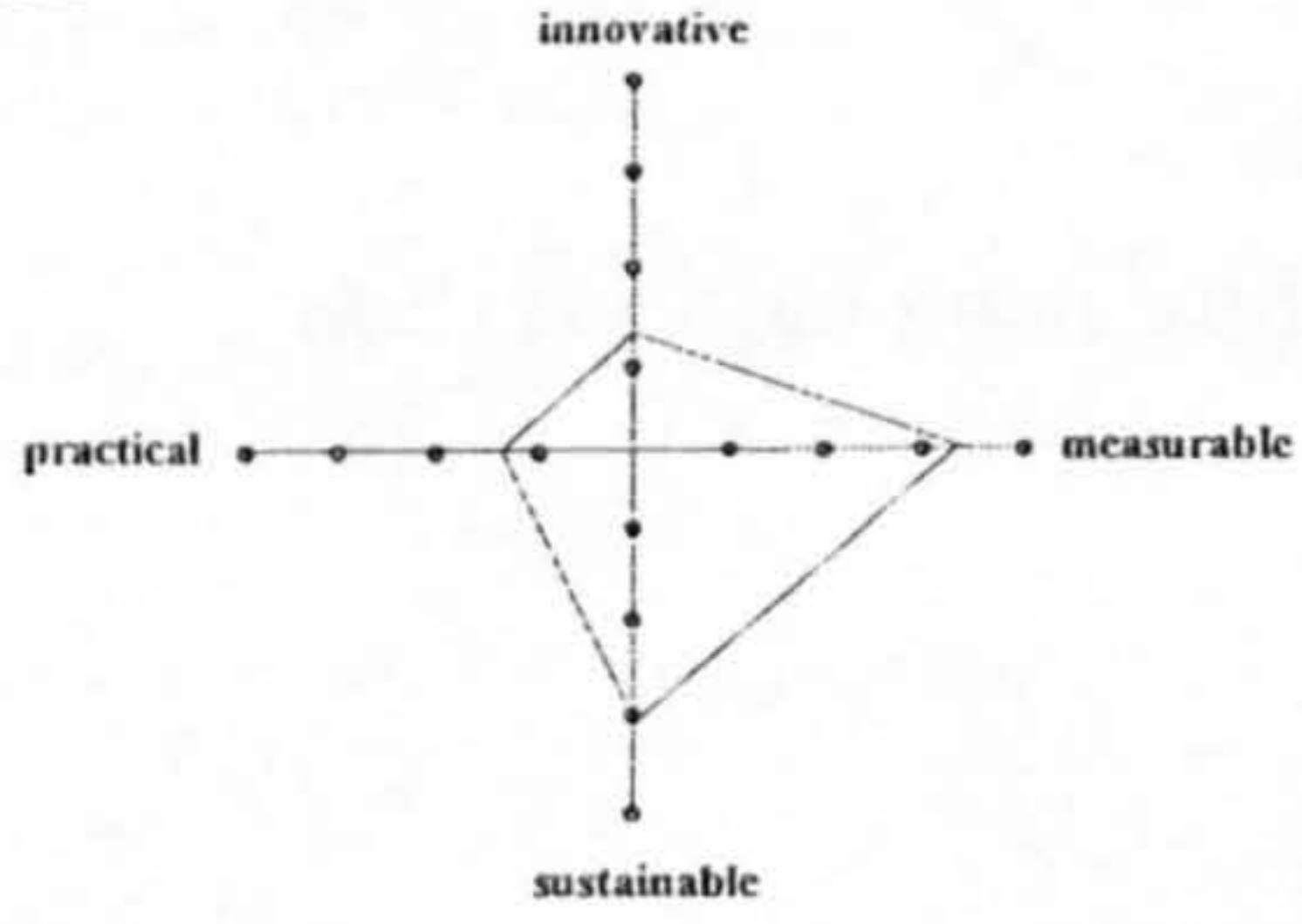
WORLDCLASS INTERNATIONAL

Mapping marketing
communications



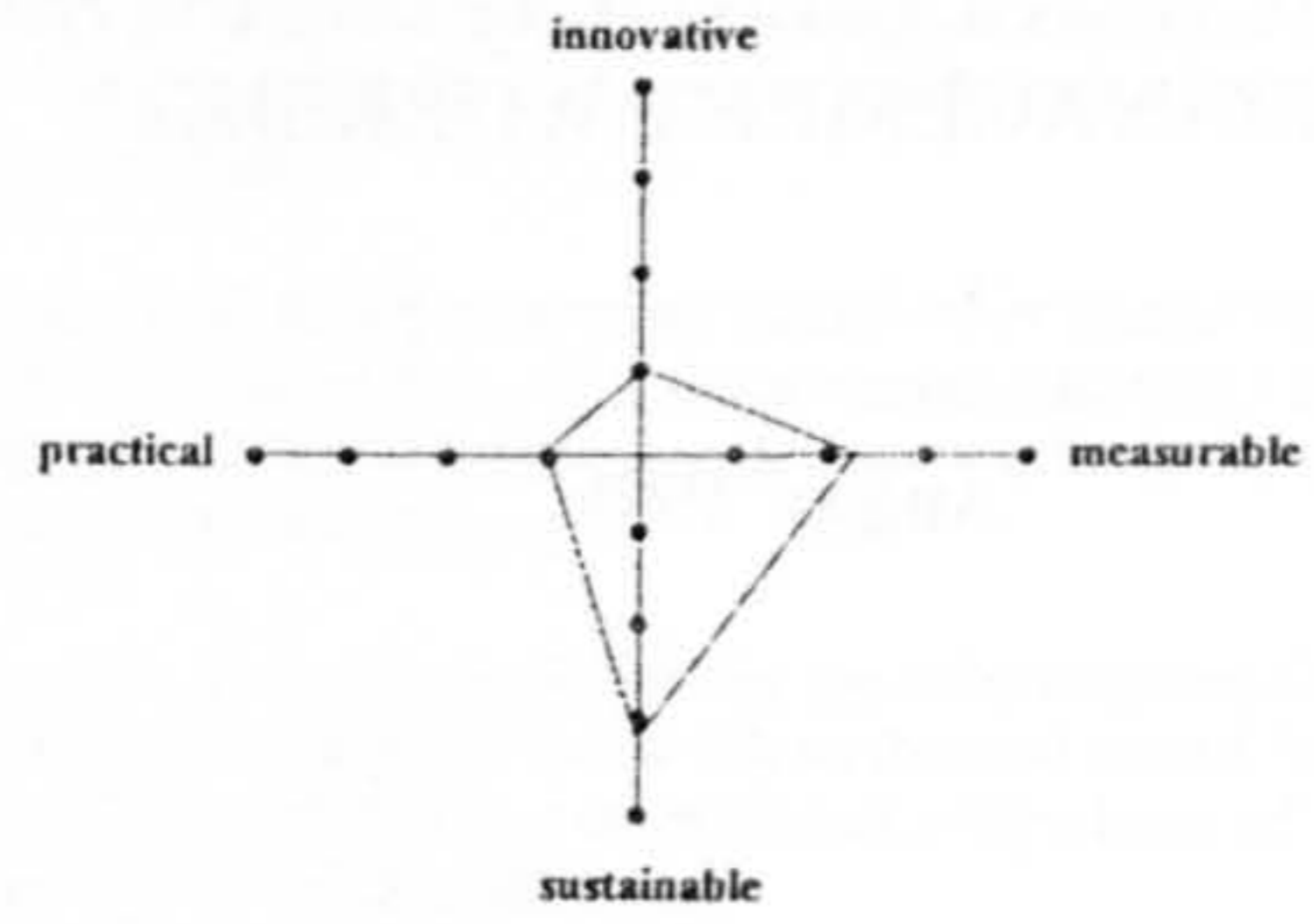
ANDERSEN CONSULTING

Mapping marketing communications



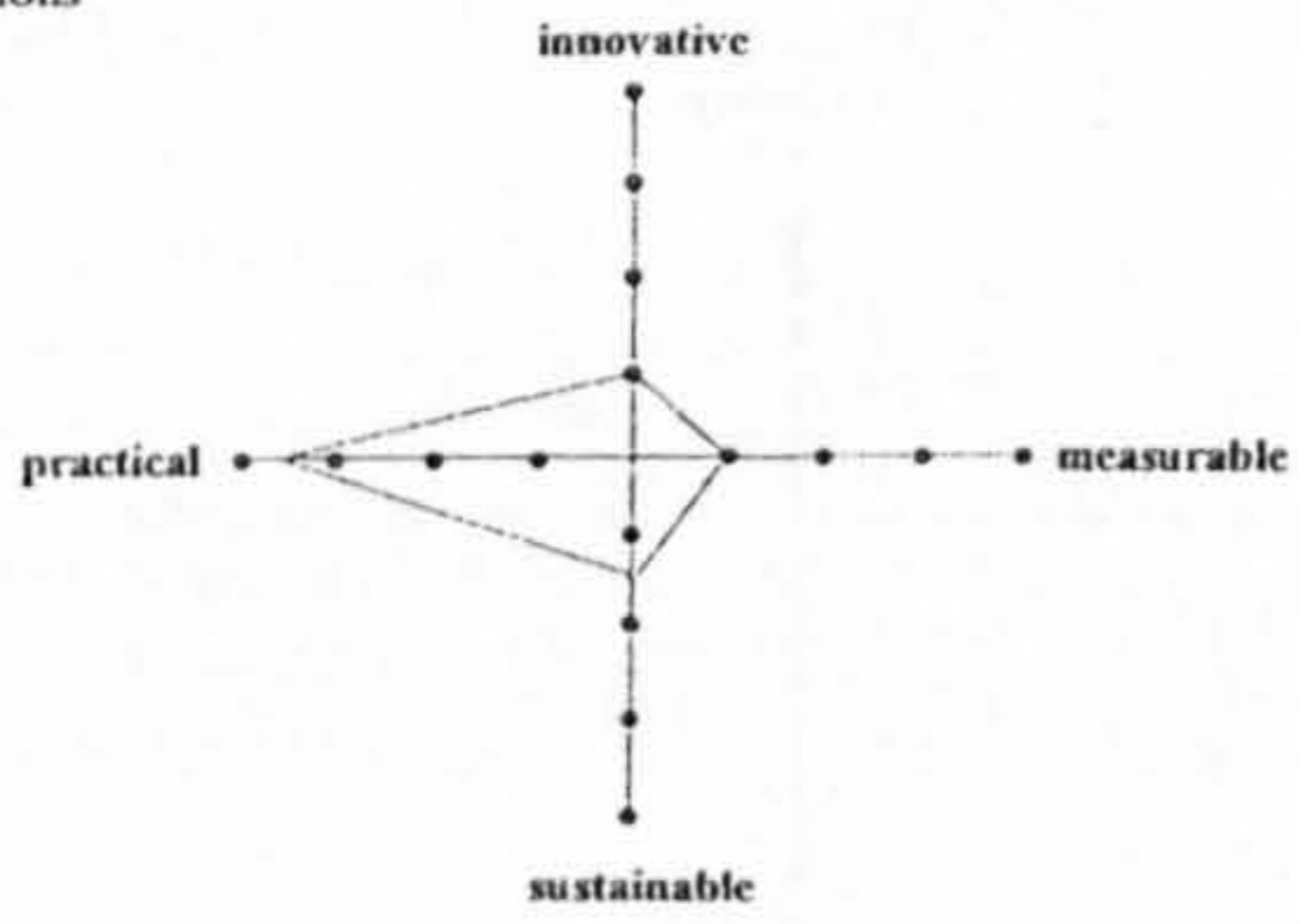
AT KEARNEY

Mapping marketing communications



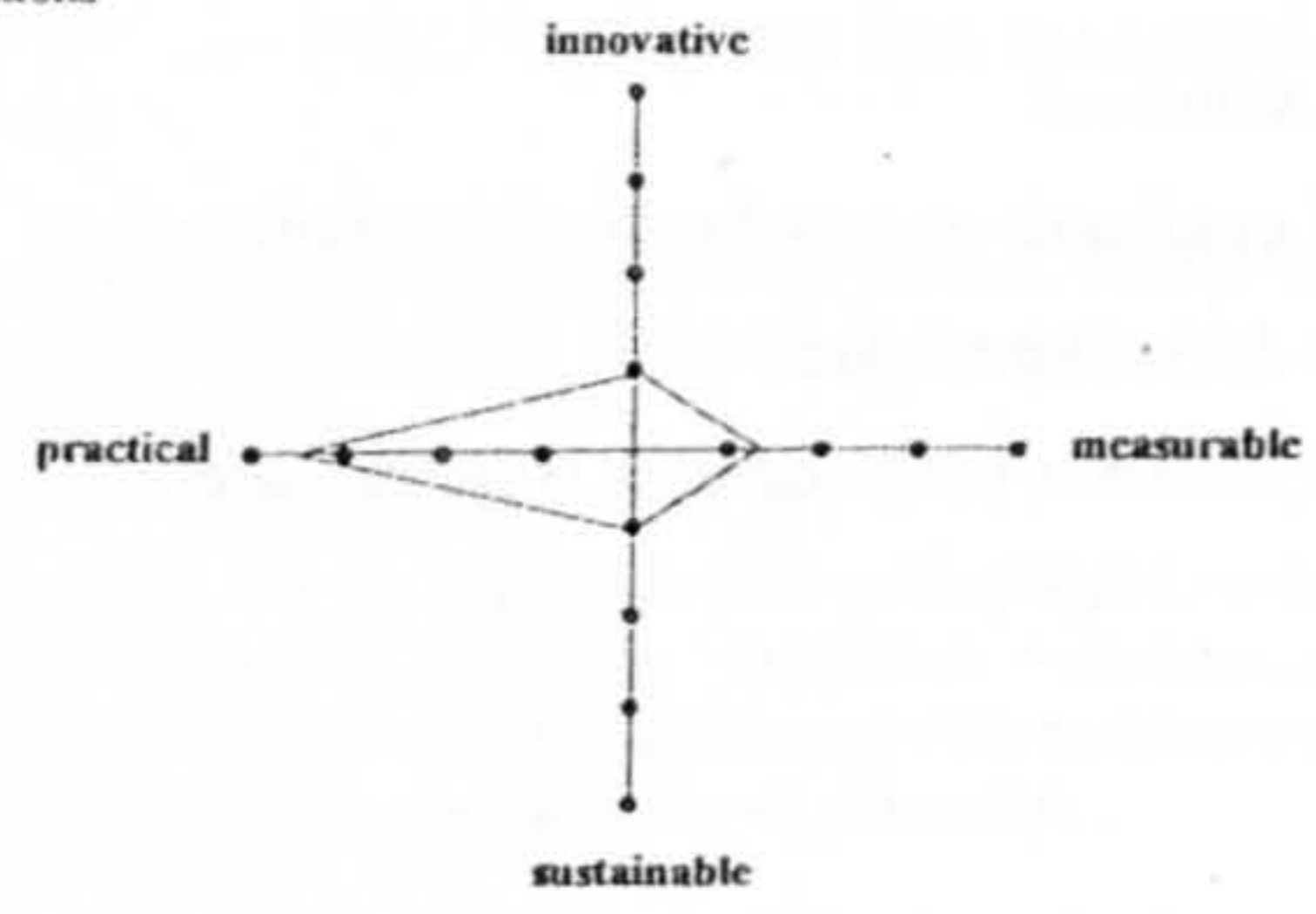
CAP GEMINI

Mapping marketing communications



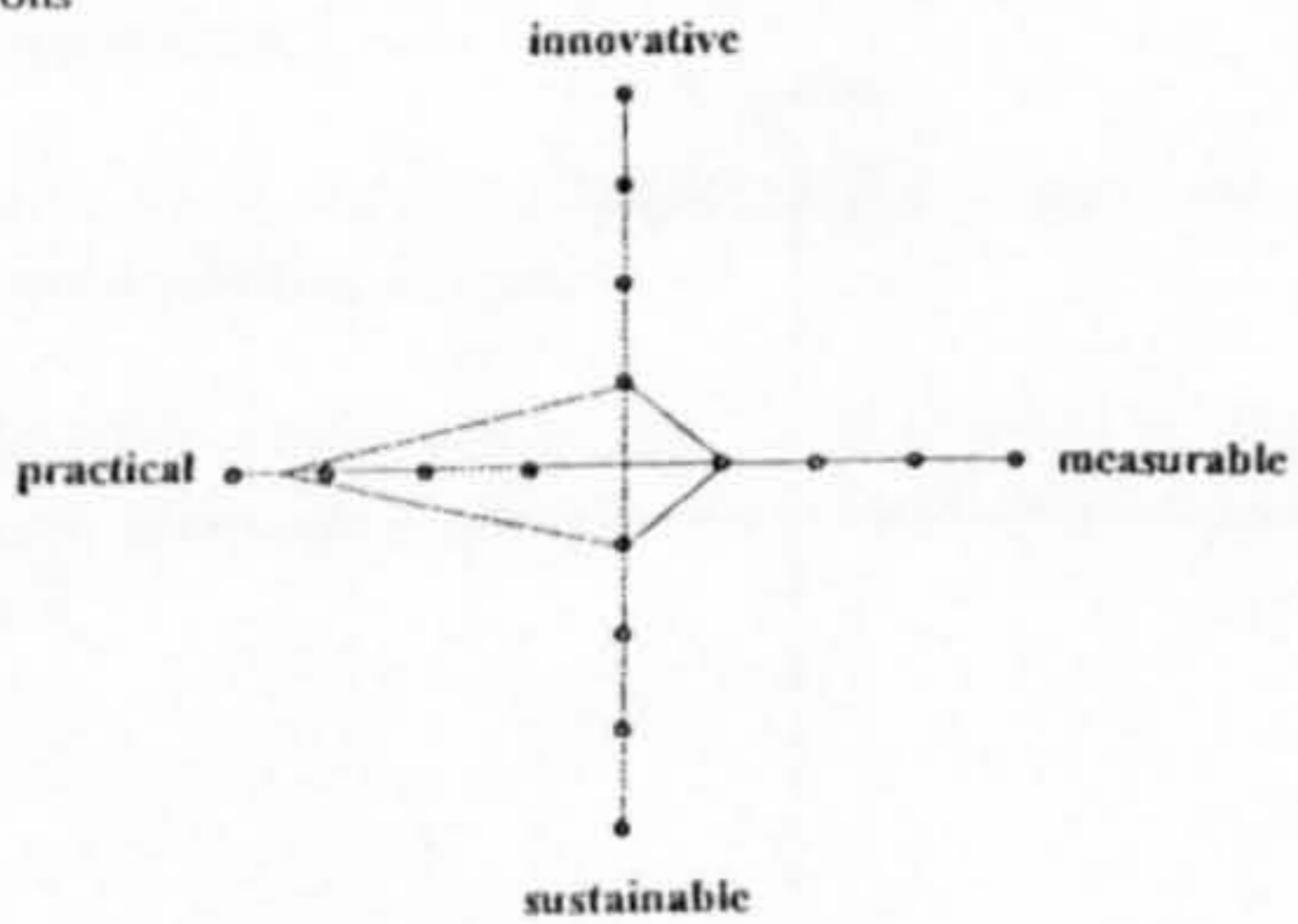
COMPASS

Mapping marketing communications



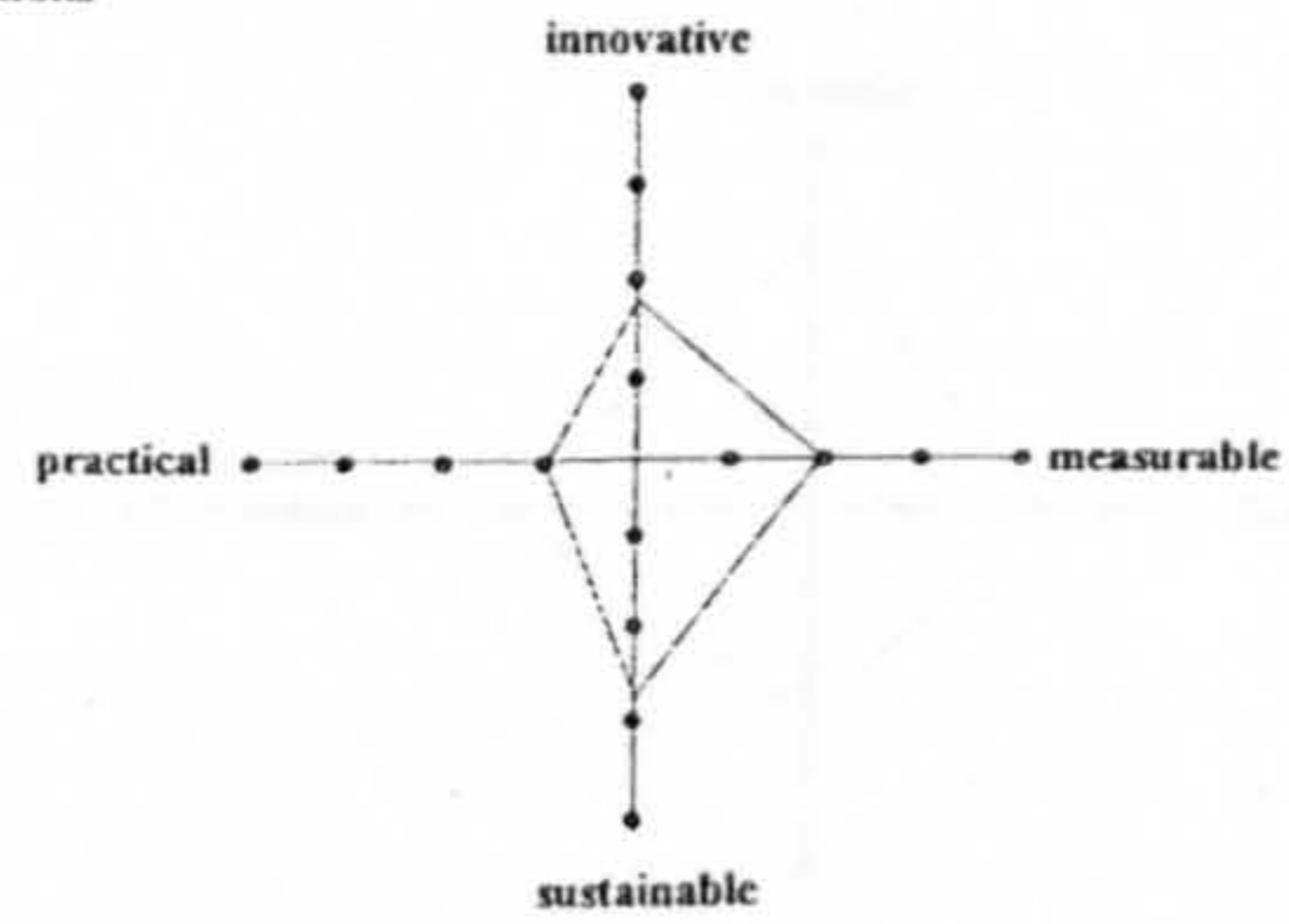
MIEBACH

Mapping marketing communications



BOOZ ALLEN HAMILTON

Mapping marketing communications



Appendix 10.8: LCP study sample reflection-in-action data display

Phase One intervention data display

Variable	Common issues	Inhibitors	Possible facilitators
1.0 Organisation attributes	Currently seen as a niche specialist. Need to broaden appeal to meet business targets	Much of the corporate attributes still defined by the founder of the business – audiences link reputation of business with personal qualities of founder	Growth of strong senior management team will help to re-define the personality of the business
1.1 Purpose	Clear plans for growth of business but challenges on need to find clear market positioning	Definitions currently use competitors to describe who LCP aspire to be	Use of clear purpose descriptor to define the market space that LCP want to occupy
1.2 Commitments	Recognition from audiences that LCP is a passionate, innovative business – need to make this more corporate and less academic	Lack of clear communication to describe the depth and breadth of the LCP offer – multiple explanations of services	Desire of team to reach new Board level audience means need to develop more comprehensive communication of service and quality
1.3 Values	Current values set ascribed by respondents to the individual. No consistent values set across the business External research points to some strong personality attributes – integrity, warmth, commitment	Inconsistent values and behaviours expressed and exhibited in communications and behaviours by the business Currently no process to link these to drivers of customer value to establish distinctive personality for the business	As management team expands, acceptance that there needs to be a consistent values set that all members of the team share Availability of new market research can help to focus LCP team on what clients are demanding and tailor brand development accordingly

Appendix 10.9d: LCP study relative frequency content analysis

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	advice/support for IT focused change																															
	auditing supply chain effectiveness																															
	competitive benchmarking																															
	determining sourcing strategies																															
	designing enterprise wide operations																															
	training programmes																															
Content Analysis 2:																																
	Frequency																															
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	cost to serve																															
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Appendix 10.9g: LCP study relative frequency content analysis																																
Network attributes																																
Network																																
Content Analysis 1: May 1999																																
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																									5							partners, institutions and academics
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																											3					geographic reach
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Content Analysis 2:																																
30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1			

Appendix 10.10: LCP study Exit interview semi-structured questionnaire

LCP study

Background/Introduction

As you will recall I have been involved in helping you shape and refine the LCP brand as part of my Cranfield Ph.D. thesis. I would like to now review with you to see how the process is going, and what you believe have been the key issues, learning points and challenges so that I can finish off this study by reviewing the key learning of all who have taken part in the process.

Question areas

For this interview I would like to review the following:

- How is the new articulation of the LCP working in practice? Why do you think this has happened?
- Have you seen any impact in terms of your marketing and ongoing communication with clients and prospects? Can you give me any examples?
- Have you noticed any differences internally in the way you business issues? Could you give me any examples of how you have noticed these changes?
- What have been the key learning points of the process so far for both you and the company?
- Looking back at the process, what other steps do you think we could have taken in hindsight to improve the process of the study?
- Do you believe that there is now a stronger consensus about the key attributes of the LCP brand moving forward? Why do you think this is the case?

- If we started such a project again now what would you do differently? Why do you have this view?

Closing section

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview and for your continued support for my academic project. I will now be writing up the final version of the project report for my thesis and will be sending a copy to John Lockton.

Appendix 11.1: AEGON study intervention protocol.

(updated 17th May, 2001)

Background

I am reaching the final stage of my doctoral research project, which is investigating the process of managing corporate brand communications. The study to date has involved an in-depth review of the academic literature surrounding the subject of corporate branding. The conclusion of this process was that in academic fields very little is actually known about how this process is managed within organisations. This view is supported by my own consultancy experience where organisations are generally unsure about how to create effective and consistent communication of corporate brand messages

Work to date

To date, I have completed two case studies with an international law firm and a European Scientific organisation, and am currently finishing a further case with a UK-based management consultancy. I am looking for one further case study preferably with an international focus.

Objective

The objective of my research is to help companies build a better model for achieving brand consistency in their corporate communications programmes. In doing this I am studying the process and helping to measure the output of this process to draw conclusions.

Benefits to AEGON

I believe that my methodology, combined with my previous experience of the Group, will help achieve a positive result for the AEGON Group communications team. The key benefits are:

- An improved definition of the key elements of the AEGON Group brand
- Development of a corporate 'tone of voice' for all Group communications

- Introduction of new approaches to measuring the output of Group Communications to check for consistency of projected message
- A new way to think about the AEGON brand and how to manage it in communication terms
- Opportunity to use the corporate brand to aid the development of the communications strategy
- Process has the potential to inform work for all Group publications (electronic and print)

Process

I envisage that the study will take a total of 6-8 months to complete. Given this timeframe and the issue of distance between London and The Hague I would suggest planning the project as follows:

1. An initial stage to investigate the brand context for AEGON – this would include a series of interviews to establish the current vision, image and culture of the Group. This would require a series of focused interviews with key people within the AEGON Group.
2. A series of group workshops with the Group Communications team to work on the definitions of the AEGON corporate brand.
3. Measurement of existing communications for consistency of message drawn from a sample of all communications material published (e.g. Annual Report, press releases, AEGONWISE, corporate website)
4. Development of clear statements of the AEGON corporate brand for agreement internally.
5. Consideration of how this work could inform Group communications strategy.
6. Measurement of this communication for consistency of message.
7. Final interviews/workshops with the Group communications team to review the process and discuss what has been learned by the project.

David Bickerton will act as the researcher/consultant throughout the process to help guide and assist on the project and act as recorder for all sessions.

Process

Time – this will require some investment of time from Group communications team to take part in group sessions. These can be planned in advance to ensure minimum disruption.

In terms of a specific timetable I would recommend the following:

End May/early June 2001

- Initial interviews in the Hague with key group staff
- Identify and collect published communication material for content analysis

June

- Conduct further round of interviews with AEGON Group communications staff
- Conduct initial content analysis measurement of current AEGON Group communications

July

- Development of AEGON corporate brand statements – sessions with Group communications
- Consider how these will influence the communication plan and Annual report

August/September

- Presentation of main findings and proposals

October/December

- Developmental workshops with Group communications team

January/March 2002

- Re-measurement of AEGON Group communications to test for consistency
- Review of project and learning of all parties

Finance – whilst this is an academic project it does offer some clear benefits to AEGON. I would therefore be looking to AEGON to cover my expenses for travel and accommodation.

Publication rights – as part of my doctoral thesis I will be looking for approval to publish my findings in my thesis and in any key academic journals. This will only be done with prior approval from AEGON Group communications.

Appendix 11.2: AEGON nv. semi-structured questionnaire

Script for AEGON senior management interviews (July - August 2001)

Preliminary

- ◆ Thank you for your time
- ◆ Clarify length and purpose of interview (approx. 45 minutes)
- ◆ Explain objectives and outputs for study as development of corporate brand definitions for AEGON group
- ◆ All conversations strictly in confidence
- ◆ Request to tape interview for future transcription

Question Areas

- ◆ Role and responsibility
- ◆ Time at AEGON
- ◆ Description of role
- ◆ Reporting lines

Context for branding

- strategy for AEGON

Current image of AEGON

- internal audiences
- external audiences (define)

Culture of AEGON

- prevailing culture
- existence of subcultures
- ability to think act and operate differently

Customer value

- ◆ How does AEGON group help its operating companies deliver value to its end customers now and in the future?
 - to operating companies?
 - to external stakeholders?

What are the key components of AEGON brand?

- ◆ Reputation – the key areas of purpose, group commitments and corporate values
- ◆ Performance – what the Group does and how it delivers its services
- ◆ Portfolio – who the customers are for the Group
- ◆ Networks – the key external relationships that allow the group to function and flourish

Positioning the AEGON group

- ◆ How would you rank the importance of each of these areas?
- ◆ How well-defined would you say that AEGON group is in each of these areas?
- ◆ Which of these areas offers the most opportunity for a point of difference?

Role of communication in this process

- ◆ How do you feel that Group Communications activities can help in the communication of the AEGON corporate brand?

Next actions

- ◆ Part of a process of assessment and review. Results of this plus an audit of existing communications will be prepared to go into the next strategic communications plan

Close interview

Appendix 11.3: AEGON study sample journal note

AEGON case study

Date: 24 August 2001

- Finishing off the communications audit coding I am struck by the similarities with previous studies concerning a lack of a clear business purpose or clearly articulated corporate values
- Instead a number of these elements are bundled up as a series of 'commitments' made by the business
- Interesting to note that the audit backs much of what was said in the first intervention phase of the study
- In terms of creating a feedback loop and providing valid information for the company I have decided to use a combination of topline feedback supported by relevant quotes from the interview sessions - this is to make these elements more accessible and understandable to the participants
- Next phase of interventions include further interviews with members of the Group staff who were unavailable on my last visit and some group sessions to provide feedback to date
- Need to think about a better solution to providing transcripts of these sessions as need fast turnaround to sustain momentum for the project

Appendix 11.4: AEGON sample interview transcript with researcher's on-line reflective notes

INTVR: 10 July 2001 with Ewold De Brunjne from AEGON Group Communications. Could you just give me a little introduction in terms of your role and responsibility within the group?

Researcher's reflection in action notes

INTVEE: I am one of the staff at the Group's Communication Department, that is the Communications Department for the AEGON and the holding company in this capacity in reporting to the Head or the Director of Group Communications and my role is simply put threefold. One put to advise the Executive Board on communications issues, two, to provide them with text input as a Copywriter, as a Ghost Writer for them and three is being the company's spokesman, not the only one but the lead one at least for the last five years now.

Communications voice of business

INTVR: And your time, you have been at AEGON before and then you left and came back?

INTVEE: That's right, I have worked with AEGON for three years from 1991 to 1994 and did the communications for AEGON The Netherlands, specifically Marketing, PR and Internal Communications and some Public Affairs. I went to work with a consultancy firm for two and a half years and specialised in Investor Relations and Financial Communications. Then I came back to AEGON and was appointed as the Group's Financial Communications Officer.

INTVR: So the key audiences you deal with then are?

INTVEE: Financial journalists and somewhat more indirect really Investment Analysts and Investors.

Influence of these audiences

INTVR: Just in terms of those audiences could you give me just some thoughts on, how do they currently view AEGON Group, how would you typify the image of AEGON to those two audiences?

INTVEE: Over the last few years we've really won ourselves a higher status as a leader in our industry and that was related to a number of large acquisitions, Providian acquisition in 1997

Aspire to industry leadership – does this involve the brand?

and Transamerica in 1999. Those were really two high profile acquisitions and largest transactions ever done at that time. So, a huge increase in shareholder value and stock price in one year increased by 155%, that coincided with a frequent public appearance of our Board members, especially Kees Storm our Executive Board Chairman. In a quite short period of time AEGON got a lot of public attention and a lot of shareholders appreciation, we won ourselves the status of champion of the Stock Exchange if you will and that's status is now constantly being challenged. So being a champion is of course a very nice and honourable position, but it's also a position that in which everyone else starts challenging you. Starting to question the wisdom of acquisitions and other transactions, funding transactions, whatever. Starting to question the quality of decision-making in all kinds of circumstances, specifically, having to do with customer service, questioning the capacity for continued growth in the future. From a situation in which we were able to build and expand our public image, we have come into a phase where we really have to defend the brand, protect the brand.

Business now more open to scrutiny than before

More open to questions on how decisions are made than just the decisions themselves – greater transparency required of the business

INTVR: What sort of challenges did that give you as a Communications Advisor within the business?

INTVEE: What we have to learn as a group is to be more effective in dealing with issues and getting public support. The licence to operate, as it's sometimes called is becoming a concept that is getting more real everyday. People used to shrug their shoulders a little bit when you mentioned this term, but I think they are beginning to see that the leadership of this company has to think and act and communicate more like Politicians do or Political parties do or movements do. And they are very uncomfortable with that, because they are not Politicians, they are not pressure groups and they are not Ideologists, they are businessmen, and they want to do deals and they don't want to lose votes. I think they have to.

Licence to operate is interesting way to look at the business mandate

More control of corporate brand communications required

INTVR: Would you say that has put the pressures on the level of transparency then within the group, that people are, your higher profile has raised, has opened you more to a different sort of scrutiny then to a few years ago.

INTVEE: Definitely, oh yes. Originally it was more intense, the questions were more detailed information, we are being

judged not as much on what the results are but more on what the process is or what the process has been which is led us to certain decisions. More fact finding is being done to determine the values and the norms of the leadership of this company.

INTVR: And what processes do you have internally to help guide the Senior Management on those norms and those values? Is there something set in place here or is it something you have to make on the hoof as so to speak?

INTVEE: It's a combination of personal coaching, personal feedback, media feedback, which can be very confronting, peer pressure. Most of that is institutionalised if that's the correct term, I think it's the correct term. How would you put that in English, we do have plenary meetings, we do have plenary one to one discussions between the Executive Board Members and the Communications Advisors, essentially being the Director of Group Communications and Director of Investor Relations and myself. Being plenary meetings with management team members of all the country team units and the daily clipping file that they get and the comments they get on their remarks in the media.

INTVR: Would you say is there a robust mechanism therefore already in place to handle those things, is it quite a reactive way of doing things in terms of an issue comes up therefore you have to develop an AEGON point of view? Or is it more proactive that there is a plan in place to cover most eventualities?

INTVEE: It's getting more proactive, I would say the Support Staff Specialists or however you would call them do prepare all kinds of scenarios and case files and in some instances even have been doing so for many years. I know of one recent example, that the change of accounting standards in The Netherlands, The Netherlands is going to adopt international accounting standards as of 2005. Which is really following EU rules, regarding corporate reporting and I have prepared a case file on that two years ago, I got an answer one year later and now it's in the media. We really had to improvise a statement and a plan to go forward. So it's not that we did not think of it but the management wasn't really ready to act on it proactively. That doesn't mean that nothing happened, but nothing

Advisory role of group communications in controlling managements' external communications

More institutionalised and strategic control of messages is required

Need for more proactive planning of communications

happened in terms of communications, a lot of effort was put in really talking to Government Officials about these new accounting standards and they tried to reason on what the standards should be for the insurance industry etc. So they did do a lot proactive work but not in terms of creating public support for our system of public reporting which is quite an anomaly in the world I think.

INTVR: Would you say from those audiences point of view, do you think there is a genuine desire on their part to invest time in understanding AEGON or do you think they still just look for an angle of if they can.....

INTVEE: As far as the media are concerned, they just look for an angle, they have a very short memory they have a tendency to look at the anomalies, the negatives, the threats, the wrong doings, the slip ups and I think that's quite a logical behaviour for them. What you call reasonable, normal whatever you call it, but I think that's their purpose. That's what they should do because in general, human beings tend to learn more about the world and about how they should prepare themselves for the future if they know about what can go wrong and how to respond to that.

Journalists don't spend an awful lot of time in getting to know AEGON; analysts and investors do. And they are really trying to get the complete picture, they want to know all the dirty details and all the nice details and all the beauty and all the successes.

INTVR: Do you think does that place a great emphasis from a communications point of view or an increased emphasis on the need to be consistent with how you approach information and how you approach your dialogue?

INTVEE: Absolutely, because one way of judging corporate values, norms or corporate behaviour is looking for inconsistencies. They are not looking for consistencies, but they are really looking for inconsistencies in order to make a judgement. So there is really no room for inconsistencies and there's a very strong need to go out proactively and repeat core or key messages, core information about the group. Whilst the audience is widening, the life span of the message seems to be shortening and the media are always challenging us to be inconsistent. They would like us to be inconsistent because that brings out new stories a new

Issue of consistency is important as external audiences look for inconsistency

Need to improve levels of understanding and familiarity with the business

Need to repeat core message as the audience for the business is always widening and new people come into contact

angle etc. So it's boring to them that we are consistent in our communications, which makes it more difficult to gain access to the media in some respects, but it's very much a policy to cling to that consistency. And at the same time, we must find ways to be an interesting partner or interesting company to write about, think about and invest in.

Need to find ways to be both consistent and interesting in terms of telling compelling stories

INTVR: Would you say, just on that need to be interesting, would you say that AEGON is a group that does have strong points of view, that are interesting to external audiences or does it try and be more neutral in terms of, if you don't have strong points of view then it makes you less susceptible to being attacked in the media.

INTVEE: I think we have very strong points of view, yes, I think we have very strong opinions about most issues and I think there is no other way of doing it, we have to position ourselves as a company with a very strong personality, very strong ideas, because, I think, that's the way we got here in the first place. Not by following others, but by wanting to lead ourselves and no, I think AEGON has a great talent of really presenting itself. It's own point of view regardless of what the fashion is and the flavour of the month. We don't shun being contrary.

Can strong opinions and ideas be incorporated in the corporate brand as corporate beliefs?

INTVR: Could you give a couple of examples of that, of where you have consciously had a point of view that doesn't conform with maybe the rest of the market or the rest of the insurance sector?

INTVEE: Absolutely, the last example, the most recent example is the accounting system that we have, we defend the way we account for indirect investment income by using this method, 30 year average yield, and a seven year unit value averaging value etc. It's quite a complicated system, but we think it's the best system, which gives the best representation of profitability as we create it through our contracts with a life span of about 30 years an average as well. That's the most recent example. Another example is the fact that we have stated that all that talk about recession in the US is really a hype and it's not going to affect the insurance industry as much as people were led to believe. Before that, we stated that the information technology or the technology hype, the internet hype was a hype. And that was before that even before acknowledged. So March

of last year, I think, Kees Storm the Executive chairman made this statement that AEGON was not going to invest so many billions in information technology or in internet initiatives, because it was just irrational to make such a statement and to believe that the world would change overnight and that the internet would be the only distribution channel for life insurance. We made a very clear and contrary statement that the bulk of our business for many years to come would be brought in through agents, intermediaries. Another statement would have been that, and still is, that AEGON doesn't believe in bancassurance, doesn't believe in the one stop shopping concept of having all financial services under one roof in one company because they are very different kinds of business, which require different kinds of management structures, approval systems, investment policies, marketing products. We have been expressing that for many years now, and in some years we are getting more credit for it than in others, in general the multiples, the P/E ratios are still in favour of pure life insurance companies rather than hybrid companies, bancassurers etc. Those are a few examples.

Example of strong belief system in business

How to turn these strong beliefs into part of the corporate brand they give the business a point of view on key topics

INTVR: Those are good ones, thank you. Just coming on to the culture of AEGON, I mean at a group level I am interested in how would you define the culture, is there a typical culture to the AEGON group?

INTVEE: I would typify the corporate culture as being direct, ambitious, informal, professional, highly ethical, self-willed, those are key words, in my perception.

Link between description of culture and values or norms of the business

INTVR: How, just in three areas that in which that manifests itself one just in terms of how the organisation thinks, so the sort of belief systems in the organisations. How do those sort of factors affect the philosophy of the business?

INTVEE: On a corporate level it manifests itself in the way decisions are being made, in the way the management exchange of views within the management teams is taking place, so very few plenary meetings, there are a lot of informal meetings. There's a lot of exchange of faxes, emails, telephone calls, all odd hours of the day. People, experts are being called in for their input on the basis of their expertise and often on the basis of their status of position within the organisation.

Behaviours used to give concrete examples of the main beliefs of the business

Appendix 11.5: AEGON study sample reflection-in-action data display

Phase One intervention

Variable	Common Issues	Inhibitors	Possible Facilitators
1.0 Reputation	Acknowledged that this element is crucial in communicating the corporate brand	Lack of clarity in defining and communicating these elements, particularly purpose and corporate	Need process to identify and define these elements
1.1 Purpose	No clearly agreed definition of purpose or Group mission	Previous focus on financial goals and shareholder value statements	Growing acceptance in business that having a Mission is important
1.2 Commitments	A number of statements have been made but no framework for consistent communication	Lack of any clear guiding framework	New requirements for corporate social responsibility and creation of new Group committee
1.3 Values	No agreed set of corporate values articulated throughout group Lack of clear corporate style to guide behaviours and communication	Previous initiative in 1999 shelved as resources and attention needed to be re-directed De-centralised structure does not encourage group behaviours and actions. Diversity is strongly encouraged across the Group	Acceptance among group that these elements are important and need to be brought back onto the agenda Use of Group communication channels to promote and support these values and provide tangible examples across the Group to reinforce aligned corporate behaviour

Appendix 11.6 AEGON study Workshop slides

AEGON Corporate Brand workshop

David Bickerton
Cranfield School of Management
August 2001

Research summary

- Series of individual interviews
- Purpose to discuss role and management of AEGON corporate brand
- All interviews recorded and transcribed
- Text analysed
- Verbal branding communications audit on AEGON Group published material

Interview sample

- Group Communications
- Investor Relations
- Group Treasury

Core values

- Absence of clearly defined and documented values
- Acceptance that key audiences are now more interested in the values and norms of the leadership
- No link into corporate behaviour
- Considerable consistency on values set from respondents

Core values - selected quotes

We have chosen one word and that is respect to symbolise our values

We have to respect the individual units habits and the way they do business but there has to be a factor that keeps it all together

The corporate values project was stalled in 1999 and needs to be brought back

Mission/purpose

- No clear statement of purpose for the Group
- Agreement that this is missing and needs addressing
- Without this AEGON appears one-dimensional - only concerned with making money

Does the absence of such an element matter?

"A good company delivers excellent products and services, a great company delivers excellent products and services and strives to make the world a better place"

Chairman, Ford Motor Company

Mission/purpose - selected quotes

AEGON enables people to enjoy life

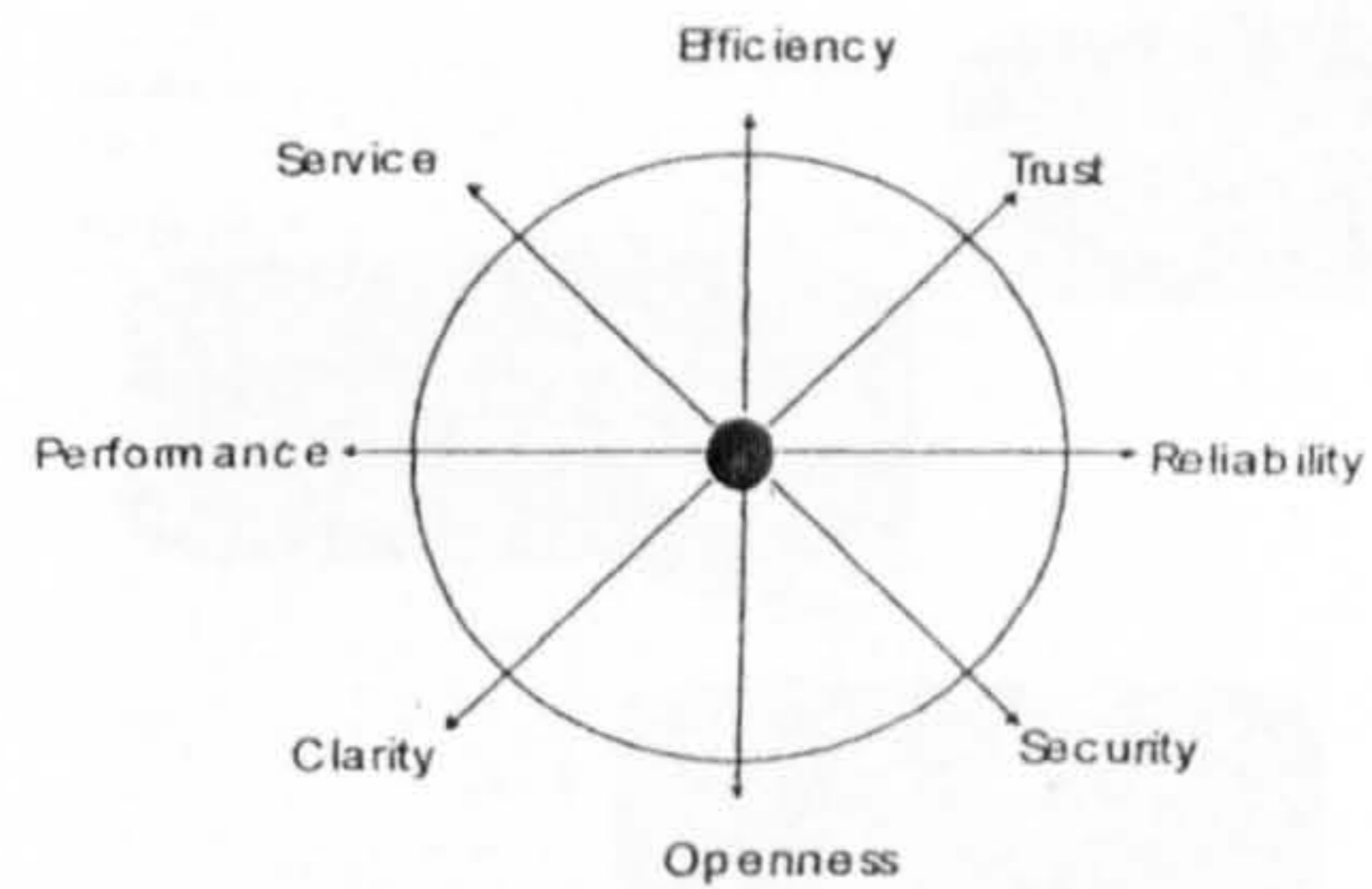
There is no clear statement of what I would call purpose in the organisation

We do not explicitly communicate our purpose and I don't know why exactly

Customer value

- Much of discussion centered around shareholder value
- Less clarity on discussing customer value (end consumer and intermediary)
- Identified a collection of main drivers

Customer value drivers



Customer value - selected quotes

Good policies and good service. You don't have to explain that it is a good policy because its named AEGON

AEGON products have different unique selling points for different people

The most important thing is security, financial security

Role of Group Communications

- Need for clear statement of Mission, Vision and Values
- Opportunity to give these elements some meaning inside the Group
- Need to make AEGON corporate brand more tangible/accessible
- Use corporate brand to create a common bond across business
- Question on how to link 4 strategic pillars to this work
- Need for stronger currency to influence business units communications
- Group Communications to be seen as guardians of visual and verbal branding

Role of Group Communications

Our role should be to make the AEGON brand more accessible

The group has to do a lot more to communicate its values and group communications must lead this

We have quite a reactive way of doing things in terms of an issue comes up and we have to develop a point of view

Barriers to creating common language

- Decentralization and control issues
- Problems of finding a workable solution to suit everyone
- Should solution be bottom up or top down?
- As audience widens life span of message shortens - need for consistency

Barriers to creating a common language

One of the ways of judging corporate values, norms and behaviour is to look for inconsistencies

More fact finding is being done to determine the values and norms of the leadership

The decentralized structure makes it more difficult to find a central common language for the group

Need to think about the corporate brand across different audiences



Economic interest
Economic impact

AEGON

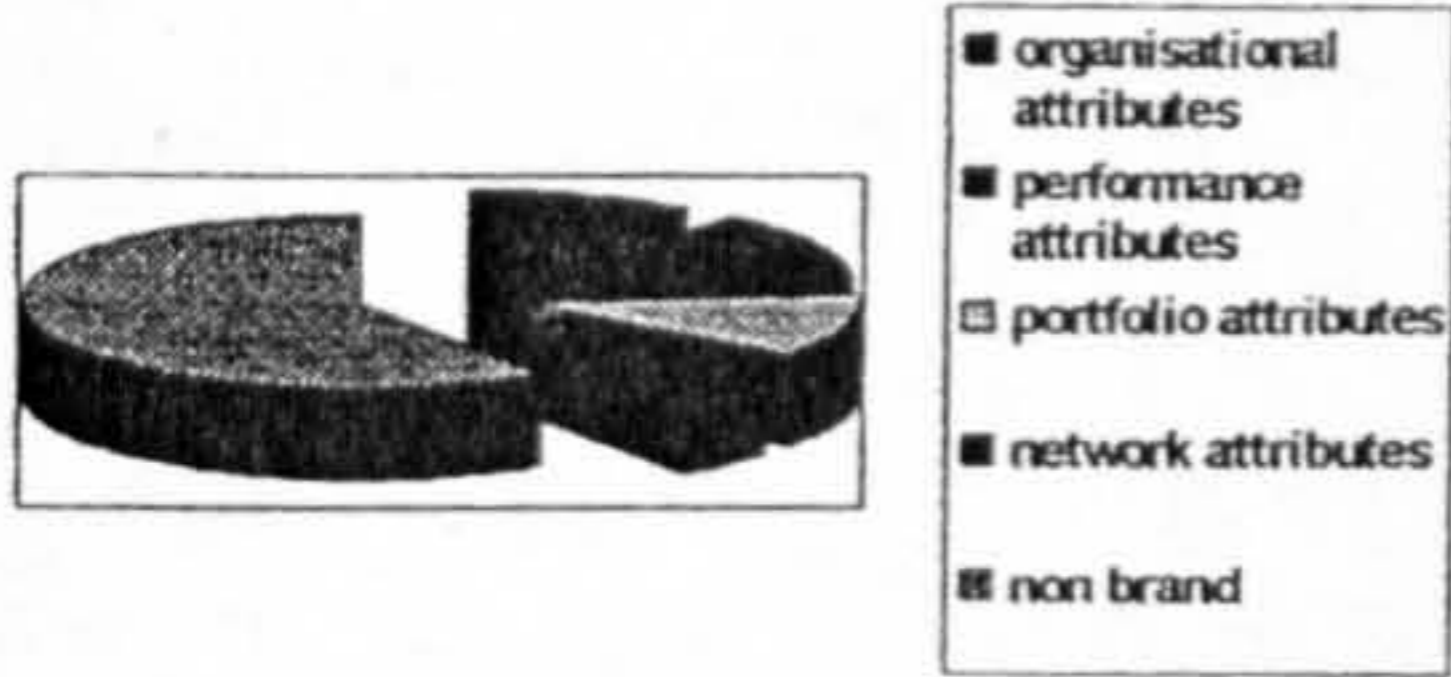
Verbal communications audit

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Methodology

- Sample of published material
- Conducted August 2001
- Sources used include Annual Report, corporate website, AEGONWISE, press releases
- Sample of 1200 lines of text
- All text was analysed on a line by line basis
- Categorized into four main corporate brand categories
- Second level of coding for messages contained within each category
- Measuring consistency of messaging

Overview of content analysis results



Purpose statements

Statement	Frequency
...to provide a high level of customer service	15
...to ensure the highest quality of products	12
...to ensure the highest quality of service	10
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services	8
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service	5

Commitments statements

Statement	Frequency
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services	15
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service	12
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	10
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	8

Values statements

Statement	Frequency
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services	15
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service	12
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	10
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	8

Performance statements - what you do

Statement	Frequency
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services	15
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service	12
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	10
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	8

Performance statements - how you do it

Statement	Frequency
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services	15
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service	12
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	10
...to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services and to provide a high level of customer service and to ensure the highest quality of products and services	8

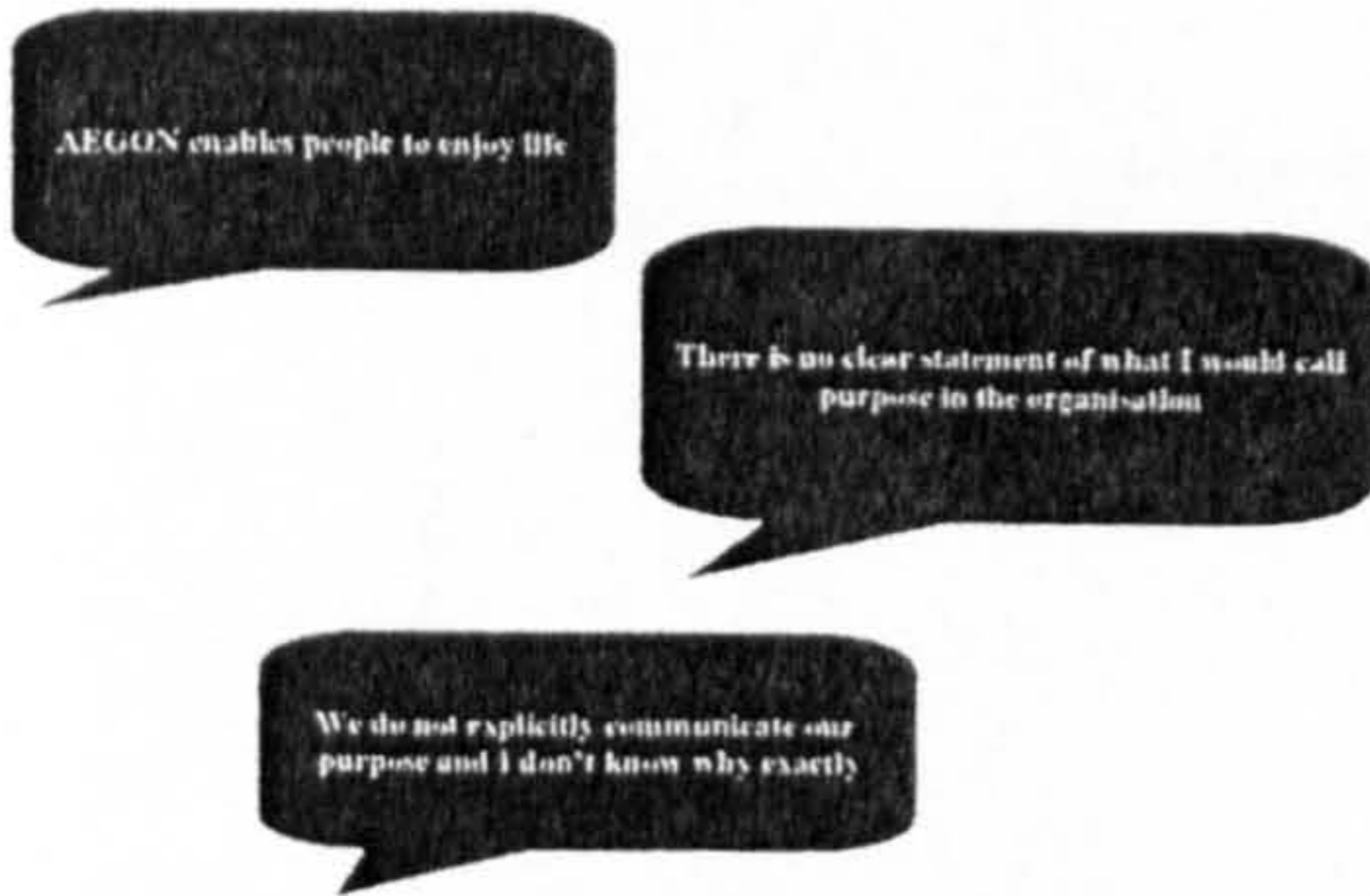
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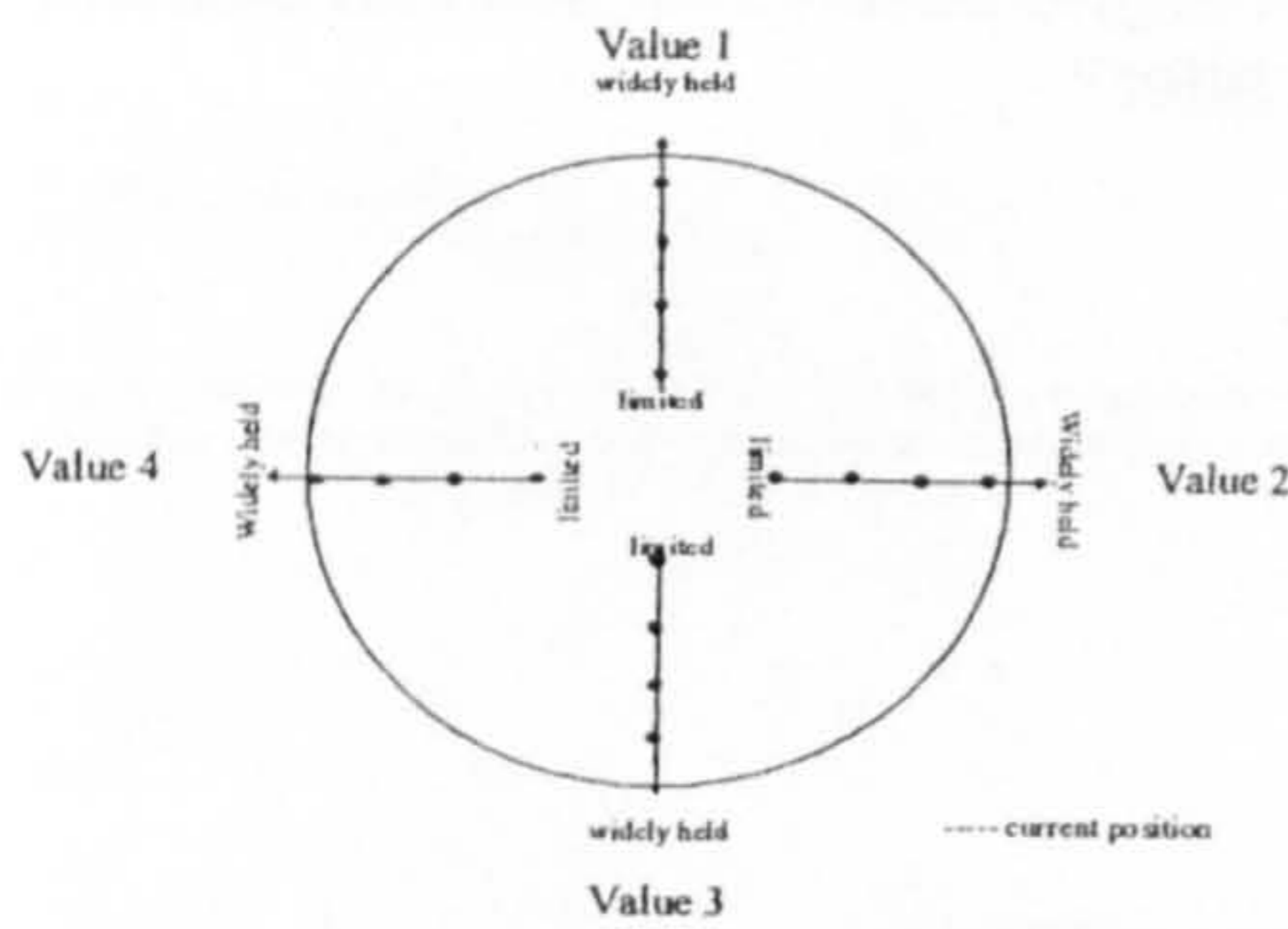
Mission/purpose - selected quotes



Customer value drivers



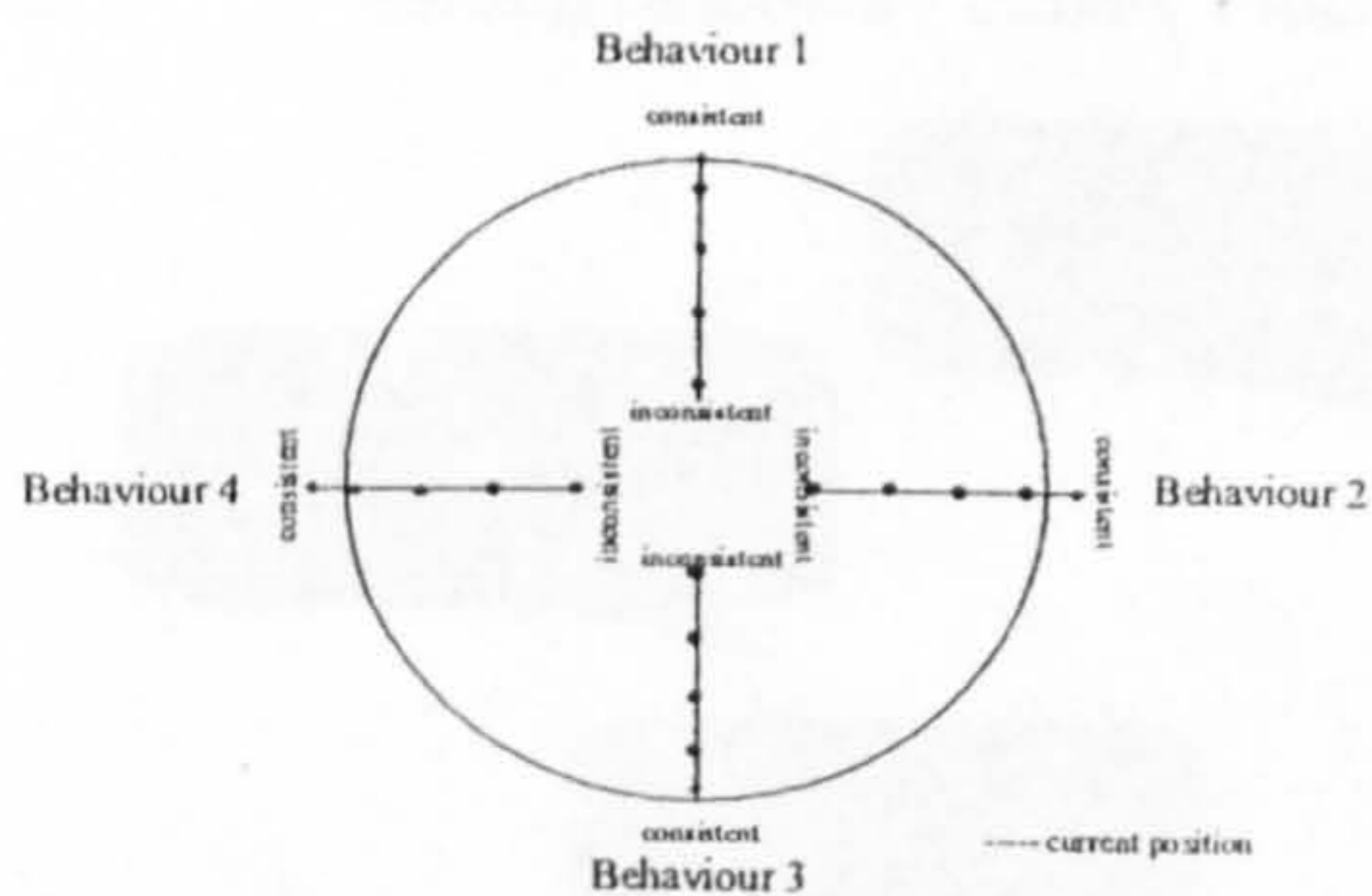
Belief systems monitor



Belief systems monitor

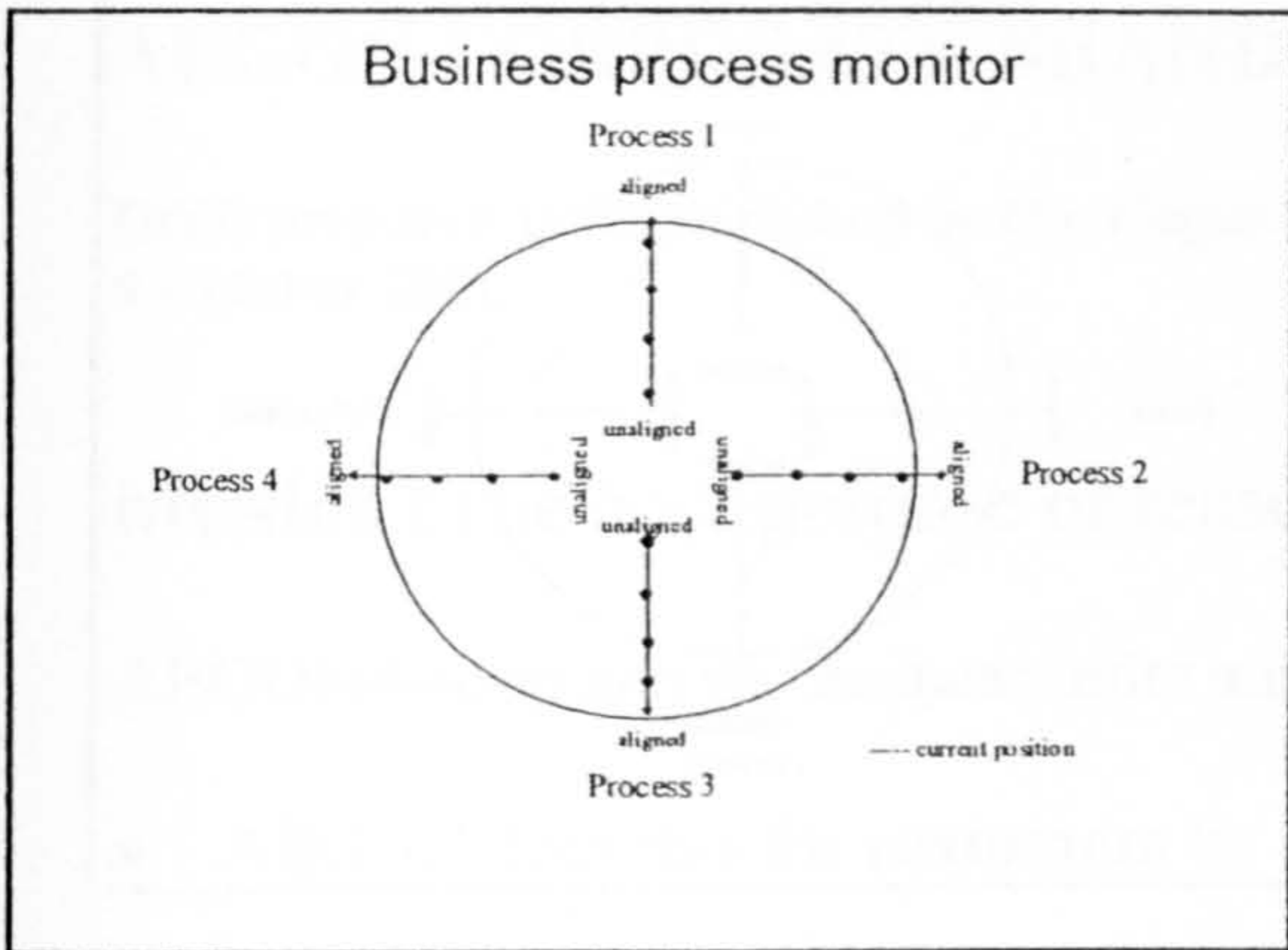
- Agree values
- Identify how these values will guide behaviour
- Discuss and measure strength and consistency of current beliefs in business
- Plot on monitor
- Definition - the guiding beliefs and philosophy of the group

Behaviours monitor



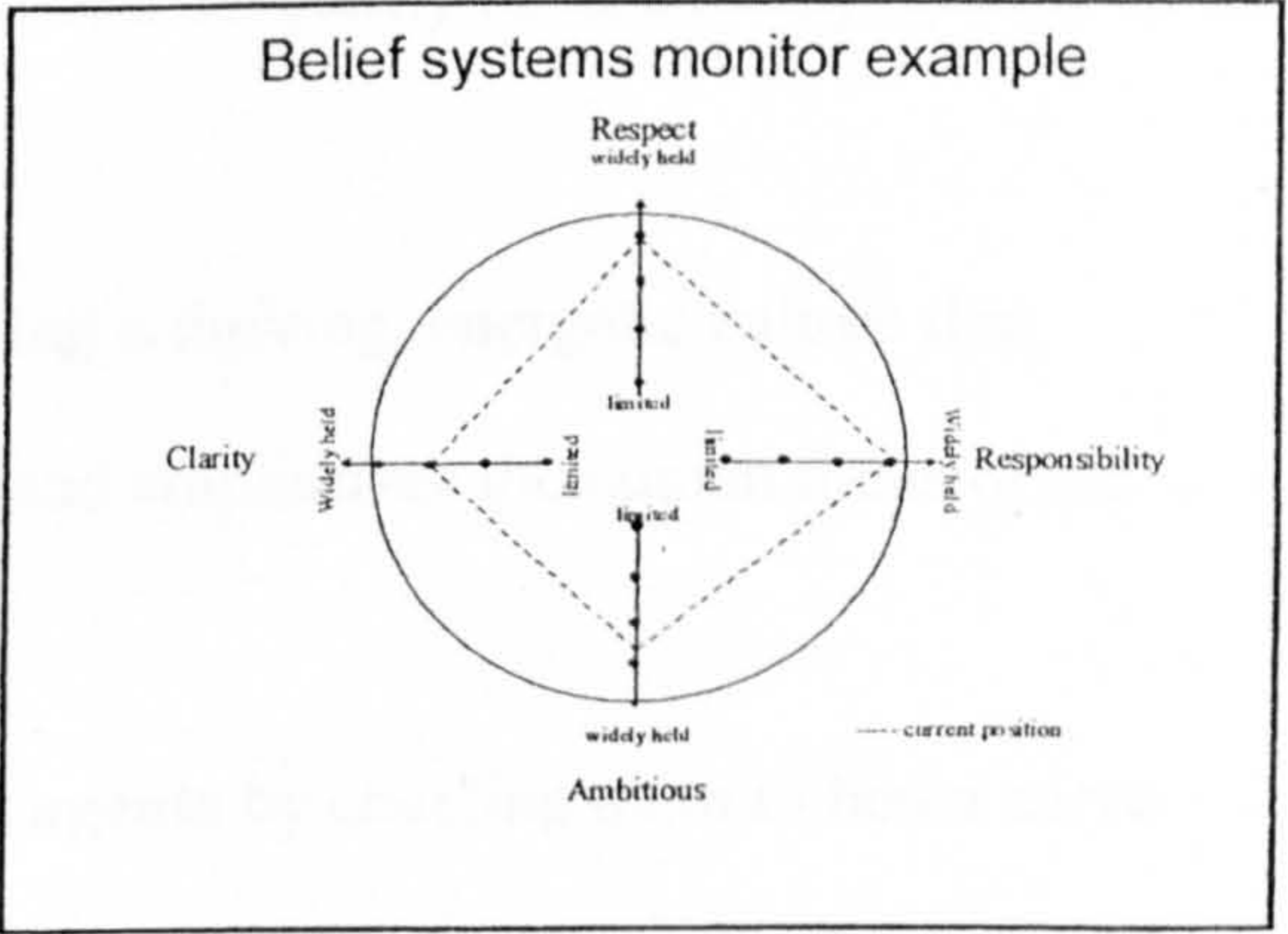
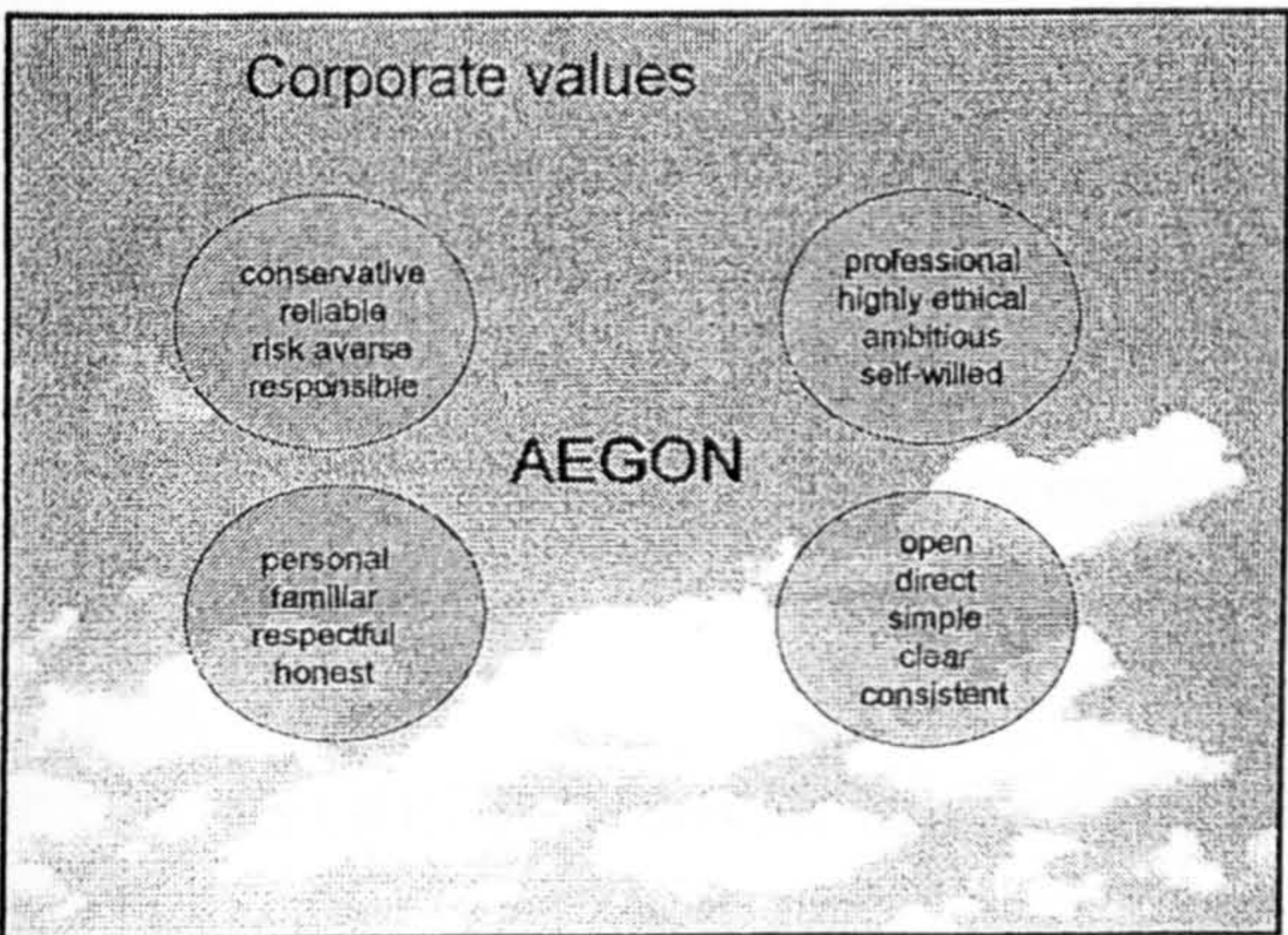
Behaviours monitor

- Discuss current behaviour patterns in organisation
- Debate how these relate to values set
- Plot current alignment of behaviours with values on monitor
- Identify what changes in behaviour are needed to live the brand
- Definition - the main characteristics that define the actions of the group



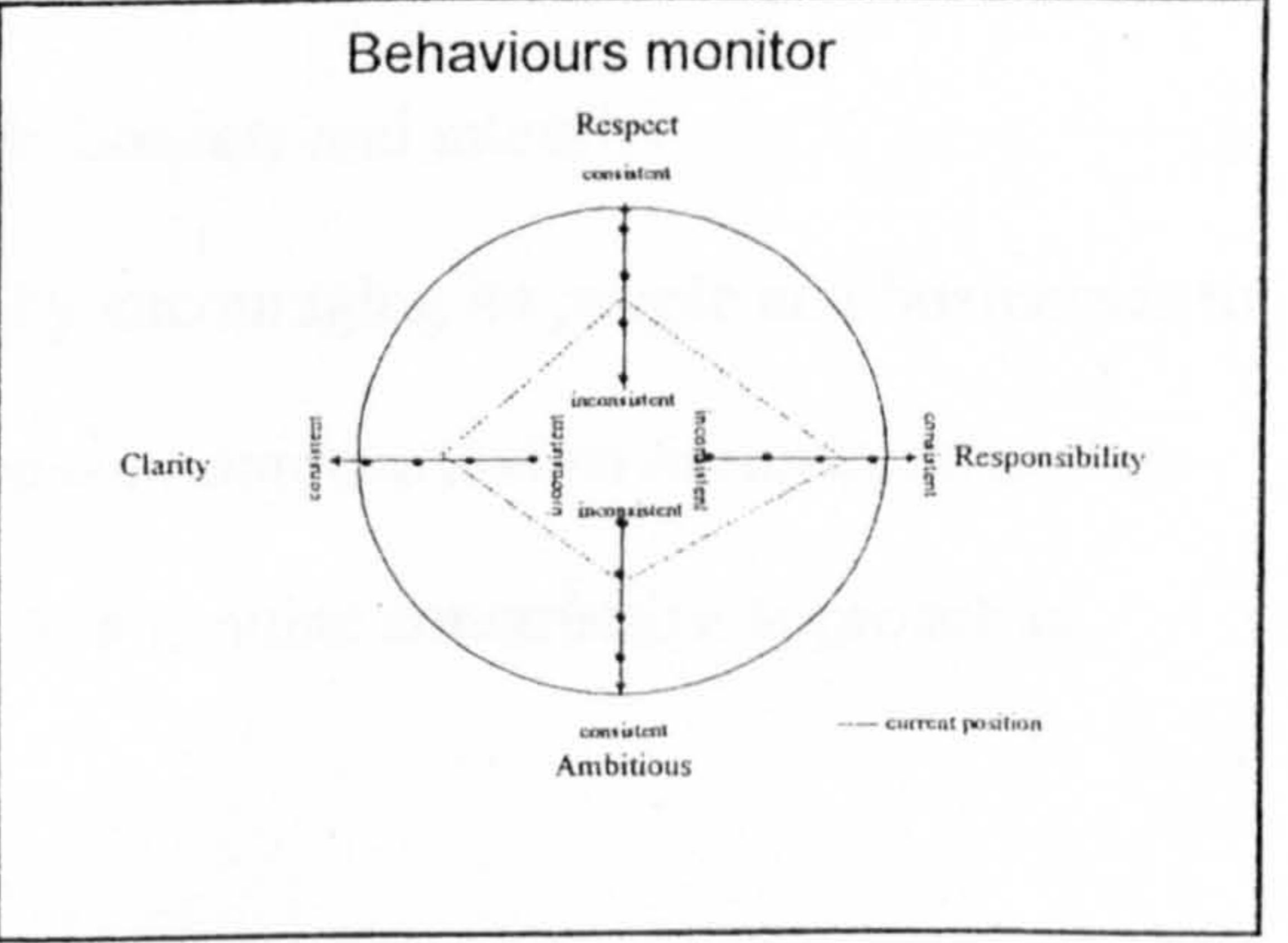
Business processes

- Identify core business processes
- Discuss how vision and values set can help align or reinforce these processes
- Identify how aligned processes are currently to the corporate brand definition
- Plot on monitor
- Definition - the main operating principles of the group



Behaviours that characterize AEGON

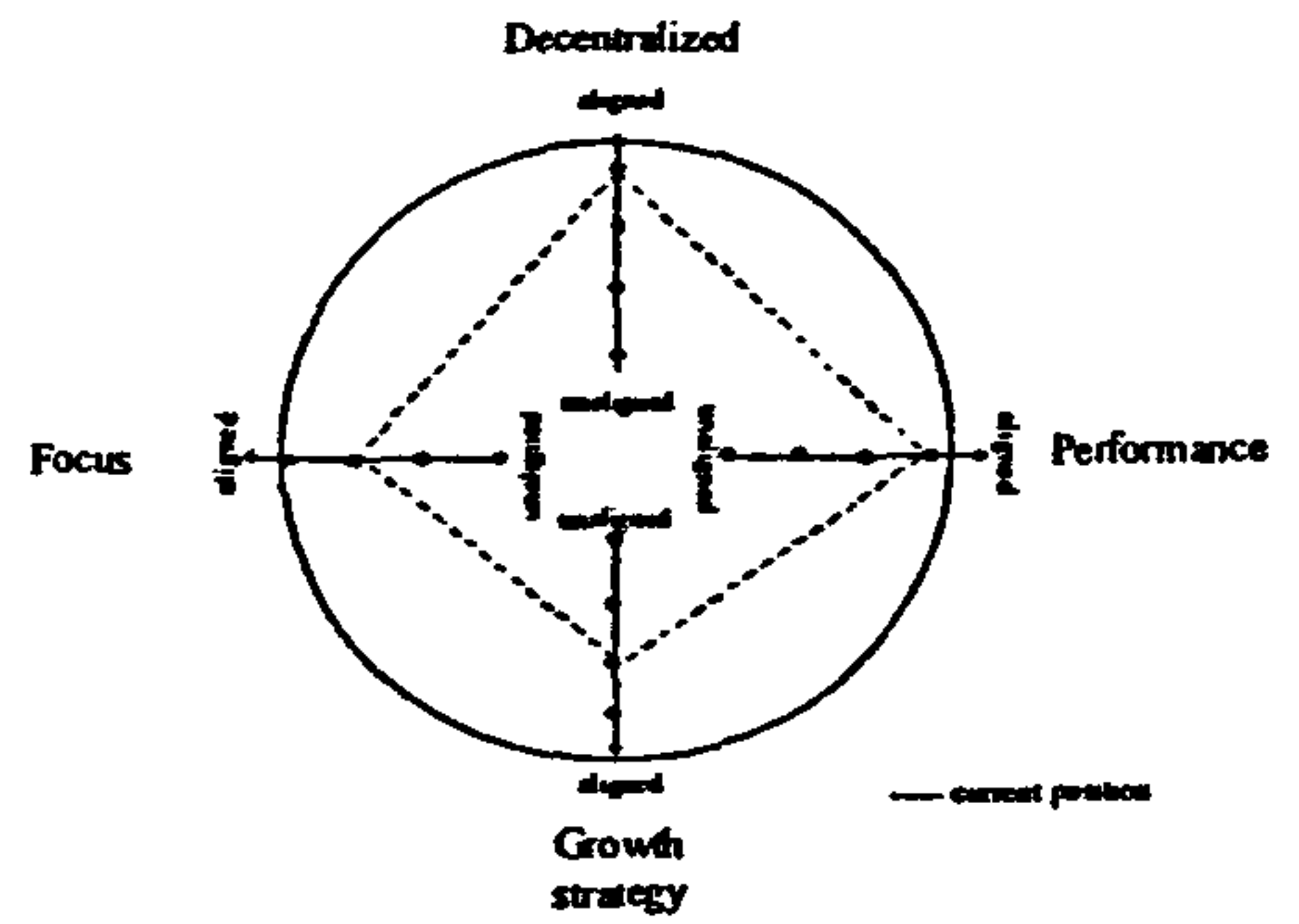
- Decentralized
- Clear performance goals
- Cautious on acquisitions
- Focused by both business and geography
- Entrepreneurial



Business processes that characterize AEGON

- Decentralized
- Clear reporting lines
- Fiat structure
- Management autonomy

Business process monitor



Appendix 11.8 AEGON study draft corporate brand statements

AEGON CORPORATE BRAND STATEMENTS

**Draft prepared from workshop in The Hague
4 October 2001**

Mission (The core purpose or reason for being of the business)

AEGON Group and its business units aim to *create better futures*

- **AEGON does this for **customers** by providing products that offer them financial protection and asset accumulation**
- **AEGON does this for **stockholders** by providing attractive shareholder returns and high levels of security and reassurance through the clarity of its strategy, quality of its management and its financial track record**
- **AEGON does this for **employees** by creating a thriving, energetic culture that encourages respect, rewards performance and emphasizes the human focus of the business**
- **AEGON does this for **intermediaries and agents** by enabling them to better serve their clients through greater market insight, low cost production and robust administrative systems**
- **AEGON does this for **partners** by envisioning futures and generating ideas that offer real mutual benefit and dealing with clarity, honesty and integrity**
- **AEGON does this for other **stakeholders** by encouraging its people and businesses to recognize their wider responsibilities to the communities and environment that they operate in. Creating better futures extends to a genuine constructive approach to sustainability issues.**

AEGON is, at heart, a business about people

Commitments (What's important or matters to the business)

This Mission as stated indicates certain commitments to the audiences for the AEGON Group. These can be summarized as follows:

For our policyholders we will offer innovative, flexible and high quality products which provide security, income and asset accumulation. We will communicate the benefits of these products with openness and clarity. Our products are backed by the reassurance of our international reputation for quality, reliability and performance.

For our stockholders we aim to offer consistently attractive returns, communicated in an open and clear fashion to all interested parties. We explain the fundamentals of our business, provide clarity on future direction and realistic assessments on future performance (qualify). We value our reputation for predictability.

For our people we encourage responsibility and initiative. Accountability and reward are part of the employment offer at AEGON for people who can thrive in a challenging and self-starting environment. We welcome people who can combine an entrepreneurial zeal with a strong sense of fairness and respect for the right ways to do things.

Group values (Central and enduring beliefs that guide the business)

The main beliefs or philosophies that guide the Group and its businesses are explained below. They have been fundamental to the growth and success of the Group and remain central to the way that AEGON will do business in the future.

Respect

AEGON people show respect in their dealings with customers and intermediaries by taking a committed interest in their needs and motivations as individuals with their own tastes and requirements. AEGON people respect different viewpoints and show flexibility in responding to these diverse needs. Our dealings with them are governed by the need to acknowledge this individuality as we seek to provide answers that suit them.

The Group encourages the value of diversity, respecting the importance and sovereignty of local market trends and conditions. These factors can best be understood and harnessed successfully by managers with local understanding and empathy.

AEGON people respect different viewpoints and show flexibility in responding to these diverse needs.

AEGON people are respectful in their dealings with each other. They have a strong sense of being part of a shared venture or enterprise.

Responsibility

AEGON businesses encourage initiative and drive in their people. Freedom to operate is a key element of our approach, supported by a clear framework of objectives and reporting lines.

This responsibility allows individuals to develop new ideas and new ways of working, setting standards and pushing boundaries to continually deliver value for our customers. With this level of freedom and individual responsibility managers are accountable for the performance of their units. AEGON seeks to create clear guidelines for performance and behaviour, which both guide and empower the individual.

The Group as a whole is prepared to set itself targets and to measure its performance against these targets at all levels of the business.

Ambition

AEGON is a dynamic business that encourages innovation and initiative. The provision of clear financial frameworks and flat operating structures encourages AEGON people to conduct their business with an entrepreneurial zeal.

The Group philosophy emphasizes the importance of performance and welcomes the determination of its people to look for improvements and opportunities in all areas of the business. Whilst individual inputs and viewpoints are welcome, ambition is best fostered at a team level with small units encouraged to develop initiatives themselves and share in the rewards for their ideas and initiatives.

AEGON encourages 'a bias towards action' in its people and businesses.

Clarity

AEGON wants to be known and regarded as a Group that prides itself in open and direct behaviour. In an increasingly complicated business AEGON sets the standard for simple and understandable products.

This simplicity is also reflected in a flat business structure with small, locally managed business units taking responsibility for their own direction and performance. Objectives, reporting lines and performance measures are all set out and clearly understood across the business.

AEGON is prepared to stand out from the pack in its beliefs and actions and will explain its position with clarity and conviction to all interested parties.

Performance attributes

What the AEGON Group does

AEGON Group is the holding company of one of the world's largest life insurance groups. The majority of our business is in the area of life insurance, pensions and related savings and investment products. The Group is also active in accident insurance, health insurance, general insurance and certain banking activities.

The Group's businesses offer a diverse portfolio of products, which serve almost every segment of the life insurance and pensions markets. The depth and breadth of this portfolio enables customers to fulfill their financial security needs.

How the AEGON Group delivers

AEGON is a dynamic and driving Group of businesses which actively encourages and rewards product innovation. New products and service initiatives are developed by business units maintaining close contact with customers, partners, agents and distributors and using this insight and expertise to respond to their needs.

Innovation extends across both areas of product design and approaches to product access.

AEGON is committed to providing the best possible products and services at the best price through an intense and sustained focus on cost-control and productivity.

Portfolio attributes

How the AEGON Group's products are presented to the customer

The AEGON Group operates a **multi-brand** strategy to optimize the benefits of local market profile and preferred distribution channels. New products are carefully designed to meet the most important customer needs, offering performance in either wealth protection or accumulation. The use of multiple branding enables AEGON's businesses to target and maximize their appeal to these identified market segments in a way which builds customer commitment and loyalty.

These brands are supported by a flexible production capability that capitalizes on the powerful economies of scale available to the Group, which aims to offer lowest cost production across the widest range of products.

The AEGON Group operates a **multi-channel distribution** strategy, which aims to build distribution strength and diversity. We retain a long-term commitment to agents and intermediaries as we believe that the familiarity and trust of face-to-face contact provides an informed, personalized and professional service.

Where appropriate, AEGON looks to offer certain products through more direct channels such as banks, internet and direct marketing, as these provide cost-effective channels for the promotion of more mass market products. A third main channel is based upon partnering and joint ventures with marketing groups, financial institutions and other parties. These are often long-term relationships built upon mutual respect for our partners' expertise and business objectives.

Network attributes

The AEGON Group is a genuinely connected organization, which operates a **multi-domestic international** approach. This involves the development of an international team of locally managed businesses within a decentralized framework and flat management structure. This operating structure and style fosters and encourages an entrepreneurial and creative culture across the Group.


This network approach is designed to deal at a local level with differences in regulatory, tax law and market behaviour that shape the investment activities in each market and region.

This decentralized structure is constantly reviewed at all levels to retain flexibility and adapt rapidly to changing local circumstances.

Appendix 11.9

AEGON Group
Communications workshop

Workshop notes



22 April 2002

Introduction

This document records the output of a Group Communications workshop held on 22 April 2002.

The contents summarize the ideas generated by the Group at the session. These include re-worked statements for each value as a creative exercise in word generation, lists of opposite words/concepts for each value and checklists for writing to reflect each value.

Creative writing exercise	3
Opposite words to values	5
Questions asked to check against each value	8
Lists to expressing each value	11

Creative writing exercise

Respect re-written

Getting under someone else's skin and knowing the other so well that you act in line with his/her thinking. Treat someone else as you would like to be treated yourself. Act in such a way that you avoid embarrassment and his understanding.

The desire or will to share knowledge to understand each other and acting on the result of that sharing. Accepting each others' differences and being clear about them. The truth can hurt but it is important to tell the truth.

Respecting differences makes progress.

Responsibility re-written

Take your accountability since you are free and encouraged to take it yet within a framework. That framework which is set by the corporate culture (plus values) and ambitious goals using your own creativity.

The energetic setting of the AEGON culture inspires you to explore new ways and stimulates out of the box thinking.

Striving towards continuously improving futures for all AEGON stakeholders.

Creative writing exercise

Ambition re-written

We are a lively group with clear goals. New initiatives and determination are valued. Our structure and open culture allows us to act with energy and drive.

We are forward looking and seek to exceed our targets by driving progress and constantly seeking new markets and fresh ideas.

We co-operate in teams to harness those individual ideas. Team members gain from exchanging initiatives and generating new ways of doing business.

Clarity re-written

We like being a transparent company - an organization that tells it like it is. In a world that is more complex every day we want our customers to understand our products and we want to talk straight to all our stakeholders.

We are de-centralized which allows those close to the customer to manage themselves, to know who is helping them and what is expected of them.

Opposite words to Respect value

Blinkered

Egotistical

Rude

Discrimination

Refusal to look at world around you

Opposite words to respect include those that show a narrow view of the world and lack of courtesy for those around you.

Opposite words to Responsibility value

Opposite words for responsibility cover rigidity and lack of flexibility through to words that reflect a lack of accountability.

Unacceptable behaviour

Discourage

Dull

Forced behaviour

Inflexibility

Suffocating

Conditioned behaviour

Striving for personal gain

Consensus thinking

Playing it safe

Opposite words to Ambition value

Lack of focus
 No interest
 Lack of pride
 Lethargy
 Laziness
 Safe - stick to the middle
 Uninterested/apathetic
 Reluctance to change
 Living in the past

Opposite words to ambition covered expressions of lack of drive through to an inability to push forward.

Opposite words to Clarity value

Opposite words to clarity span from those that express imprecision through to words that reflect deliberate acts to mislead or mis-form.

Obscure
 Opaque
 Vague
 Hidden
 Lying
 Obfuscation
 Confusion
 Hiding/avoiding
 Hierarchical
 Command and control

Questions asked to check against each value

Respect

Does it acknowledge diversity?
 Does it show considerate behaviour?
 Is it human enough?

Responsibility

Does it show trust in individuals/groups?
 Does it show freedom within a framework?
 Does it show initiative?

Questions asked to check against each value

Ambition

Does it show progress?
 Is the language used active rather than passive?
 Does it show innovation?

Clarity

Is it open?
 Is it direct?
 Is it simple?

Limits to expressing each value

Outside zone	AEGON copy zone	Outside zone
Hinkered Cautious Kneetorial	Respect	Subservient Too humble
Too strict No flexibility	Responsibility	Freedom without support No parameters
Apathy	Ambition	Overreaching ambition
Vague Complex and Confusing	Clarity	Totally transparent Indirect

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Appendix 11.10a: AEGON study relative frequency content analysis

Organisation Elements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	30	40	50	60	70	80
Purpose																										
Content Analysis 1: August 2001																										
						</																				

Appendix 11.10f: AEGON study relative frequency content analysis

Portfolio attributes

Product brands

Content Analysis 1: August 2001

	50	45	40	35	30	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Concept		
																							9										Moneymax
																										5							multibranded
																										5							AEGON branded products
																											4						Spaarbeleg
																												3					Transamerica
																											3						Banamex
																													2				Coverna
																													1				Goaltender
																													1				sophisticated customized
																													1				BOLI/COLI
																													1				Scottish Equitable
																													1				AB AEGON
																													1				Special Markets group
																													1				E-Rekening
																													1				GICs

Content Analysis 2: June 2002

	50	45	40	35	30	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Concept		
																																	brand diversity
																																	parent brand
																																	multi-brand approach

Appendix 11.10h: AEGON study relative frequency content analysis

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
Network attributes																																	
	Network																																
Content Analysis 1: August 2001																																	
	Concept																																
	decentralized organization																																
	partners																																
	relationships																																
	locally managed units																																
	units have own priorities																																
	national focus																																
	diversity of growth approaches																																
	AEGON academy																																
	AEGON University																																
	internal networking																																
	building e-links between units																																
Content Analysis 2: June 2002																																	
	decentralized organization																																
	agents and intermediaries																																
	distribution partners																																
	internal co-operation																																

Appendix 11.11: AEGON study Exit interview semi-structured questionnaire

AEGON study

Background/Introduction

In the last year I have been involved in helping you define the AEGON corporate brand and tone of voice as part of my Cranfield Ph.D. thesis. I would like to now review with you to see how the process is going, and what you believe have been the key issues, learning points and challenges so that I can finish off this study by reviewing the key learning of all who have taken part in the process.

Question areas

For this interview I would like to review the following:

- How is the new articulation of the AEGON brand working in practice? Why do you think this has happened?
- Have you seen any impact in terms of your communication with stakeholders? Can you give me any examples?
- Have you noticed any differences internally in the way you approach issues? Could you give me any examples of how you have noticed these changes?
- What have been the key learning points of the process so far for both you and the group?
- Looking back at the process (including the workshops), what other steps do you think we could have been taken in hindsight to improve the process of the study?
- Do you believe that there is now a stronger consensus about the key attributes of the AEGON corporate brand moving forward? Why do you think this is the case?

- If we started such a project again now what would you do differently? Why do you have this view?

Closing section

Thank you for responding to these questions and for your continued support for my academic project. I will now be writing up the final version of the project report for my thesis and will be sending a copy to Gijsbert Siertsema for further comments.

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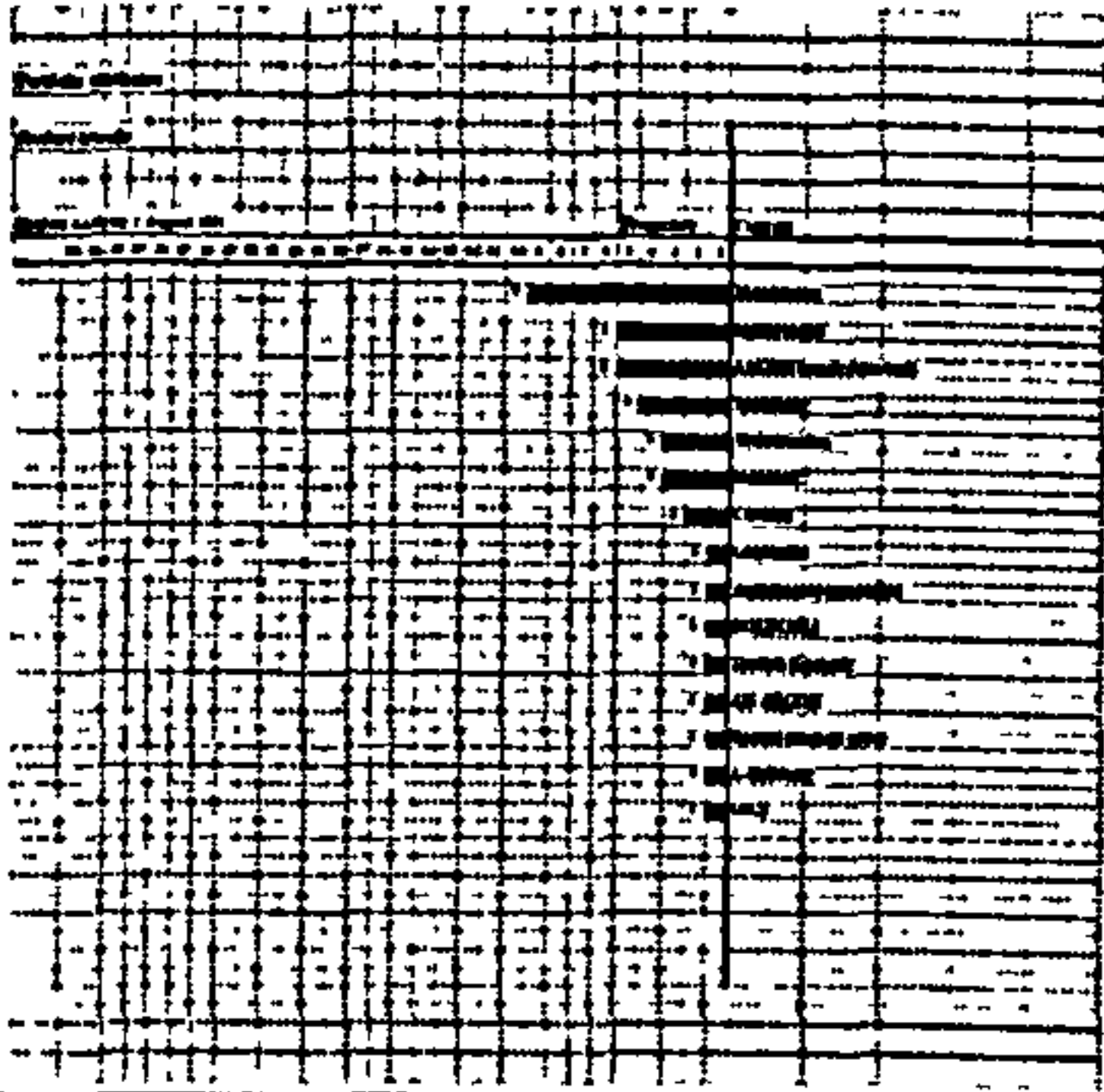
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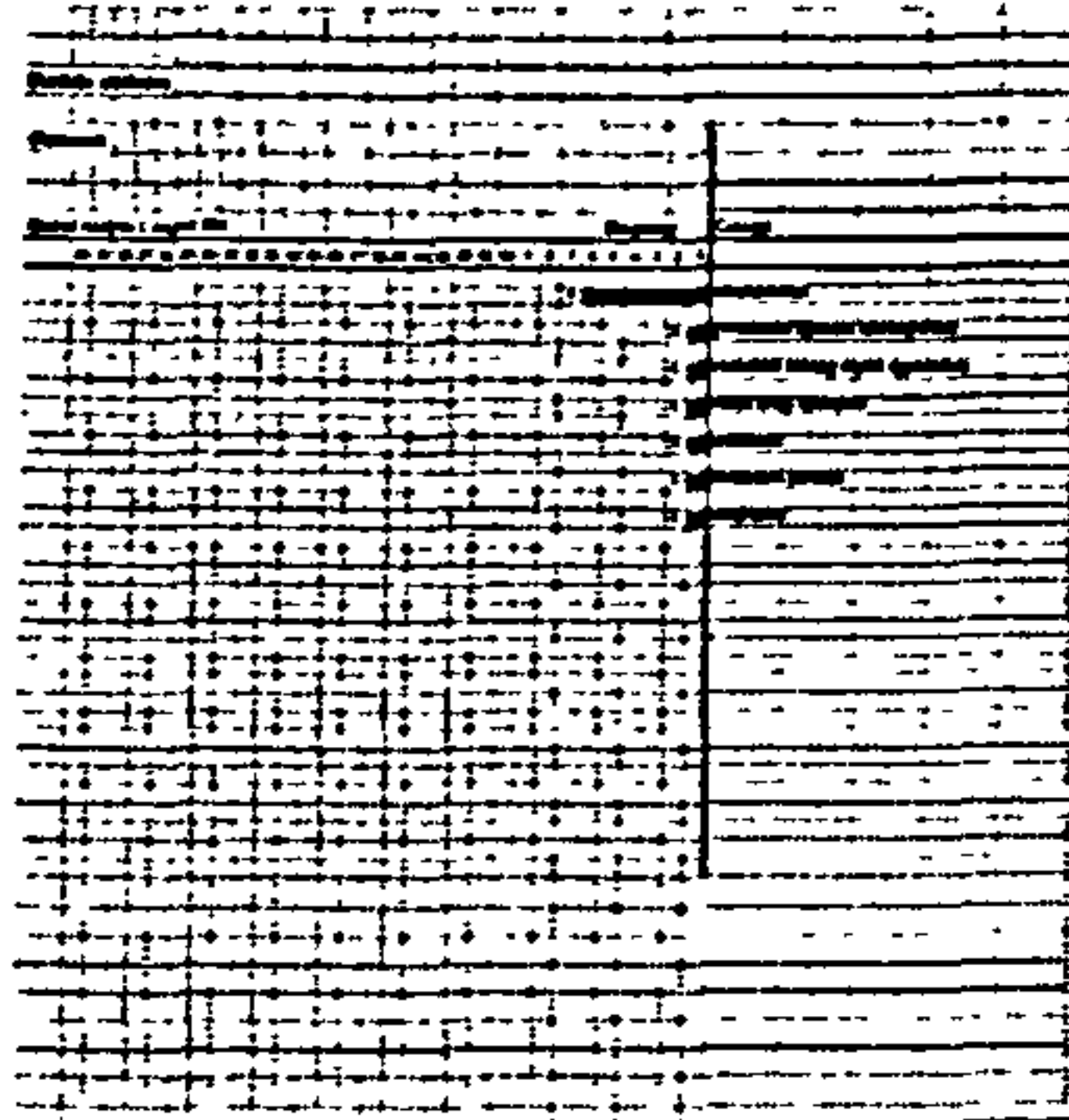
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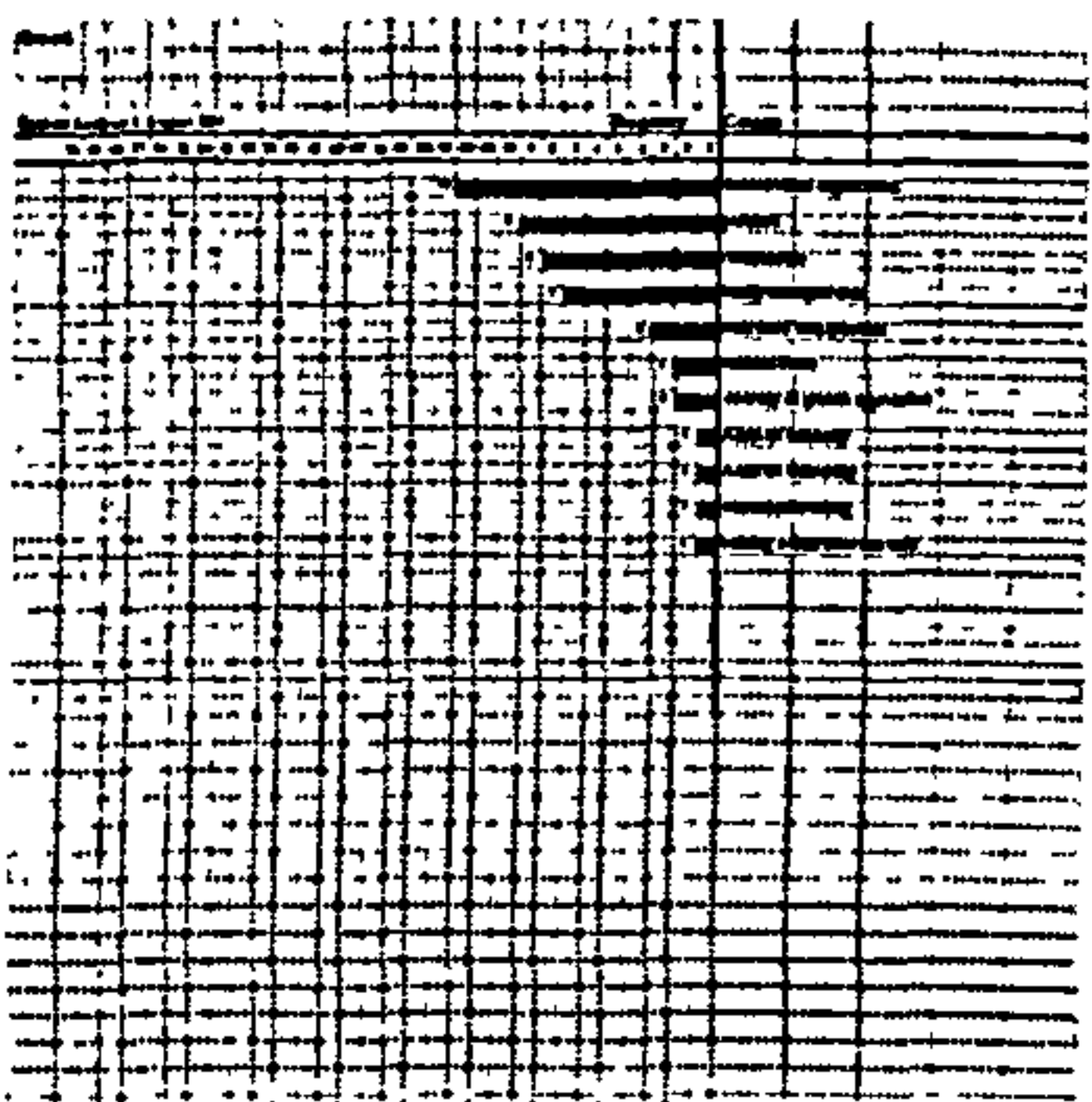
Portfolio - sub-brands



Portfolio - customers



Network statements



Conclusions

- Marked inconsistency on commitments statements
- Purpose and values statements absent
- Lack of consistent presentation across all brand attributes
- Opportunity to present more consistent verbal branding

Appendix 11.7 AEGON study workshop slides

Mission and Values workshop

David Bickerton
Cranfield School of Management
October 2001

11

Objectives for this session

- Background
- Intended output
- Process
- Next actions

Mission/purpose

- No clear statement of purpose for the group
- Agreement that this is missing and needs addressing
- Without this AEGON appears one-dimensional - only concerned with making money

Does the absence of such an element matter?

"A good company delivers excellent products and services, a great company delivers excellent products and services and strives to make the world a better place"

Chairman, Ford Motor Company

Core values

- Absence of clearly defined and documented values
- Acceptance that key audiences are now more interested in the values and norms of the leadership
- No link into corporate behaviour
- Considerable consistency on values set from respondents

Core values - selected quotes

We have chosen one word and that is respect to symbolise our values

We have to respect the individual ways habits and the way they do business but there has to be a factor that keeps it all together

The corporate values project was stalled in 1999 and needs to be brought back